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Time in Languages of the Horn of Africa

Edited by
Ronny Meyer and Lutz Edzard



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Table of Contents

Editors' Preface.....	7
MARIA BULAKH (Moscow): On Static Verbs in Gə'əz	15
FEKEDE MENUTA (Hawassa): Time in the Gurage Variety of Gumer	53
MAGDALENA KRZYŻANOWSKA (Poznań/Hamburg): Interaction of Time and Epistemic Modality in Amharic	71
DERIB ADO (Addis Ababa): Metaphors of Time in Amharic	103
SHIMELIS MAZENGIA (Addis Ababa): Aspect and Tense in Oromo	117
LUTZ EDZARD (Erlangen/Oslo): Experiencer Constructions and the Resultative Function of Impersonal Verbs in Ethio-Semitic	138
OLGA KAPELIUK (Jerusalem): Contrastive Analysis of Some Occurrences in the Verbal Systems of Amharic and Tigrinya	157
RONNY MEYER (Addis Ababa): Emergence of Tense in Ethio-Semitic	179

Editors' Preface

The grammatical expression of time – tense and aspect – is a well-established field of study in linguistic typology. Since Comrie's (1976; 1985) seminal work, various facets of tense and aspect, and their interrelationship have been researched, e.g. in Dahl (1985), Bybee (1985), Sasse (1991), Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca (1994), Bhat (1999), Binnick (1991; 2012), among others.

In typological approaches, TENSE is considered a deictic category that relates the verbal EVENT (e.g. state, action, etc.) to a reference point, usually the moment of speaking, which results in the putative three-way tense distinction between present, past and future. Many languages, however, only distinguish between two values, viz. past vs. non-past or present vs. non-present; a few languages have more specific tense values, like, e.g. near vs. remote past, definite vs. indefinite future, etc. Markers for tense often grammaticalize from lexical elements (e.g. auxiliary verbs) or aspect markers, and thus have a very generalized semantics that does not interact with the semantics of the verbs to which they are attached.

Markers for aspect behave differently. GRAMMATICAL or VIEWPOINT ASPECT, i.e. basically the two-way distinction between perfective vs. imperfective expressed through verb inflection, is not a deictic category but represents the speaker's view on a verbal event. The perfective aspect emphasizes the inherent (potential) boundaries of an event, which often co-occurs with a past reading, whereas the imperfective aspect highlights the ongoing phase following the initial point or preceding the end point of an event. The imperfective aspect has various pragmatic interpretations, including that of a continuative or progressive, iterative, habitual, or general present. Certain temporal phases of a verb can also be encoded by periphrastic constructions or verb derivation, which consequently function as expressions for a specific PHASAL ASPECT. Finally, the inherent temporal structure of a verb, its LEXICAL ASPECT, is construed through a combination of the semantic features dynamicity, durativity and telicity yielding the well-known four-way distinction between states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements.

Despite the long-lasting and diversified cross-linguistic interest in tense/aspect, most grammatical descriptions of Cushitic, Ethio-Semitic, Nilo-Saharan, and Omotic languages spoken at the Horn of Africa do not deal in much

detail with the expression of time. Often, only a summary of inflectional verb paradigms (which as often as not are entirely based on elicited data), and their approximate translations into English or other languages are provided. Not much is said about the origin of these paradigms, their meaning range, discourse function, and semantic interaction with each other, or with time adverbials. For other language families, however, comprehensive studies on tense/aspect are available, e.g. Dahl (2000) for European languages, or Nurse (2008) for Bantu languages.

In order to develop a better understanding of time concepts in languages spoken at the Horn of Africa, and to gain new insights in typological and areal-linguistic issues related to the expression of time in these languages, Ronny Meyer (Addis Ababa University), Lutz Edzard (University of Erlangen-Nürnberg and University of Oslo), Yvonne Treis (CNRS/LLACALAN, Paris), and Ewa Wolk-Sore (University of Warsaw) organized the panel “Time in the Languages of the Horn of Africa” at the 19th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, which took place from 24–28 August 2015 in Warsaw under the theme “Ethiopia – Diversity and Interconnections through Space and Time”.

The panel presentations had an unintentional bias towards Ethio-Semitic, to which nine of the fourteen presentations were devoted. Four papers were concerned with Cushitic languages, but only one with an Omotic language. Two research topics dominated the presentations: in-depth studies on tense/aspect systems of individual languages, and typological contrastive comparison of specific tense/aspect features in closely related languages. All of the eight contributions in the present collective volume emerge from the panel presentations and the subsequent discussions.

The first section of the present volume consists of five contributions dealing with tense/aspect phenomena in individual Ethio-Semitic languages. Maria Bulakh investigates the interplay between the lexical semantics of Gə‘əz stative verbs and their temporal meaning (implication) in the three basic verb conjugations for the perfective and imperfective aspect, and the converb. She argues that stative verbs in Gə‘əz belong to two broad semantic classes, viz. inchoative-stative verbs and verbs that denote a continuous event with potential starting and end points.

Fekede Menuta outlines the main features of grammatical time expressions in Gumer, a little-known Gurage variety of the Chaha-group (Central Western Gurage). The contrast between the perfective and imperfective viewpoint aspect is the central feature of verb inflection. Gumer, furthermore, grammaticalized periphrastic auxiliary constructions to denote a future event without speci-

fic modal implications vs. a less probable future (or past) event. Tense marking is also found in the derivation of certain time adverbs, which occur in pairs of complementarily forms for past or future events.

Two contributions are concerned with particular parts of the Amharic tense/aspect system. Magdalena Krzyżanowska describes the interface of tense/aspect with epistemic modality in complex predicates containing the invariable auxiliary *yə-hon-all* (3SM-be(come)IPFV-AUX.NPST), i.e. the 3SM imperfective of the inchoative-stative verb *honä* ‘be(come)’ followed by the non-past auxiliary *allä*. Epistemic modality is concerned with the speaker’s evaluation of the degree of validity of a given proposition, which involves two temporal reference points: (i) the moment of the speaker’s assessment of a proposition, and (ii) the time of the event denoted by the proposition. The auxiliary *yəhonall* combines with three types of co-verbs, which all are dependent verbs syntactically, viz. plain verbs in the imperfective or converb (traditionally called “gerund”) conjugation, or derived progressive forms consisting of a verb in the perfective conjugation marked by the prefix *əyyä-*. The co-verbs convey aspectual meaning, but also code a relative tense with the moment of the speaker’s epistemic assessment as reference point. The moment of the epistemic assessment typically coincides with the moment of speaking, but can also be the past in narrative texts. There is no formal distinction between them.

The other contribution with a sole focus on Amharic is Derib Ado’s *Metaphors of time in Amharic*, which is not concerned with the grammatical coding of tense/aspect, but with the pragmatic extension of time concepts in metaphorical expression. After a general overview about frequent time metaphors in Amharic, such as TIME IS AN OPPONENT, CONTAINER, LOAD, RESOURCE, Derib Ado concentrates on the metaphor TIME IS SPACE and its various facets. Time in Amharic is dominantly conceptualized on a two-dimensional horizontal axis, on which ego faces the future, whereas the past is behind him. On this axis, time, as well as ego might move, commonly from the future to the past. The reverse direction, past to present/future, only occurs in imaginary discourse about past events.

The last contribution in this section – and the only one on a language not belonging to the Ethio-Semitic family – is Shimelis Mazangia’s account of tense/aspect in the Cushitic language Oromo, more precisely its Eastern or Hararghe variety (with additional comparative data from the Western or Wallagga Oromo variety, and Amharic). Oromo verbs primarily inflect for the perfective and imperfective aspect, which denote several semantic sub-categories. Only prospective and continuous events are marked by periphrastic con-

structions, which usually are based on copula clauses. It is assumed that verbs in the two primary conjugations conflate aspect with tense by default, thus past perfective vs. non-past imperfective. However, they also denote events with the respective other time reference, so that they most probably are unmarked for tense. Specific time reference is commonly marked by adverbs, or temporal auxiliaries. A distinct past auxiliary can optionally refer to a habitual event in the past, or mark past reference in periphrastic constructions (e.g. the prospective or progressive). Another auxiliary derived from the verb ‘exist’ primarily emphasizes the continuity of an event (in the past or non-past). Secondly, this existential auxiliary is developing into a non-past marker, as can clearly be seen in the Wallagga variety. It grammaticalized the combination of converb plus auxiliary as separate construction denoting the perfect, in which the past perfect contains the past auxiliary, but the present perfect the existential auxiliary. The Hararghe variety, in contrast, includes the perfect reading within the semantics of the perfective.

The remaining three contributions are comparative studies of tense/aspect phenomena in various Ethio-Semitic languages. Lutz Edzard’s contribution is an in-depth study of experiencer constructions and impersonal verbs in Ethio-Semitic (with focus on Amharic) from a Semitic and general typological perspective. He shows that these constructions most frequently denote bodily sensations in Ethio-Semitic (or more specifically Amharic), but rarely include verbs of perception. The grammatical encoding of the experiencer (agent-like through subject suffixes vs. patient-like through object suffixes) supports the cross-linguistic hierarchies for control and affectedness.

Based on a corpus of Hebrew news texts, which were translated into Amharic and Tigrinya, Olga Kapeliuk contrastively compares the occurrence of specific Amharic and Tigrinya verb forms. Although the two Ethio-Semitic languages are structurally similar, there are major differences in the use of auxiliary verbs in main-clause predicates. As a result, identical translations into Amharic and Tigrinya are rather few in number. The Amharic texts are more fluent and follow closer the Hebrew source, while the Tigrinya texts tend to be more complex, and to contain longer sentences.

In the last contribution, Ronny Meyer deals with the grammaticalization of tense in Ethio-Semitic by comparing the structure and function of main clause predicates in Gə‘əz, Amharic, and Muher. Tense as a grammatical category distinguishing between past vs. non-past is an innovative feature in modern Ethio-Semitic. It emerged as an optional feature in Gə‘əz, probably first in copula clauses, and then diffused to main clauses with an imperfective verb. Subse-

quently, tense became an inherent part of periphrastic constructions, mainly the perfect, proximative and progressive. These constructions are limited to main clauses, as subordinate predicates usually only express viewpoint aspect but not tense.

A few recurrent issues can be observed in the multitude of tense/aspect phenomena discussed in the individual contributions. Stative verbs in Ethio-Semitic languages apparently belong to two or more semantic sub-classes (Bulakh; Kapeliuk; Edzard; Meyer). Their lexical semantics always includes a potential (initial) boundary, i.e. total-stative verbs seem to be completely absent, or to be quite rare at least.

The primary temporal feature, marked through the basic verb conjugations, is viewpoint aspect, i.e. the binary distinction between perfective vs. imperfective. This conclusion is supported by two phenomena: First, stative verbs in the perfective conjugation have by default a present reading, but can also have a past implication in marked contexts, as shown in the contributions by Bulakh; Edzard; Kapeliuk; Meyer. Second, (plain) imperfective main-clause verbs are typically interpreted as non-past events, but can also refer to the past (cf. Shimelis; Meyer). Thus, the tense interpretation of the two basic conjugations interacts with the lexical aspect of verbs, and may vary depending on the discourse context, which is a strong indicator that they mark aspect, not tense.

Grammatical tense is usually marked through temporal auxiliaries to distinguish past from non-past events (cf. Fekede; Shimelis; Kapeliuk; Meyer). Commonly, a distinct past auxiliary combines with imperfective verbs, or is part of periphrastic constructions (including the perfect) in affirmative main clauses. Non-past in these types of predicates, however, is often not overtly marked, but simply indicated through the absence of the past auxiliary. Although the existential verb/copula (which initially might have emphasized ongoing events) may develop into a non-past auxiliary, its combination with an imperfective verb may still retain a tense-neutral continuous reading in certain contexts. Therefore, complex predicates consisting of an imperfective co-verb and the existential auxiliary can also refer to past events, as observed in Amharic (for which cf. also Krzyżanowska) and Oromo.

The perfect seems to be an innovative grammatical category, which is typically a complex predicate consisting of a converb (or converb equivalent) as co-verb and a temporal auxiliary (which can also be a zero marker through the contrast with an overt past auxiliary). Initially, the perfect reading was certainly part of the perfective conjugation (cf. Bulakh; Shimelis; Meyer). But then the perfect grammaticalized as a separate morphosyntactic form, and apparently

became a feature of the Ethiopian language area, which may be absent in peripheral varieties, as clearly shown in Shimelis' comparison of the perfect in Hararghe vs. Wallagga Oromo. On the other hand, the two distinct morpho-logical categories for the perfective and the perfect may again merge into a single form, namely that of the innovative perfect, as can be observed in Gunnän Gurage (cf. Fekede; Meyer).

It should be noted that the transcription of linguistic data has not been unified in the collective volume, i.e. representations according to IPA occur side-by-side with specialized (Ethio-)Semitic transcription systems (sometimes even for the same language). Therefore, a single sound might be transcribed variously, but it is consistently represented in the individual contributions.

Finally, we want to express our gratitude to the NORHED project *Linguistic Capacity Building: Tools for the Inclusive Development of Ethiopia* (jointly conducted by Addis Ababa University, Hawassa University, the University of Oslo, and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology) for providing financial support to the panelists from Ethiopia, the University of Oslo for its technical support, and the organizing committee of the 19th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies for hosting our panel.

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October 2016

Ronny Meyer and Lutz Edzard

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On Static Verbs in Gəʿəz

Maria Bulakh, Russian State University for the Humanities

1 Introduction

In most works on lexical aspect, STATES are established as a special class of situations, contrasting with other classes such as ACTIVITIES (for an overview cf. Filip 2011:1189, 1193, 1197, 1202, etc.). Verbs denoting states may differ in their morphosyntactic behavior from language to language and within one language.

Breu (1988:45) – adopted in Sasse (1991:5) and Breu (1994:25) with some terminological modifications – offers a consistent classification of verb meanings based on the boundary characteristics of situations.¹ He distinguishes between totally static verbs (TSTA) and inceptively static verbs (ISTA). While totally static verbs do not presuppose any temporal boundaries for the denoted situation, an initial limit is probable for inceptively static verbs. Furthermore, there is a class of situations, which allow for both initial and final limits, the so-called activities (ACTI).² Albeit the term ACTIVITY implies a non-static meaning, the class of ACTI-verbs in fact includes many situations traditionally seen as states, such as *sitting* or *being ill* (cf. Breu 1994:32; Gvozdanović 1994:144). Thus, a label without reference to the static-active opposition, like, e.g. INCEPTIVE-TERMINATIVE, would have been more appropriate. Nevertheless, in the present contribution, the term ACTI is retained as conventional label. Accordingly, I will speak of “static ACTI-verbs”, despite the oxymoronic character of such a collocation.

It must be emphasized that Breu’s classification operates with situations as they are conceptualized in a given language, i.e. the same verbs may belong to different classes in various languages (Breu 1994:32). Thus, a formal distinction between the semantic verb classes on morphological or syntactic criteria is not universal (Sasse 1991:6).

1 In the present contribution, the terminology of Breu (1994) is used.

2 The remaining two semantic classes – gradually terminative and totally terminative verbs – are beyond the scope of the present investigation.

The present contribution will discuss the morphosyntactic behavior of a number of Gə‘əz verbs denoting states, as in Table 1:

Table 1 Gə‘əz static verbs

BASIC STEM *qatla* TYPE

STRONG ROOTS	C ₂ =SEMIVOWEL	C ₂ =GUTTURAL
<i>ʔabda</i> ‘be mad’	<i>ḥaywa</i> ‘live’	<i>dəḥna</i> ‘be safe’
<i>ʔamna</i> ‘believe’	<i>noḥa</i> ‘be tall; high’	<i>nəʔsa</i> ‘be small’
<i>ʕabya</i> ‘be big’	<i>qoma</i> ‘stand’	
<i>kabda</i> ‘be heavy’	<i>noma</i> ‘sleep’	C ₂ =GUTTURAL
<i>nagša</i> ‘reign’	<i>šora</i> ‘carry’	<i>baʔha</i> ‘be numerous’
		<i>šanša</i> ‘be strong’
		<i>šalʔa</i> ‘hate’

BASIC STEM <i>qatala</i> -TYPE	BASIC STEM <i>qatla/qatala</i> -TYPE	CAUSATIVE STEM
<i>ḥadara</i> ‘reside; dwell’	<i>ḥamma/ḥamama</i> ‘be in pain’	<i>ʔafqara</i> ‘love’
	<i>qarba/qaraba</i> ‘be near’	<i>ʔaʔmara</i> ‘know’

The verbs in Table 1 were randomly selected from a list of verbs whose meaning is cross-linguistically associated with static situations. In addition, some well-known Gə‘əz verbs whose meaning is apparently conceptualized as static have been included. The majority of these verbs are of the *qatla* type (admittedly, some of them are verbs with a guttural as last radical, which allow only the *qatla* type in the basic stem).³ Of course, this is only to be expected, as the *qatla* type is associated with a static meaning.⁴ The verb *ḥadara* is certainly not the only verb of the *qatala* type with a static meaning, i.e. it is just by accident that no other static verbs of this type have been included. However, the causative stem, primarily employed for the causative derivation, typically refers to non-static situations. Consequently, static verbs in this stem are not numerous.

In the discussion of the morphosyntactic features of these static verbs, I will focus on the interplay between their lexical meaning and the inflectional mor-

3 Note that for the two verbs allowing variation between *qatla* and *qatala*, the latter form is marked as rare in Dillmann (1865:72, 425).

4 Cf. already Dillmann (1907:142), where the *qatla* type is claimed to denote “participation, not in pure doing, but either in suffering or in mere condition”; see also Lambdin (1978: 50).

phemes *qatala*, *yəqattəl*, and *qatilo*.⁵ Some attention will be paid to the employment of the *qatala* form with static verbs to refer to a present situation (cf. §3.3.2). On the basis of the attested textual employment, it will be argued that there are two types of static verbs in Gə'əz: The verbs of the first type denote either a state or its beginning (and thus, are to be classified as ISTA-verbs), while the verbs of the second type denote a state, its beginning, or the whole situation from the beginning to the end (and thus, are to be classified as ACTI-verbs).

I have deliberately excluded negative forms and predicates of conditional sentences from the investigation. In conditional sentences, there is a tendency to employ verbs in the *qatala* conjugation in the protasis, but in the *yəqattəl* conjugation in the apodosis (see, e.g. Tropper 2002:245). Thus, the verb form is syntactically rather than semantically motivated. In negation, the opposition between the perfective and imperfective meanings could be neutralized (see Miestamo and van der Auwera 2011). As will be shown in §2, this opposition is crucial for understanding the behavior of static verbs in Gə'əz.

The majority of the cited examples come from the Gə'əz Bible and the apocrypha, either quoted in Dillmann (1865), or found in a searchable online collection of Biblical Gə'əz texts.⁶ The relevant contexts are quoted according to Dillmann (1853; 1861; 1894); Esteves Pereira (1989); Mercer (1931); Gleave (1951); Bachmann (1893); Wechsler (2005); Zuurmond (1989; 2001); Knibb (1978); VanderKam (1989); and Perrone and Norelli (1995). Devens's (2001) concordance to the *Gə'əz Psalms* and Lusini's (2003) concordance to the *Ascension of Isaiah* were consulted as well. Examples for early post-Aksumite Gə'əz are taken from the *Kəbra Nagašt* (Bezold 1905) and the *Chronicle of 'Amda Šəyon* (Kropp 1994).⁷

For a comprehensive description, certainly more verbs have to be examined, including an exhaustive analysis of their contextual usage. This task cannot be

5 Following Weninger (2001), I use *qatala*, *yəqattəl*, and *qatilo* as shorthand label for the basic verb conjugations and their respective grammatical function: *qatala* instead of the traditional term perfect (i.e. perfective), *yəqattəl* instead of imperfect, *qatilo* instead of gerund (or converb). The form *qatilo* is only briefly discussed because it is rare in comparison with *qatala* and *yəqattəl*, and I failed to collect a large number of relevant contexts. The discussion of the *qatilo* forms in §3.4 is based on examples from Weninger (2001). Other inflected verb forms, like the jussive, imperative and infinitive, are not considered.

6 Accessible at <http://www.tau.ac.il/~hacohen/Biblia.html>.

7 I am most grateful to A. Bausi for providing me with a searchable digital version of these two texts.

easily fulfilled without a concordance for a large number of Gə'əz texts differing in genres and time of creation. Still, it is to be hoped that the present contribution will help to advance our knowledge on static verbs in Gə'əz.

2 Some remarks on the verbal system of Gə'əz

In a research on lexical verb classes, special attention should be paid to the interaction between the semantics of a verb and its various grammatical meanings. Therefore, one has to say some words on the basic grammatical oppositions in the verbal system of Gə'əz. The crucial question is whether it is primarily aspect-oriented or tense-oriented. Unfortunately, there is no consensus on this question up to date. In 2001, a special monograph by S. Weninger appeared, which explored in detail the various functions of all major verb conjugations in Gə'əz. Weninger (2001:313, 319) evaluates the main opposition of the Gə'əz verbal system, viz. the opposition between *qatala* and *yəqattəl*, as relative tense: *qatala* marks the relative past (“relative Vorzeitigkeit”), while *yəqattəl* expresses the relative present (“relative Gleichzeitigkeit”). In Tropper (2002:181, 182, 186), this analysis is abandoned in favor of an aspectual interpretation: *qatala* is described as perfective, and *yəqattəl* as imperfective (cf. also Cohen 1989:190; Meyer 2016 (this volume)).

In view of this dissent, it is necessary to summarize the generally accepted facts about the *qatala* and *yəqattəl* conjugations, and to assess their compatibility with temporal and aspectual interpretations. The *qatala* conjugation is primarily used in sentences about past situations. The examples with apparent reference to the present time in Weninger (2001:75–88) are to be explained either as performative verbs (as duly acknowledged by Weninger), or as inference about a present state resulting from a change of state in the past (cf. §3.3.2). Furthermore, *qatala* appears in (relatively few) sentences about future situations (Weninger 2001:88–95).⁸ In such contexts, Weninger’s analysis of *qatala* as expressing relative past, i.e. as a situation preceding in time another reference situation, is indeed highly convincing. However, a similar employment of the perfective aspect is also known from other languages. In general, the distribution of the time reference of *qatala* – default past time reference, lack of present time reference, restricted future time reference – corresponds to what can be expected from a verb conjugated for the perfective aspect (cf. Dahl

8 The so-called *perfectum propheticum*, which could also belong here, is a mechanical translation of the *Vorlage* (i.e. original forms) in most contexts (cf. Weninger 2001:97–98).

1985:79–80). As for *yəqattəl*, it is used in sentences about past, present and future situations (Weninger 2001:103–156).⁹

Now, what aspectual value can be ascribed to *qatala* and *yəqattəl*? In sentences about the past time, *qatala* is apparently the default form. The employment of *yəqattəl* in such sentences can plausibly be interpreted as expression of the imperfective meaning, which is hardly in contradiction with Weninger's (2001) evaluation of *yəqattəl* as relative present tense (cf. Dahl 1985:24–25 on the difficulty of distinguishing between imperfective and relative present tense). In sentences about the present time, the imperfective interpretation of *yəqattəl* is practically the only possible one. In sentences about the future, *yəqattəl* can describe both bounded and unbounded situations (cf. the examples in Weninger 2001:143–150; Tropper 2002:186–187), but this may be explained as neutralization of the opposition between imperfective and perfective. All in all, the interpretation of *yəqattəl* as imperfective does not contradict the facts.

More problematic is the employment of *qatala*. Is it really restricted to bounded situations? At first glance, the answer seems to be *no* – in view of four passages quoted by Weninger (2001:73–74) in which *qatala* seems to refer to continuous or habitual situations in the past. However, for each of the cited examples, a perfective interpretation cannot be excluded.¹⁰ The most convincing argument for the non-perfective employment of *qatala* is Weninger's (2001:73) example No. 109, which is given in (1).¹¹

9 This distribution – one form limited to the past, and the other with no time restrictions – is not unlike that of Modern Written Arabic, which is analyzed by Comrie (1976:78–81) as combining tense and aspect oppositions. However, the verbal system of Modern Written Arabic is treated in Dahl (1985:155) as aspect opposition, and the same analysis is applied to the system of Classical Arabic (Cohen 1989:183). The fact that the perfective most frequently occurs in sentences about the past is typologically predictable (cf. Dahl 1985:79, Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994:83).

10 The verb *rassaya*, in Weninger's (2001:73) example No. 110, might designate an individual action: *rassaya ħurato* 'he took up the course'. Example No. 111 involves an apodosis of an unreal conditional sentence, and hence does not provide strong evidence for a specific aspectual interpretation (cf. §1). For the perfective interpretation of example No. 112, cf. example (77) in Appendix 3.

11 The first line in the examples from the corpus of epigraphic Gə'əz is a quotation from RIÉ, with the following modifications: The RIÉ transliteration has been adapted to the system used in the present paper, i.e. RIÉ *ḏ* and *ṣ* are replaced with *ṣ* and *ṣ̣*, respectively. The RIÉ symbol /, which represents a word divider, is replaced with |. In examples from unvocalized inscriptions, the second line (marked with two asterisks **) contains a hypothetical reconstruction of the vocalization. If the Epigraphic Gə'əz orthography deviates from that of Classical Gə'əz, the underlying forms (marked by the symbol <) are given in round brackets. Square brackets indicate damaged fragments, which are re-

- (1) *wssywm | [ʔmʔmr | ʔwʕʔw]m | ʔbhʕrm | [l]lʕltm | hbst | ʕls | [22000 ... | wʕg | z]yʔkl[m]*
***wa-sesayaw-omu ʔam-ʔamir-a ʔawʕʔaw-omu*
 and-feed\PFV:SBJ.3PM-OBJ.3PM ABL-day-CONST take_out\PFV:SBJ.3PM-OBJ.3PM
ʔab-bəher-omu (<ʔam-bəher-omu) la~lla-ʕalat-omu həbəst-a
 ABL-land-POSS.3PM ALL~DIST-day-POSS.3PM bread-CONST
ʕalas 22000 ... wa-ʕəgā za-yaʔakkəl-omu
 spelt[NOM] 22000 and-meat REL.SM-SBJ.3SM:be_enough\IPFV-OBJ.3PM
 ‘and **they gave them to eat** from the day they took them out of their land
 each day spelt bread – 22000 ... and meat which was enough for them’
 (RIÉ 185 II:11–13)¹²

Example (1) denotes a habitual situation in the past. Typologically, habituality is one of the most common sub-senses of the imperfective aspect (cf., e.g. Comrie 1976:25; Bybee 1994:236). Thus, it is indeed a strong argument against the perfective interpretation of *qatala*.

In the RIÉ corpus, one can detect several other examples of a similar employment of *qatala*:

- (2) *wʕʕbʕm | lʔrbʕtm | srwtm | b.rm | bbm | mħdr̥m*
***wa-ʔaʕbaʔ-omu la-ʔarbāʕt-u-^m sarāwit-^m*
 and-feed\PFV:SBJ.3SM-OBJ.3PM ALL-four-NOM-MIM troop\NOM-MIM
b.rm² ba-bba-^m māħdar-omu
 ? LOC~DIST-MIM lodging-POSS.3PM
 ‘and **he fed** four troops ... in each of their lodgings’ (RIÉ 186:18-19)¹³

stored on the base of parallel passages. Three dots indicate text that cannot be restored, or blank space.

- 12 Cf. also RIÉ 185bis II:13–16:

- (i) *wssywm | ʔmʔm | ʔwʕʔw | ʔmbʕrm | ll | ʕlt | hbst | ʕls | 20020 | ... | wʕg | sgbt*
***wa-sesayaw-omu ʔam-ʔama ʔawʕʔaw-omu ʔam-bəher-omu*
 and-feed\PFV:SBJ.3PM-OBJ.3PM ABL-when take_out\PFV:SBJ.3PM-OBJ.3PM ABL-land-POSS.3PM
la~lla ʕalat həbəst-a ʕalas 20020 ... wa-ʕəgā ʕəgbat-a
 ALL~DIST day[NOM] bread-CONST spelt[NOM] 20020 and-meat satiety-ACC
 ‘and **they gave them to eat** from the moment when they took them out of their land
 each day spelt bread – 20020 – ... and meat to their satiety’

- 13 The examples from RIÉ 186 and 190 – inscriptions written in South Arabian script – preserve the transliteration of RIÉ: *ʕ* stands for the Sabaic grapheme which in modern works is represented as *s*₂ (used in Gə‘əz inscriptions to render Gə‘əz *ʕ*); *s* stands for *s*₁ (used to render Gə‘əz *s*). In these inscriptions, and in a few other Gə‘əz inscriptions writ-

- (3) *wa-ʔəla~ʔəla* | *ʕarazna* | *ʔahazna* | *wa-moqaḥna*
 and-REL.P~DIST pierce\PFV:1P take\PFV:1P and-put_in_fetters\PFV:1P
 ‘and **we took** and **put in fetters** all those whom **we pierced**’
 (RIÉ 187:10)¹⁴

- (4) *wa-qatalu* | *za-rakabu*
 and-kill\PFV:3PM REL.SM-find\PFV:3PM
 ‘and **they killed** (all) whom **they met**’ (RIÉ 187:19)

- (5) *wqtlm* | *mnm* | *škbm*
 ***wa-qatalna-m* *mann-a-m* *rakabna-m*¹⁵
 and-kill\PFV:1P-MIM who-ACC-MIM find\PFV:1P-MIM
 ‘and **we killed** whoever **we met**’ (RIÉ 190:10-11)

- (6) *wqtlm* | *wšwwm* | *zškbm*
 ***wa-qatalu-m* *wa-šewawu-m* *za-rakabu-m*
 and-kill\PFV:3PM-MIM and-take_captive\PFV:3PM-MIM REL.SM-find\PFV:3PM-MIM
 ‘and **they killed** and **took captive** whoever **they met**’ (RIÉ 190:18)

Each of the examples (1)–(6) implies a kind of distributive, marked either by the distributive prepositions *lalla-* and *babba-*, or by the relativizer in the singular or in the distributive plural (***ʔəlla-ʔəlla-*). In such a syntactic context, the *qatala* form denotes a single action within a chain of repeated actions: ‘we killed each man that we met’, ‘in the course of each day he gave them such and such quantity of wheat’, etc. Thus, none of the examples can be seen as a true argument in favor of a non-perfective employment of *qatala*.¹⁶ However, no *yəqattəl* forms are attested in Epigraphic Gəʿəz to describe a habitual or iterative situation in the past. Thus, it remains unclear what was the usual way of expressing such a meaning in Epigraphic Gəʿəz.

ten in South Arabian script (cf. Sima 2003/2004:276–277), a word-final *-m* is inserted indiscriminately after nouns, verbs, prepositions, etc. as an imitation of the Sabaic mimation of nouns, on which final *-m* expresses the indeterminate state (cf. Stein 2011: 1051).

14 In the examples from vocalized inscriptions, the transliteration of RIÉ is preserved.

15 Note that the South Arabian graphemes for *r* and *š* are sometimes confused in RIÉ 190 because of their graphic similarity (cf. Schneider 1974:769).

16 Moreover, the perfective is used in iterative or habitual contexts in some languages (Dahl 1985:79).

The comparison of Gə'əz *qatala* forms with the verbs in the *Vorlage* yields ambiguous results. The usual correspondence between the Greek aorist – generally accepted as an exponent of the perfective (cf., e.g. Comrie 1976:19; Sasse 2002:203; Bary 2009:11) – and Gə'əz *qatala* (cf. Hofmann 1969:79; 1977:245) may be seen as an argument in favor of perfectivity for *qatala*. Within this approach, one would expect that the Greek imperfect – with the semantics of the imperfective in the past – would be consistently rendered with Gə'əz *yəqattəl*. This, however, is not the case, at least not exactly. The Greek imperfect is often rendered with *yəqattəl* into Gə'əz, but examples of corresponding Gə'əz *qatala* are found as well (cf. Hofmann 1969:79; 1977:245). Can one discard them as stylistic amendments by the translator? Or should one, on the contrary, treasure such examples as true indications of *qatala* used with an imperfective meaning?¹⁷

The material of the present investigation provides an additional argument in favor of the aspectual interpretation of the *qatala* vs. *yəqattəl* opposition. It turns out that the apparent polysemy of static verbs in Gə'əz – for most of which the dictionaries record two invariants, a static and an inceptive one – can be plausibly explained as result of the interaction between lexical aspect and grammatical aspect. The extant text examples can be analyzed in terms of a complementary distribution between the static and inceptive meanings of one verb: the former appears in the *yəqattəl* form, whereas the latter is associated with *qatala*. Such a distribution agrees with the aspectual interpretation of the respective forms. It is well known that static verbs often change their meaning to an inceptive reading in the perfective aspect (cf. Comrie 1976:19–20; Breu 1988:47; Smith 1997:70).¹⁸ Admittedly, there is no ultimate evidence for an inceptive reading of *qatala* with static verbs. Many examples are ambiguous and allow both inceptive and static readings. Nevertheless, an analysis that implies an exact correlation between form and meaning and, moreover, has a theoretical rationale, seems highly attractive. Therefore, I adopt the aspectual interpretation in the present investigation, in the hope that further development of Gə'əz studies will reveal decisive arguments in its favor.

17 Cf. the discussion of example (15) in §3.3.1.

18 Cf. also Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca (1994:92), where a related phenomenon – present time reading of static verbs in the perfective aspect – is discussed as an important criterion to distinguish between perfective and simple past. As we shall see in §3.3.2, in Gə'əz one cannot speak of the *obligatory* present time reading. Rather, it emerges as an implicature from the past inceptive.

3 Static verbs in Gə'əz

3.1 Are there total static verbs in Gə'əz?

Among the verbs in Table 1, there are several designations of qualities or permanent states which could be expected to belong to the totally static verb class (TSTA). Meanings such as 'be big', 'be small', 'be long, high', 'be heavy', 'be numerous', 'be near', 'be mad', 'be strong' may be thought to be associated with situations typically unchangeable, without any implication of a beginning or an endpoint. For instance, the meaning 'be small' does not necessarily presuppose a beginning, a process of *becoming small* (unlike 'know', which typically implies that the situation of knowing was preceded by a process of acquiring the knowledge).

However, it turns out that formal criteria do not allow establishing a TSTA verb class in Gə'əz. It is quite difficult to find verbs that only denote static situations (the only reliable example is the locative and existential copula *hallo/hallawa*). Even a cursory perusal of Leslau's (1987) comparative Gə'əz dictionary reveals that for verbs which denote qualities – 'be red', 'be big', 'be small', 'be heavy' – one usually finds, along the definition "to be X", the definition "to become X" (of course this phenomenon is not restricted to Gə'əz; cf. Cohen 1989:58–59 for other Semitic languages).¹⁹ As a result, their syntactic behavior is quite similar to verbs like 'love', 'know', 'believe', 'hate', which predictably belong to the inceptively static class.

To illustrate this phenomenon, let us consider the verb *ṣabya* 'be big'. Logically, a state 'be big' does not necessarily presuppose that the object in question *became big* at a certain moment of time. A statement that a mountain *is big* does not imply that this mountain *became big* some time ago. However, the verb *ṣabya*, besides the static meaning 'be great, be big, be large, be important' (Leslau 1987:55); 'magnum esse' (Dillmann 1865:985), can be used with the inceptive meaning 'increase (itr), become fat, swell' (Leslau 1987:55); 'cres-cere, magnum vel majorem fieri' (Dillmann 1865:985), as examples (7) and (8) show.

19 In some cases, the change from the static meaning to the inceptive one is accompanied by an additional semantic shift. For instance, for the verb *haywa* 'live', the inceptive realization is 'come back to life, revive (itr)', often more specifically 'be cured, recover' (cf. Leslau 1987:252).

- (7) *wa-səbḥat za-yəsebbəḥu wa-kəbr-u la-za*
 and-praise[NOM] REL.SM-3PM:praise\IPFV and-glory-NOM.POSS.3SM ALL-REL.SM
yənabbər diba manbar yašabbi
 3SM:sit\IPFV SUPE chair[NOM] 3SM:be_big\IPFV
 ‘And the praise with which they praise and the glory of him who is sitting
 upon the throne **is great**’ (Asc. Is. 7:27)

- (8) *ləhəqqi wa-šabayki*
 grew\PFV:2SF and-be_big\PFV:2SF
 ‘You grew up and **became big**’ (Ezek. 16:7)

In Appendix 1, more examples for the static and inceptive usage of verbs denoting permanent qualities are presented.

3.2 Functions of the *yəqattəl* form with static verbs

The *yəqattəl* form of static verbs can describe a state in the past, in the present and in the future:²⁰

- (9) *wa-kʷəll-omu ʔəlla yāʔammərəw-o qadimu*
 and-every-POSS.3PM REL.P SBJ.3PM:know\IPFV-OBJ.3SM earlier
 ‘all who **knew** him earlier’ (Job 42:11)

- (10) *ʔanta ʔəgziʔ-o tāʔammər fənot-əya*
 2SM lord-VOC 2SM:know\IPFV road-POSS.1S
 ‘Oh my Lord, **you know** my way’ (Ps. 141:4/142:3)

- (11) *haymānot-ə-ssa la-šālam təqawwəm*
 faith-NOM-TOP ALL-eternity[NOM] 3SF:stand\IPFV
 ‘But faith **will stand** forever’ (Sir. 40:12)

It remains unclear whether *yəqattəl* of a static verb can be used with inceptive meaning. In my corpus, I have detected only one potential example in which *yəqattəl* may indicate a habitual inceptive situation in the general present:

²⁰ In the considered examples, the most reliable way of distinguishing between the present and future references of *yəqattəl* is to contrast the Gə‘əz text with its Greek *Vorlage* (if available).

- (12) *wa-soba ləhqat yaʕabbi ʔəm-kʷəll-u*
 and-when grow\PFV:3SF 3SM:be_big\IPFV ABL-every-NOM.POSS.3SM
ʔaḥmāl wa-ʔəkawwən ʕəṣ-a ʕabiy-a ʔaska soba
 vegetable\NOM and-3SM:be\IPFV tree-ACC big\SM-ACC until when
ʔaʕwāf-a samāy yəmaṣṣəʔ wa-ʔaḥaddər wəsta
 bird\NOM-CONST sky[NOM] 3SM:come\IPFV and-3SM:live\IPFV LOC
ʔaʕsuqi-hā
 bough\NOM-POSS.3SF

‘And when it (mustard seed) grows it **becomes bigger** than any vegetable and becomes a big tree, until the birds of the sky come and **start to live** in its boughs’ (Matt. 13:32)

However, one cannot exclude the static meaning: ‘is bigger’, ‘come and live’. Another problem about this passage is that it can be interpreted as a conditional sentence, in which case the choice of *yəqattəl* in the apodosis has no semantic motivation (cf. §1).

Inceptive interpretations can also be offered for some of the examples referring to future time. But, there are no solid arguments for preferring the inceptive to the static reading, as in example (13).

- (13) *ʔasma ʔanta tənaggəṣ la-na ba-ṣəyon*
 because 2SM 2SM:reign\IPFV ALL-1P LOC-Zion
 ‘For you **will reign** over us (or: **will start to reign** over us, **will become our king**) in Zion’ (Kropp 1994 [I]:8)

3.3 Functions of the qatala form with static verbs

3.3.1 Inceptive usage

The ambiguity of some *yəqattəl* forms referring to the future mentioned in §3.2 is mirrored by the ambiguity of a number of examples with the *qatala* form. Indeed, in many cases it is difficult to distinguish between the inceptive and the static employment of *qatala*. The context is not always helpful since it is not easy to tell whether the static meaning is actually *denoted* by the verbal form or *inferred* from the inceptive usage of the verb. To illustrate this problem, let us consider a rather trivial example with the verb *ʔafqara* ‘love’:

- (14) *wa-ʔafqar-ā yāʕqob la-rāḥel*
 and-love\PFV:SBJ.3SM-OBJ.3SF Jacob ALL-Rachel
 ‘And Jacob **loved** Rachel’ (Gen. 29:18)

Many examples are similar to (14) and admit both the inceptive and static interpretation. In order to decide whether the static interpretation is the actual meaning of the verb or whether it is inferred from its inceptive employment, one has to rely on the language of the *Vorlage*, or on the general context, or on parallel passages, etc. Quite often, there are no ultimate arguments in favor of one of the two interpretations.

Can all employments of *qatala* be ascribed an inceptive meaning? In most cases, this is not a problem. Even the examples in which the Greek *Vorlage* makes use of verbs in the imperfect or praesens, which in principle supports a static interpretation, do not exclude the inceptive reading (in the examples below, the Greek forms are quoted after Rahlfs 1979, and Nestle et al. 1994).

- (15) *wa-taqayyamatt-o* *herodyādā* *wa-faḡadat*
 and-harbor_rancor\PFV:SBJ.3SF-OBJ.3SM Herodiadah and-wish\PFV:3SF
təqtall-o
 SBJ.3SF:kill\JUSS-OBJ.3SM
 ‘and Herodiadah **was harboring rancor against him** and **wishing** to kill
 him’ (Mark 6:19; Gr. *eneixen* (impf.), *éthelen* (impf.))

- (16) *wa-samišo kama ʔarkalāwos nagša²¹ həyyate*
 and-hear\CNV:3SM COMP Archelaus reign\PFV:3SM instead
ʔab-u-hu herodəs farha hawir-a həya
 father-NOM-POSS.3SM Herod fear\PFV:3SM go\INF-ACC there
 ‘and having heard that Archelaus **was reigning** in place of his father
 Herod, he feared to go there’ (Matt. 2:22; Gr. *basileúei* (praes.))

Of course, the inceptive reading (‘started to harbor rancor’ > ‘harbored rancor’; ‘started to wish’ > ‘was wishing’, ‘had become king’ > ‘was reigning’) is acceptable in (15) and (16).

Are there any counterexamples, in which the static reading of *qatala* is the only possible one? Among the considered material, only the three instances in (17)–(19) have been detected in which the static interpretation of *qatala* is clearly preferred. Note that for these examples the delimitative reading discussed in §3.3.3 is unacceptable.

- (17) *wa-ʔaʔmar-omu ʔəgziʔ ʔiyasus za-yəhelləyu*
 and-know\PFV:3SM-SBJ.3SM-OBJ.3PM lord[NOM] Jesus REL.SM-3PM:think\IPFV
ʔəkay-omu
 evil-POSS.3PM
 ‘and Lord Jesus **knew** that they were thinking of evil’ (Matt. 22:18;
 Gr. *gnoûs* (part. praes.))

- (18) *ʔəsmā ʔaʔmarat za-kona lāʕle-hā*
 because know\PFV:3SF REL.SM-be\PFV:3SM SUPE-3SF
 ‘because **she knew** what had happened to her’ (Mark 5:33; Gr. *eiduīa*
 (part. praes.))

- (19) *wa-ʔəlla haywu wa-ʔəlla-hi motu taqašfu*
 and-REL.P live\PFV:3PM and-REL.P-and die\PFV:3PM be_stricken\PFV:3PM
wəsta nafəst-omu
 LOC body-POSS.3PM
 ‘and those who **lived** and those who died were stricken into their bodies’²²
 (1 Kings 5:12; Gr. *hoi dzōntes* (part. praes.))

21 Note that the B-text has *yənaggəs*, i.e. the *yəqattəl* form.

22 The first part of the Gə'əz text deviates from that of the Septuagint version and is probably to be amended into:

In the examples (17) and (18), the interpretation of *ʔaʔmara* as ‘start to know; learn’ is unconvincing. However, as soon as the meaning ‘start to know’ is re-interpreted as ‘realize, understand’, the inceptive reading becomes acceptable. The example (19) can receive an inceptive reading if one postulates the meaning shift ‘start to live’ > ‘escape death’ (which would fit the general context of 1 Kings 5:12). Thus, the examples (17)–(19) do not presuppose a non-perfective use of *qatala*. Rather, one can suspect a somewhat unusual development of the inceptive semantics. Moreover, the extreme scantiness of such examples does not allow using them as a reliable piece of evidence.

All in all, the collected examples do not contradict the analysis according to which the inceptive and static meanings are distributed alongside the *qatala* and *yəqattəl* forms, respectively.

3.3.2 Static verbs in the *qatala* form with present time reading

It is well known to the scholars of Gə‘əz that some verbs in the *qatala* form can refer to the present time. Dillmann (1907:168) observes that the use of the “perfect” (i.e. the *qatala* form) to express the present tense is relatively rare, and restricted to two cases. One is what is known in contemporary linguistics as performative verbs (cf. Weninger 2000), which are excluded from the present discussion. The second case is described by Dillmann (1907:168) as follows:

“When a transaction has already begun, starting from the Past, and is continued up to the Present, the Perfect is employed, e.g., *ba-krəstos taḥadga lana ḥaṭiʔatəna* ‘our sin is forgiven us for Christ’s sake’; and the use of the Perfect is obligatory, when a Future cannot be thought of as taking its place without an alteration in the sense, e.g. *nāhu qarba za-yāgabbaʔanni* ‘Lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand’ Matt. 26:46.”

Dillmann (1907:168) correctly connects this phenomenon with the nature of static verbs in Gə‘əz:

“Certain actions especially, for which we would use the present, are mostly expressed in the Perfect, because the Ethiopian conceives them not so much ‘a state of being’, as ‘a mode of doing or becoming’, e.g. *ʔaʔmarku* ‘I know’ (‘I have learned’); *rəʔiku* ‘I see’; *ʔafqara* ‘he loves’.”²³

(ii) *wa-ʔəlla ḥaywu wa-ʔəlla ʔi-motu ...*
 and-REL.P live\PFV:3PM and-REL.P NEG-die\PFV:3PM
 ‘and those who lived and those who did not die ...’

In the Hebrew text, there is no equivalent of *ʔəlla ḥaywu*.

- 23 According to Dillmann (1907:168), the use of the verb *hallawa/hallo* ‘be; exist’ is determined by the same principle. However, the verb *hallawa* differs considerably from the other verbs mentioned by Dillmann. The *qatala* form of *hallawa* indeed expresses meanings normally assigned to the *yəqattəl* form. This usage is grammaticalized to such an extent that the *qatala* form of *hallawa* appears in syntactic contexts usually demanding a

The same idea is presented in Weninger’s (2001:311-312) description of the Ga‘əz verbal system, but with one important difference. According to him, the phenomenon is restricted to verbs of thinking and feeling:²⁴

“Einige Beispiele für reale generell-kontinuative Sachverhalte der Gegenwart gibt es, die mit *qatala* ausgedrückt werden. Es handelt sich durchwegs um Verben des Denkens und Fühlens [There are some examples of general continuous situations in the present time which are expressed by *qatala*. This invariably involves verbs of thinking and feeling].” (Weninger 2001:85)

It can be easily demonstrated that the use of *qatala* to refer to the time of utterance is by no means limited to verbs of thinking and feeling. It rather occurs with any static verb, although it is more conspicuous in some of them and less in others. Below, the examples of such use with the static verb *ʕabya* ‘be big, become big’ are adduced. Importantly, in two of the examples, (21) and (22), the influence of the Greek or Hebrew Bible is ruled out, as they employ copula clauses with zero copulae.

- (20) *ḥaṭāwəʔi-homu ʕabyat ʔəqqə*
 sin\p-poss.3pm be_big\pfv:3sf very
 ‘their sins **are** very **great**’ (Gen. 18:20; Gr. *megálai* (adj.), Hbr. *kābədā* (*qāṭal*))

- (21) *ʕabya qʷəsl-əya*
 be_big\pfv:3sm wound-poss.1s
 ‘my wound **is** **great**’ (Jer. 15:18; Gr. *stereá* (adj.), Hbr. *ʔānūšā* (pass. part.))

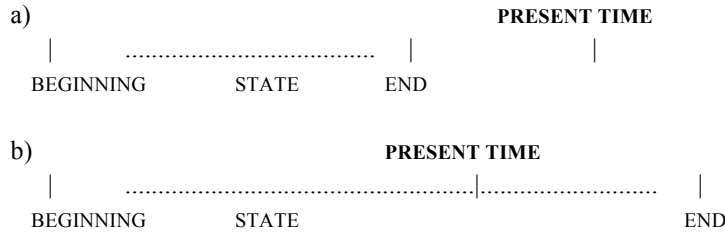
- (22) *ʔəsmə ʕabyat ʔəska samāy-āt məḥrat-ə-ka*
 because be_big\pfv:3sf till heaven-p[nom] mercy-nom-poss.2sm
 ‘since your mercy **is** as high (lit. **big**) as the heaven’ (Ps. 107:5/108:5; Gr. *méga* (adj.), Hbr. *gādol* (adj.))

yəqattəl form, such as dependent temporal clauses introduced by the conjunction *ʔənza* ‘while’ (cf. Tropper 2002:241–242). A search through the texts of the *Chronicle of ‘Amda Šəyon* and *Kəbra Nagašt* confirms Tropper’s description. Among the 93 *ʔənza* clauses with a verbal predicate in the *Chronicle of ‘Amda Šəyon*, 86 clauses contain the *yəqattəl* form. The remaining 7 clauses have the *qatala* form of *hallawa*. In the *Kəbra Nagašt*, one finds 158 verbal *ʔənza* clauses. Among them, 149 have *yəqattəl*. Of the remaining 9 clauses, 8 have the *qatala* form of *hallawa*, whereas one employs *qatala* forms of two other verbs (cf. example (28)).

24 Cf. also Weninger (2001:75–76) regarding “individual” situations with verbs of thinking and feeling.

Another question is whether present time reference is a part of the grammatical meaning of the *qatala* form. It turns out that the present time reading encounters the same difficulties as the static interpretation discussed in §3.3.1. If the *qatala* form refers to the initial boundary of a state in the past, it is certain that the state started before the moment of speech, but it remains unclear whether it came to an end or not. This leaves us with the two possibilities, as shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1 Conceptualization of static verbs in the *qatala* form



The *qatala* form of a static verb in Gə'əz can be used in both situations, as examples (23) and (24) show.

- (23) *wa-ʔafqaratt-o melkol walatt-a sāʔol la-dāwit*
 and-love\PFV:SBJ.3SF-OBJ.3SM Michal daughter-CONST Saul ALL-David
 'and Michal, the daughter of Saul, **fell in love** with David' (1 Kings 18:20)

- (24) *ʔasma šādəq ʔəgziʔabəher wa-šədq-a ʔafqara*
 because righteous\SM[NOM] God and-righteousness-ACC love\PFV:3SM
 'for God is righteous and **came to love** righteousness' (Ps. 10:8/11:7)

In (23), both the beginning and the end of the situation are in the past (hence, the sentence can be reinterpreted as 'and Michal, the daughter of Saul, **loved** David'). In (24), the state is obviously perceived as continuing into the present, and the reasonable interpretation is 'for God is righteous and **loves** righteousness'.

Thus, the *qatala* form of a stative verb does not automatically receive present reading. Furthermore, for static verbs, *qatala* is not the only (nor the most frequently used) verbal form with present time reference. The *ʔəqattəl* form also refers to the present time, as discussed in §3.2. A cursory survey of the static verbs listed in Table 1 reveals that the *ʔəqattəl* form is attested with pre-

sent time reference for all of them, and that it prevails for present reference over the *qatala* form for many of them.

The language of the *Vorlage* for the Biblical passages supplies an additional argument in favor of an inceptive reading of *qatala*. In most examples, a Gə'əz verb in the *qatala* form renders the Greek aorist, which is a perfective morpheme that often has an inceptive meaning (cf. Goodwin 1900:270; also Comrie 1976:19; Bary 2009:17–18). Hence, the inceptive perfective (rather than the static present) is the most natural interpretation of *qatala*, as in example (25).²⁵

- (25) *yəʔəze ʔaʔmarku kama təfarrəh-o la-ʔəgziʔabəher ʔanta*
 now know\PFV:1S COMP SBJ.2SM:fear\IPFV- ALL-God 2SM
 OBJ.3SM
 ‘now **I have learned** that you fear God’ (Gen. 22:12; Gr. *égnōn* (aor.))

Finally, if *qatala* forms of static verbs had the grammatical meaning of present tense (competing with *yəqattəl*), one could expect that they would also occur in other syntactic contexts normally demanding the *yəqattəl* form. However, this is not the case at least in one construction, namely a subordinate clause with the temporal conjunction *ʔanza* ‘while’ which usually has a verb in the *yəqattəl* form as predicate (Troppe 2002:241–242). The *qatala* forms co-occurring with *ʔanza* are extremely rare. Except for the verb *hallawa/hallo* (cf. fn. 23), I only found four examples:

- (26) *la-mənt təsseʔal-anni ʔanza ʔəgziʔabəher ʔadaga-kka*
 ALL-what SBJ.2SM:ask\IPFV-OBJ.1S while God leave\PFV:SBJ.3SM-
 OBJ.2SM
 ‘why are you asking me, now that the God **has left you?**’ (1 Kings 28:16)

- (27) *ʔi-taʔahəzu-ni ʔanza ʔəgziʔabəher*
 NEG-SBJ.2PM:oppose\IMP-OBJ.1S while God
šarraḥa-nni fənot-əya
 grant_success\PFV:SBJ.3SM-OBJ.1S road-POSS.1S
 ‘do not oppose me, now that the God **has granted success** to my journey’
 (Gen. 24:56)

²⁵ Note that the Greek *Vorlage* for examples (23) and (24) also uses the aorist, i.e. *ēgápēsen*.

- (28) *wa-ba-kama* *ʔanbar-omu* *ba-gadām* *40 ʕāmat-a*
 and-INST-how place\PFV:SBJ.3SM-OBJ.3PM LOC-desert[NOM] 40 year-ACC
*ʔanza ʔi-balya*²⁶ *ʔalbāsi-homu* *wa-ʔi-naqʕa*
 while NEG-wear_out\PFV:3SM garment\P-POSS.3PM and-NEG-chap\PFV:3SM
sakʷanā-homu
 foot-POSS.3PM
 ‘as he placed them in the desert for 40 years during which their clothes **did not wear out** and their feet **did not chap**’ (Bezold 1905:81)
- (29) *wa-qanʔa* *lāʕla* *bəʔsit-u* *ʔanza rəkʷəst*
 and-be_jealous\PFV:3SM SUPE wife-NOM.POSS.3SM while impure\SF[NOM]
yəʔəti wa-ʔamma-ni ʔanza ʔi-konat *rəkʷəst-a*
 3SF and-if-and while NEG-be\PFV:3SF impure\SF-ACC
 ‘and he became jealous of his wife while she is impure or while she **is not** impure’ (Num. 5:14)

Only (29) can be treated as an instance of present time reference of *qatala* becoming grammatical for a static verb.²⁷ In (28), the verb *balya* is static, but the verb *naqʕa* is not. Clearly non-static are *hadaga* and *šarrəha* in (26) and (27), respectively. Thus, the conjunction *ʔanza* is extremely rarely used with *qatala* forms, and shows no preference for the *qatala* form of static verbs.

In some cases, the present time reading of the *qatala* form seems superior to the inceptive-in-the-past reading. Let us consider the verb *ʕabya* ‘be big’ in examples (20)–(22). For (20) and (22), the inceptive interpretation is quite acceptable (‘the sins have become great’ > ‘the sins are great’, ‘the mercy has become great’ > ‘the mercy is great’). However, for (21), it is somewhat problematic: the most natural interpretation of the clause ‘my wound is big’ in the Greek *Vorlage* is that the wound was big from the moment of its coming into existence. However, such cases are rare.

Appendix 2 contains all collected examples in which the *qatala* form of a static verb translates a Greek verb in the present tense or a predicate of a copula clause denoting a situation in the present time. In most of them, the inceptive

26 With the variant *yəballi* in two manuscripts.

27 It seems that the negative form of the semi-copular verb *kona* indeed grammaticalized *qatala* as an exponent of present tense, for some preliminary remarks cf. Bulakh (2014: 604 and fn. 48). However, its occurrence in *ʔanza* clauses is obviously too sparse to sustain this claim.

reading of the Gə'əz verb is quite natural so that one can speak of a stylistic device used by the translator rather than of employment of *qatala* with the grammatical meaning of static present tense. The verbs for which an inceptive reading seems awkward are very few (e.g. (52), (66), (71)), and in fact, present tense reading is not their only possible interpretation.

Therefore, present time reference is not a grammatical function of the *qatala* form for static verbs. Rather, the static present reading of *qatala* is inferred from the inceptive-in-the-past meaning. The alleged present time reference of *qatala* is then a phenomenon belonging to pragmatics rather than to grammar. Of course, similar pragmatic inference can be observed in other languages (cf., e.g. Smith 1997:34–35).

3.3.3 Inceptive and delimitative employment of *qatala* for static ACTI verbs

For some verbs, the *qatala* form is used with two different functions: it denotes the initial limit of the state expressed by the verb in certain contexts (inceptive usage), but in other contexts the same verb expresses a state with two temporal boundaries, i.e. the entire phase including the beginning, a certain duration and the endpoint of a state. As long as the function of *qatala* is considered to mark the perfective aspect, this second type of employment can be understood as designation of a temporally restricted situation, either with or without explicitly mentioned boundaries (this function of the perfective is well-known cross-linguistically, cf., e.g. Comrie 1976:17, 22; Dahl 1985:76–77). In Slavic linguistics, two subtypes exist: DELIMITATIVE, which indicates a short duration of a situation, and PERDURATIVE, which denotes duration throughout a certain period of time (cf., e.g. Smith 1997:244). Since no formal distinction between the two types is observed in Gə'əz, I will use the term DELIMITATIVE for any verb in the *qatala* form which denotes either type of a temporally limited situation.

The two functions of the *qatala* form – inceptive and delimitative – are illustrated by the verb *nagša* 'reign' in (30) and (31):

(30) INCEPTIVE USAGE

ʔəgziʔabəher nagša səbhati-hu labsa
 God reign\PFV:3SM glory-POSS.3SM wear\PFV:3SM
 'God **began to reign**, he put on his glory' (Ps. 92:1/93:1; Gr. *ebasileusen*
 (aor.))

(31) DELIMITATIVE USAGE

wa-kəlʔet-a ʕāmat-a nagša

and-two-ACC year-ACC reign\PFV:3SM

‘and **he reigned** for two years’ (2 Kings 2:10; Gr. *ebasileusen* (aor.))²⁸

In (30), the *qatala* form clearly has an inceptive meaning – incidentally, with present time reference (cf. §3.3.2). In (31), in contrast, the inceptive interpretation can be safely excluded. Admittedly, the imperfective (durative) reading would fit the context. However, the presence of an aorist in the Greek *Vorlage* rather suggests an employment of *qatala* in the delimitative function (for the delimitative use of the Greek aorist cf., e.g. Comrie 1976:22; Bary 2009:19).

The delimitative employment of *qatala* with the verb *nagša* implies that this verb is to be classified as an ACTI verb (Breu 1988:47; Sasse 1991:12–13). However, its inceptive employment speaks against such a classification, and rather indicates that it belongs to the ISTA class (Breu 1988:47; Sasse 1991:12). Are there two lexemes *nagša* in Gəʕəz, one belonging to the ISTA class and the other to the ACTI class? Such a splitting seems unwarranted since a similar behavior is also found with other Gəʕəz verbs, which all together form a special semantic class. Besides *nagša*, the following verbs whose *qatala* form has both the inceptive and delimitative functions have been detected in my corpus: *ḥamma* ‘be in pain’, *ḥaywa* ‘live’, *ḥadara* ‘reside, dwell’, *noma* ‘sleep’, *qoma* ‘stand’. Appendix 3 provides examples of the inceptive and delimitative employment for these verbs. The corresponding forms of the Greek *Vorlage* are adduced whenever available. It seems clear that these verbs have one semantic feature in common: they denote states which are perceived as temporary or transient, expected to have a beginning and an endpoint. Consequently, these verbs are to be classified as ACTI verbs, according to Breu’s definition (cf. §1).

The delimitative function of *qatala* does not occur with most other verbs considered in the present investigation. I assume that verbs denoting a permanent state or quality, and verbs of feeling and thinking in Gəʕəz typically lack an endpoint. Hence, they are incompatible with the delimitative meaning. Indeed, I failed to find a reliable example of the delimitative usage for any of these verbs (that is for the verbs treated in Appendix 1, as well as for *ʔaʔmara* ‘know’, *ʔafqara* ‘love’, *ʔamna* ‘believe’, and *ʕalʔa* ‘hate’) in my corpus. The verb *dəḥna* ‘be safe’ seems also to be an ISTA verb in Gəʕəz, i.e. without an implication of a final limit.

²⁸ Cf. a similar context in 3 Kings 15:2.

It could be expected that verbs such as *šora* 'carry', *ʔarmama* 'be silent', *labsa* 'wear', which typically denote temporary states with clear-cut initial and final limits, belong to the ACTI class. However, I failed to find reliable examples of their delimitative employment. Possibly, such examples could be found in a larger text corpus. Likewise, it remains to be established whether the active atelic verbs usually classified as ACTI verbs are characterized by the same ambiguity of *qatala*, i.e. whether the *qatala* form of verbs such as *hōra* 'go', *zammara* 'sing' or *roša* 'run' can be used with the inceptive as well as delimitative meanings.

3.4 Static verbs in the *qatilo* form

In his fundamental study, Weninger (2001) ascribes to *qatilo* the meaning of relative past. He correctly observes that the basic semantics of *qatilo* is preserved with most static verbs, which then receive an inceptive reading (Weninger 2001:238). However, with verbs denoting states of spirit or soul – “bei geistigen und seelischen Zuständen” – Weninger (2001:238-239) interprets the *qatilo* form as indicator of contemporaneity. This distinction between the spiritual states and all other kinds of states is unwarranted. Verbs like *farha* 'fear', *šəhqa* 'wish', *faqada* 'wish', *ʔaʔmara* 'know', *qanʔa* 'be jealous, have zeal', and *tazakkara* 'remember' (all claimed by Weninger 2001:238-239 to employ *qatilo* to indicate contemporaneity) must belong to the class of ISTA verbs in Gə'əz. Thus, *farihaya* (fear\CNV:1S) can be interpreted as 'I, having become afraid' rather than 'I, being afraid', or *šəhiqo* (wish\CNV:3SM) can be understood as 'he, having started to wish' rather than 'he, wishing', etc. Therefore, one has to speak of the interaction between the semantics of the grammatical function of *qatilo* with the lexical semantics of the verb rather than of a special meaning of *qatilo* (note that Weninger 2001:327 also admits that the inceptive interpretation is also applicable to the designations of spiritual states).

Moreover, in some examples involving static verbs, the inceptive interpretation of *qatilo* is clearly superior to the static one. Thus, in (32), the *qatilo* form of the inceptive static verb *ʔaʔmara* 'know' denotes a change of state ('having learned') rather than the state itself ('knowing').

- (32) *wa-ʔəm-zə ʔaʔmiro wəʔətu ʕalāwi kama tarākaba*
 and-after-DEM.SM know\CNV:3SM 3SM rebel.NOM COMP meet\PFV:3SM
nəguṣ məsla sarāwit-u farha ʔəqqa
 king[NOM] COM troop\P-NOM.POSS.3SM fear\PFV:3SM very
wa-ḥaʔa fənot-a ḥaba yaḥawwər
 and-not_find\PFV:3SM road-ACC where 3SM:go\IPFV

‘and after that, this rebel, **having learned** that the king has met his troops, became scared and failed to find way where he could go’ (Kropp 1994 [I]:13, cf. also the translation in Kropp 1994 [II]:18)

Thus, static verbs change their meaning from static to inceptive not only in the *qatala* form, but in the *qatilo* form as well. This suggests that like *qatala*, *qatilo* is best described as exponent of the (subordinate) perfective.

4 Conclusion

Gə‘əz distinguishes between two types of static verbs: ISTA verbs denoting either states (static meaning) or their initial limit (inceptive meaning), and ACTI verbs denoting states, their initial limit, or the whole state including the initial and final temporal limits (delimitative meaning). With these verbs, the *yəqattəl* form usually has a static semantics (referring to past, present or future situations), whereas the *qatala* form can only have an inceptive or a delimitative meaning, both typically associated with reference to the past. The *qatilo* form of static verbs behaves similar to *qatala*.

The present time function of *qatala* is unwarranted. In all pertinent passages, it is inferred from the literal meaning of the clause. It is more appropriate to treat this as a pragmatic effect of the inceptive employment of a static verb.

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Abbreviations*Abbreviations of cited sources*

1 Cor.	1 Corinthians	Jer.	Jeremiah
Asc. Is.	Ascension of Isaiah	Kuf.	Maṣḥafa Kufāle
Deut.	Deuteronomy	Lam.	Lamentations
Eccles.	Ecclesiastes	Matt.	Matthew
Ex.	Exodus	Num.	Numbers
Ezek.	Ezekiel	Ps.	Psalms
Gen.	Genesis	RIÉ	Bernand, Drewes, and Schneider (1991)
Hen.	Henoch		
Isa.	Isaiah		

Other abbreviations

ABL	Ablative	M	Masculine
ACC	Accusative	MIM	Mimation (an orthographic device in pseudo-Sabaic inscriptions)
act	Active	NOM	Nominative
adj	Adjective	OBJ	Object
ALL	Allative	P	Plural
aor	Aorist	part	Participle
COM	Comitative	pass	Passive
CONST	Construct state	perf	Perfect
CNV	Converb (<i>qatilo</i>)	PFV	Perfective (<i>qatala</i>)
DEI	Deixis marker	pl	Plural
DEM	Demonstrative	pluperf	Pluperfect
DIST	Distributive	POSS	Possessive
F	Feminine	praes	Praesens
fut	Future	Q	Question marker
Gr.	Greek	REFL	Reflexive
Hbr.	Hebrew	REL	Relative marker
IMP	Imperative	S	Singular
impf.	Imperfect	SBJ	Subject
INF	Infinitive	SUPE	Superessive
INST	Instrumental	TOP	Topic
IPFV	Imperfective (<i>yəqattāl</i>)	tr	Transitive
itr	Intransitive	VOC	Vocative
LOC	Locative		

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Appendix 1: Static and inceptive employment of static verbs

A few examples of static verbs denoting permanent qualities are given below, accompanied with their definition in Leslau (1987) and Dillmann (1865), as well as with relevant quotations from the text corpus (cf. also examples (7) and (8)).

ʔabda

Static meaning: ‘be insane, rage, be mad, be out of one’s mind, be foolish’ (Leslau 1987:2); ‘oberrare, profugere, vagari; insanire, amentem esse; stultum esse; rabiosum esse’ (Dillmann 1865:760)

- (33) *wa-mann-u za-yaʔakki wa-yaʔabbəd ʔəmənna*
 and-who-NOM REL.SM-3SM:be_evil\IPFV and-3SM:be_insane\IPFV ABL
ʔəgʷāl-a ʔəmm-a-ḥəyāw
 child-CONST mother-CONST-alive
 ‘and who **is** more evil and **more insane** than a human being?’
 (Bezold 1905:35)²⁹

Inceptive meaning: ‘become enraged, become a fool’ (Leslau 1987:2); ‘amentem fieri; stultum fieri; rabiosum fieri’ (Dillmann 1865:760)

- (34) *ʔabda marāʕəy*
 be_insane\PFV:3SM herd\NOM
 ‘the herd **became mad**’ (Mark 5:13)

baʕḥa

Static meaning: ‘be numerous, be abundant, be much, be many’ (Leslau 1987:117); ‘multum esse, numerosum esse’ (Dillmann 1865:532)

- (35) *nəḥna nəbazzəḥ*
 1P 1P:be_many\IPFV
 ‘we **are many**’ (Ezek. 33:24)

Inceptive meaning: ‘increase (itr)’ (Leslau 1987:117); ‘multum fieri, multiplicari, augeri, crescere’ (Dillmann 1865:532)

²⁹ One may observe that with the verbs denoting properties, a fairly large number of present time references of *yəqattəl* involve comparative constructions. With most verbs, non-comparative usages of *yəqattəl* referring to present time are also found.

- (36) *bazhu* *ʔaʕʕuqi-hu*
 be_many\PFV:3PM bough\P-POSS.3SM
 ‘its boughs **became numerous**’ (Ezek. 31:5)

kabda

Static meaning: ‘be heavy, be a burden, be serious, be severe (sickness)’ (Leslau 1987:273); ‘gravem esse, graviorem esse’ (Dillmann 1865:849)

- (37) *yəkabbəd-akka* *zə-qāl* *wa-ʔi-təkəl*
 SBJ.3SM:be_heavy\IPFV-OBJ.2SM DEM.SM-word[NOM] and-NEG-2SM:be_able\IPFV
bāḥtit-əka *gabirot-a*
 alone-2SM do\INF-ACC
 ‘this word **is heavy for you** and you are unable to do (it) alone’
 (Ex. 18:18)

Inceptive meaning: ‘ingravescere’ (Dillmann 1865:849); a narrower definition ‘become hardened (heart)’ is given in Leslau (1987:273)

- (38) *wa-soba rəʔya* *farʕon* *kama kona*
 and-when see\PFV:3SM Pharaoh COMP be\PFV:3SM
ʕəraʕt *kabda* *ləbb-u*
 rest[NOM] be_heavy\PFV:3SM heart-NOM.POSS.3SM
 ‘and when Pharaoh saw that there was a period of rest, his heart **became hard**’ (Ex. 8:11)

nəʔsa

Static meaning: ‘be small, be little, be young’ (Leslau 1987:381); ‘minorem vel minimum esse’ (Dillmann 1865:663)

- (39) *ʔəm-kʷəll-u* *ʔaʕwāf* *yənəʔəs* *nəhb*
 ABL-every-NOM.POSS.3SM bird\NOM] 3SM:be_small\IPFV bee[NOM]
 ‘the bee **is smaller** than all birds’ (Sir. 11:3)

Inceptive meaning: ‘be diminished’ (Leslau 1987:381); ‘minorem vel minimum fieri, minui’ (Dillmann 1865:663)

- (40) *wa-tawaddāʔna* *wa-wəḥədna* *wa-nəʔsat* *manfas-ə-na*
 and-be_finished\PFV:1P and-be_few\PFV:1P and-be_small\PFV:3SF spirit-NOM-POSS.1P
 ‘and we became exhausted and few in number, and our spirit **became small**’ (Hen. 103:9)

noḥa

Static meaning: 'be high, be tall, be long' (Leslau 1987:409); 'extendi, pro-tendi; longum vel longiorem esse; procerum, altum vel altiore esse' (Dillmann 1865:672)

- (41) *wa-rəʔiku mangala šəbāḥ kāləʔ-a dabr-a*
 and-see\PFV:1S ALL east[NOM] other\SM-ACC mountain-ACC
za-yənawwəḥ kama-zə
 REL.SM-3SM:be_long\IPFV as-DEM.SM

'and I saw towards the east a second mountain which **is** as **high** as this one' (Hen. 26:3)

Inceptive meaning: 'longum vel longiorem fieri; procerum, altum vel altiore fieri' (Dillmann 1865:672)³⁰

- (42) *noḥa šarṣ-u*
 be_long\PFV:3SM sprout-NOM.POSS.3SM
 'its twigs **became long**' (Ezek. 31:5)

qarba

Static meaning: 'be near' (Leslau 1987:440); 'propinquum esse, prope abesse' (Dillmann 1865:425)

- (43) *wa-mann-u wəʔətu ḥəzb ʕabiy za-bottu*
 and-who-NOM 3SM people[NOM] big\SM[NOM] REL.SM-LOC.3SM
ʔamlāk za-yəqarrəb-o
 Lord REL.SM-SBJ.3SM:be_near\IPFV-OBJ.3SM

'and who are these great people who have Lord Who **is close** to them?' (Deut. 4:7)

Inceptive meaning: 'draw near, approach, come close' (Leslau 1987: 440); 'ap-propinquare, accedere' (Dillmann 1865:425)

- (44) *wa-qarba yāʕqob ḥaba yəṣḥaq ʔab-u-hu*
 and-be_near\PFV:3SM Jacob ALL Isaac father-NOM-POSS.3SM
 'and Jacob **approached** Isaac, his father' (Gen. 27:22)

30 No inceptive meaning is given in Leslau (1987).

ṣanʿa

Static meaning: ‘be strong, be powerful, be steadfast’ (Leslau 1987: 559); ‘firmum esse, durum esse, severum esse’ (Dillmann 1865:1288)

- (45) *Ḥasma yaṣannāfu Ḥamanne-na fadfāda*
 because 3PM:be_strong\IPFV ABL-1P much
 ‘because they **are** much **stronger** than we’ (Num. 13:31)

Inceptive meaning: ‘firmum fieri, obdurescere, obfirmari’ (Dillmann 1865: 1288)³¹

- (46) *wa-soba ṣanʿa wəḥatu ḥəṣān*
 and-when be_strong\PFV:3SM 3SM boy[NOM]
 ‘and when this boy **became strong**’ (Ex. 2:10)

Appendix 2: Static verbs in the *qatala* form with present time reference

The examples of static verbs in the *qatala* form with present time reference collected here correspond to present tense clauses in Greek (often copula clauses). Hence, they cannot be explained as mechanical translation of the aorist from the Greek *Vorlage*. Moreover, for many examples, the Hebrew original text does not use the corresponding *qātal* form and therefore, could not have influenced the Gəʿaz translation. To illustrate this, not only the Greek *Vorlage*, but also, whenever possible, the Hebrew forms are adduced in brackets. For consistency, the present static meaning is given in the translations, rather than the literal meaning suggested by the perfective inceptive interpretation.

ḥamna

- (47) *za-ḥamna³² b-əya ḥakko b-əya za-ḥamna*
 REL.SM-believe\PFV:3SM LOC-1S NEG LOC-1S REL.SM-believe\PFV:3SM
za-ḥənbala ba-za-fannawa-nni
 REL.SM-without LOC-REL.SM-send\PFV:SBJ.3SM-OBJ.1S
 ‘it is not in me that the one **believing** in me **believes**, but in the one who sent me’ (John 12:44); Gr. *ḥo pisteúōn* (praes. part.) ... *ou pisteúei* (praes.)

31 The only inceptive meaning adduced in Leslau (1987:559) is ‘become worse (disease)’. However, as Dillmann (1865) and example (46) show, the inceptive nuances denoted by this verb are not limited to this specific meaning.

32 With a variant reading *yaḥammən*.

- (48) *ʔəlla ʔamnu ba-səm-u*
 REL.P believe\PFV:3PM LOC-name-NOM.POSS.3SM
 ‘those who **believe** in his name’ (John 1:12); Gr. *toīs pisteúousin* (praes. part.)

Obviously, in both occurrences of *ʔamna*, the inceptive interpretation is acceptable (‘who started to believe’ > ‘who believes, believer’, etc.)

ʔaʔmara

- (49) *rəʔay-a rəʔiku šəqāy-omu la-ħəzb-əya ʔəlla wəsta*
 see\INF-ACC see\PFV:1S torment-POSS.3PM ALL-people-POSS.1S REL.P LOC
gəbš wa-ʔawyāt-omu samāʕku ʔəm-nadāʔt-a
 Egypt and-lamenting-POSS.3PM hear\PFV:1S ABL-overseer\P-CONST
gabār wa-ʔaʔmarku šāʕr-omu
 workman[NOM] and-know\PFV:1S anguish-POSS.3PM
 ‘I have seen the suffering of my people in Egypt and I have heard their lamenting from the taskmasters, and **I know** their anguish’ (Ex. 3:7); Gr. *oīda* (praes.); Hbr. *yādaʕtī (qātal)*

The inceptive interpretation (‘I have learned’ > ‘I know’) is well acceptable here.

bazħa

- (50) *kama bazħu ʔardāʔi-hu*
 COMP be_many\PFV:3PM disciple\P-POSS.3SM
 ‘that his disciples **are many**’ (John 4:1); Gr. (*pleíonas mathḕtàs*) *poieĩ* (praes.)
- (51) *ʔəkkīt bazħat lāʕla sabʔ*
 evil[NOM] be_many\PFV:3SF SUPE man[NOM]
 ‘the evil **is abundant** upon mankind’ (Eccles. 6:1); Gr. *pollē estin* (praes.); Hbr. *rabbā* (adj.)
- (52) *zə-ni bazħa*
 DEM.SM.NOM-and be_many\PFV:3SM
 ‘and this **is the most numerous**’ (1 Cor. 14:27); Gr. *tò pleĩston* (adj.)

For the examples (50) and (51), the inceptive reading is unproblematic (‘the disciples became numerous’ > ‘he makes numerous disciples’, ‘the evil became abundant’ > ‘the evil is abundant’). In the example (52), however, the inceptive meaning is rather difficult to imagine.

dəḥna

(53) *ḡalla dəḥānkāmu*

REL.P be_safe\PFV:2PM

‘you, who **are in safety**’ (Isa. 45:20); Gr. *ḡoi sḡdzómenoi* (part. praes.);
Hbr. *ḡālīṭē* (pl. constr., noun)

(54) *dəḥānkāmu ḡantāmu nāhu ḡana ḡadawku*

be_safe\PFV:2PM 2PM DEI 1S cross\PFV:1S

bet-a ḡagāḡazt-əya wa-qatalkəw-omu

house-CONST lord\P-POSS.1S and-kill\PFV:SBJ.1S-OBJ.3PM

‘you **are safe** (from guilt); now I have transgressed against the house of my lords and have killed them’ (4 Kings 10:9); Gr. *dikaioi* (adj.);
Hbr. *ḡaddiqīm* (adj.)

In both examples, the inceptive reading (‘become safe’ > ‘be safe’) is acceptable.

ḡafqara

(55) *za-ssa ḡafqar-ā*

la-ḡamaḡā ḡalḡa nafs-o

REL.SM-TOP love\PFV:SBJ.3SM-OBJ.3SF ALL-injustice hate\PFV:3SM REFL-ACC.3SM

‘but he who **loves** injustice, hates himself’³³ (Ps. 10:6/11:5); Gr. *agapōn* (praes. part.); Hbr. *ḡohēb* (part. act.)

The inceptive interpretation (‘he started to love’ > ‘he loves’) is unproblematic.

ḡamma

(56) *ḡamamku lāḡle-ka*

be_in_pain\PFV:1S SUPE-2SM

‘**I am distressed** about you’ (2 Kings 1:26); Gr. *algō* (praes.); Hbr. *ḡar-lī* (adj. + prepositional phrase)

³³ The Gə‘əz translation differs from that of Septuagint and Hebrew Bible, where the text runs as follows: “His (God’s) soul hates him who loves injustice.”

- (57) *rəʔi ʔəgziʔabəher ʔəsmā ɣamamku*
 see\IMP:SM God because be_in_pain\PFV:1S
 ‘look, God, for **I am in pain**’ (Lam. 1:20); Gr. *thlibomai* (praes.);
 Hbr. *šar-lī* (adj. + prepositional phrase)

- (58) *tašāhala-nni ʔəgziʔ-o ʔəsmā ɣamamku*
 have_mercy\IMP:SM-OBJ.1S lord-VOC because be_in_pain\PFV:1S
 ‘have mercy upon me, oh Lord, for **I am in pain**’ (Ps. 30:10/31:9);
 Gr. *thlibomai* (praes.); Hbr. *šar-lī* (adj. + prepositional phrase)

The inceptive reading (‘became distressed’ > ‘is distressed’, etc.) is unproblematic in all three passages.

ɣaywa

- (59) *hor wald-ə-ka-ssa ɣaywa*
 go\IMP:SM son-NOM-POSS.2SM-TOP live\PFV:3SM
 ‘go! your son **is alive**’ (John 4:50); Gr. *dzē* (praes.)

The inceptive interpretation is unproblematic (‘he came back to life’ > ‘he lives’).

ɣadara

- (60) *za-ɣadara wəsta zā hagar*
 REL.SM-dwell\PFV:3SM LOC DEM.SF city[NOM]
 ‘he who **lives** in this city’ (Jer. 45:2); Gr. *hō katoikōn* (part. praes.);
 Hbr. *hay-yošēb* (act. part.)

The inceptive reading (‘who started to live’ > ‘who lives’) is unproblematic.

kabda

- (61) *ʔana-hu dāʔmu kabadku-ka*
 1S-Q but be_heavy\PFV:SBJ.1S-OBJ.2SM
 ‘but am I heavy upon you?’ (Job 7:20); Gr. *eimì... fortion* (adj. + praes. copula); Hbr. *wa-ʔehye ... ləmaššāʔ* (copular verb + prepositional phrase)

In this example, the inceptive meaning is easy to imagine (‘I became heavy upon you’ > ‘I am heavy upon you’).

qarba

- (62) *nāhu ʔana qarabku ʔaba ʔəth-əya*
 DEI 1S be_near\PFV:1S ALL judgement-POSS.1S
 ‘here, I **am near** to your judgement’ (Job 13:18); Gr. *eggús eimi* (adj. + praes. copula); Hbr. *ʕāraktī* ‘have set forth (a legal case)’ (*qātal*)

- (63) *qarbat ʕəlat-a ʔəgziʔabəher*
 be_near\PFV:3SF day-CONST God
 ‘the day of God **is near**’ (Isa. 13:6); Gr. *eggús* (adj.); Hbr. *qārob* (pass. part.)

- (64) *yəsatti ʔəmənna kʷəll-u māy za-qarb-o*
 3SM:drink\IPFV ABL every-NOM. water[NOM] REL.SM-be_near\PFV:SBJ.3SM-OBJ.3SM
 ‘he drinks from every water that **is near to him**’ (Sir. 26:12); Gr. *súneggus* (adj.)

All these examples can be rendered with inceptive (‘I approached, I have become near’, ‘the day has approached’, ‘the water which he approached’).

qoma

- (65) *nāhu qomku lāʕla ʕazaqt-a māy*
 DEI stand\PFV:1S SUPE pit-CONST water[NOM]
 ‘behold, **I am standing** upon the pit of water’ (Gen. 24:13); Gr. *ḥestēka* (praes.); Hbr. *niššāb* (*qātal*)

- (66) *mənt-a qomkəmu zəya ʕəruʕ-ān-a kʷəll-o ʕəlat-a*
 what-ACC stand\PFV:2SM here idle-PM-ACC every-ACC.POSS.3SM day-ACC
 ‘why **are you standing** there idly the whole day?’ (Matt. 20:6); Gr. *ḥestēkate* (praes.)

While for example (65) the inceptive meaning can well be reconstructed (‘I began to stand’ > ‘I am standing’), the use of *qatala* in (66) is more problematic. Here, the inceptive meaning is difficult to reconcile with the temporal adverbial *kʷəll-o ʕəlata* ‘the whole day’. Apart from the present time interpretation (which is supported by the Greek present tense form *ḥestēkate*), it can be explained as a delimitative employment of the perfective (cf. §3.3.3). Still another possibility is that the Gəʕəz translator mistook the Greek form *ḥestēkate* (semantically pre-

sent tense, but formally perfect) for a perfect form (the Greek perfect is regularly rendered with Gə'əz *qatala*, cf. Hofmann 1969:79; Weninger 2001:16–17). The same explanation could apply to example (65) as well.

şalʔa

- (67) *za-ssa ʔafqar-ā la-ʕamaşā şalʔa nafs-o*
 REL.SM-TOP love\PFV:SBJ.3SM-OBJ.3SF ALL-injustice hate\PFV:3SM REFL-ACC.3SM
 ‘but he who loves injustice, **hates** himself’ (Ps. 10:6/11:5); Gr. *miseĩ* (praes.); Hbr. *šānəʔā (qātal)*

- (68) *wa-za-ssa şalʔ-ā la-nafs-u*
 and-REL.SM-TOP hate\PFV:SBJ.3SM-OBJ.3SF ALL-REFL-NOM.3SM
 ‘but who hates himself’ (John 12:25); Gr. *ʰo misōn* (praes. part.)

The inceptive interpretation is unproblematic in both examples (‘he started to hate’ > ‘he hates’, ‘who started to hate’ > ‘who hates’).

şanʕa

- (69) *ʔəsmā şanʕat ʔəde-hu dibe-na*
 because be_strong\PFV:3SF hand-POSS.3SM SUPE-1P
 ‘because his hand **is strong** upon us’ (1 Kings 5:7); Gr. *sklēra* (adj.);
 Hbr. *qāšəṭā (qātal)*

- (70) *şanʕat ʔəd ʔənta qaşafatt-anni*
 be_strong\PFV:3SF hand[NOM] REL.SF punish\PFV:SBJ.3SF-OBJ.1S
 ‘the hand which punished me **is strong**’ (Job 30:21); Gr. *krataiā* (adj.);
 Hbr. *ʕoşem* (const, noun)

- (71) *ba-samāy şanʕa şədq-ə-ka*
 LOC-heaven[NOM] be_strong\PFV:3SM righteousness-NOM-POSS.2SM
 ‘your righteousness **is strong** in the heaven’ (Ps. 88:3/89:2)

In all cases, the inceptive interpretation is acceptable (‘became strong’ > ‘is strong’; in (70) one has rather to do with the meaning ‘to become hard, fierce’). In (71), the inceptive reading is also not to be excluded, albeit the present time reading seems more natural. Note that in this case, the Gə'əz text is a rather loose translation of the Septuagint version (where the verb *ʰetoimasthēsetai*

‘will be prepared’ (fut.) is used; neither is the meaning ‘strong’ present in the Hebrew text).

šora

(72) *šora* *ḥaṭāwəʔi-na*

carry\PFV:3SM sin\P-POSS.1P

‘**he carries** our sins’ (Isa. 53:4); Gr. *fērei* (praes.); Hbr. *səbālām* (*qātal*)

The inceptive interpretation (‘he took upon himself, he started to carry’ > ‘he carries’) is quite acceptable as well.

Thus, in most cases, the perfective inceptive interpretation is not less convincing than the present stative one. In (52), (66), (71), as well as in example (21) discussed in §3.3.2, the inceptive interpretation appears rather infelicitous. However, in three of these examples, such an interpretation is not to be fully ruled out. As for example (66), another explanation involving the grammatical function of the perfective can be offered.

Appendix 3: Static ACTI-verbs

Below, examples of inceptive and delimitative employment of static ACTI-verbs are given (cf. also (30) and (31)).

ḥamma ‘be in pain’

(73) INCEPTIVE

naššər səʔlat-əya ʔəsmā ḥamamku fadfāda

look\IMP:SM prayer-POSS.1S because be_in_pain\PFV:1S much

‘give heed to my prayer for I **have become** very much **distressed**’

(Ps 141:7/142:6); Gr. *etapeinóthēn* (aor.)

(74) DELIMITATIVE

kʷəll-u bəʔsi za-bəzuḥ ḥamma

every-NOM.POSS.3SM man.NOM REL.SM-much\SM[NOM] be_in_pain\PFV:3SM

‘each man who **has suffered** a lot’ (Sir. 36:25); Gr. *polúpeiros* (adj.)³⁴

34 Cf. a similar context in Sir. 31:9.

(75) DELIMITATIVE

ḥamama *ba-ḥanta* *gegāy-ə-na*
 be_in_pain\PFV:3SM LOC-through error-NOM-POSS.1P
 'he **has suffered** because of our sin' (Isa. 53:5); Gr. *memalákistai* (perf.)

ḥaywa 'live'

(76) INCEPTIVE

wa-ḥaywa *wald-u* *ba-yəḥati* *saḥāt*
 and-live\PFV:3SM boy-NOM.POSS.3SM LOC-3SF hour[NOM]
 'and his servant **became cured** in that hour' (Matt. 8:13); Gr. *íathē* (aor.)³⁵

(77) DELIMITATIVE

wa-ḥaywa *ḥadām* 230 *ṣāmat-a*
 and-live\PFV:3SM Adam 230 year-ACC
 'and Adam **lived** 230 years' (Gen. 5:3); Gr. *édzēsen* (aor.)³⁶

ḥadara 'reside, dwell'

(78) INCEPTIVE

wa-baṣiḥo *ḥadara* *wəsta* *bəḥer* *ḥanta* *səm-ā*
 and-reach\CNV:3SM dwell\PFV:3SM LOC land[NOM] REL.SF name-POSS.3SF
nāzret
 Nazareth
 'and having arrived, he **settled** in the land which is called Nazareth'
 (Matt. 2:23); Gr. *katōkēsen* (aor.)

(79) DELIMITATIVE

ḥəm-dəḥra *ṣaṣart-u* *ṣāmat* *za-ḥadara* *ḥabrām*
 ABL-after ten-NOM year[NOM] REL.SM-dwell\PFV:3SM Abraham
wəsta *mədr-a* *kanāḥan*
 LOC land-CONST Canaan
 'after ten years during which Abraham **lived** in the land of Canaan'
 (Gen. 16:3); Gr. *toū oikūsai* (inf. aor.)

35 Cf. fn. 19.

36 Cf. similar contexts in Gen. 5:3 (quoted in Weninger 2001:74 as example No. 112), Gen. 11:15, Gen. 11:16.

(80) DELIMITATIVE

wa-ḥadara gerāro-hā šalast-a subāfe ʕāmat
 and-dwell\PFV:3SM Gerar-ACC three-CONST week year[NOM]
 ‘and he **lived** in Gerar for three weeks of years’ (Kuf. 24:12)

noma ‘sleep’

(81) INCEPTIVE

wa-ʔam-dəḥra noma ʔastarʔay-o la-salomon
 and-ABL-after sleep\PFV:3SM appear\PFV:SBJ.3SM-OBJ.3SM ALL-Solomon
nəguš ʕaḥāy bəruh waradat ʔam-samāy-āt
 king[NOM] sun[NOM] bright\SF[NOM] come_down\PFV:3SF ABL-heaven-
 P[NOM]
 ‘and after **he fell asleep**, there appeared to the King Solomon a bright sun
 which came down from heaven’ (Bezold 1905:25)

(82) DELIMITATIVE

wa-noma yāʕqob nəwām-a wa-yəbe ...
 and-sleep\PFV:3SM Jacob sleep-ACC and-say\PFV:3SM
 ‘and Jacob **slept** a sleep and [after that] he said ...’ (Kuf. 27:25)³⁷

qoma ‘stand’ (cf. also example (66) in Appendix 2)

(83) INCEPTIVE

ʔəgzīʔabəḥer qoma wəsta māḥbar-a ʔamāləkt
 God stand\PFV:3SM LOC assembly-CONST god\P[NOM]
 ‘God **has taken his place** in the council of gods’ (Ps. 81:1/82:1); Gr. *éstē*
 (aor.)

(84) DELIMITATIVE

wa-ʔan-sa qomku wəsta dabr 40 ʕəlat-a wa 40 lelit-a
 and-1S-TOP stand\PFV:1S LOC mountain[NOM] 40 day-ACC and 40 night-ACC
 ‘but **I stood** on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights’ (Deut. 10:10);
 Gr. *ḥeistēkein* (pluperf.)³⁸

37 An inceptive interpretation is impossible since preceding verses already deal with what took place during Jacob’s sleep. On various interpretations of this passage cf. VanderKam (1989 [II]:176).

38 Gr. *ḥeistēkein* ‘I stood’ is the pluperfect of the verb *ḥistēmi*, whose perfect and pluperfect forms are used to express the meaning ‘stand’ with present and past time reference, respectively (cf. Goodwin 1900:124).

Time in the Gurage Variety of Gumer

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1 Introduction

Gurage is spoken by the people who originally live in the Gurage Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. There are about twelve language varieties to which the term *Gurage* is applied, all of which derive their names from ethnonyms. Genetically, Gurage belongs to the southern branch of Ethio-Semitic, in which commonly Eastern Gurage (as part of Transversal South Ethio-Semitic) is distinguished from Gunnän Gurage (Outer South Ethio-Semitic), which in turn can be subdivided into Northern Gurage (Kistane, Dobbi, Muher) vs. Western Gurage consisting of Mesqan (counted as an individual language) and the Chaha vs. Inor dialect clusters (cf. Hetzron 1977:17). Gumer is a Gurage variety spoken in the Gumer district of the Gurage Zone. It is closely related to Chaha, Ezha and Gura, which are grouped together as Central Western Gurage. Leslau (1951:217) considers Gumer and Gura to be varieties of Chaha, while Ezha should be slightly different. Gumer is not well studied yet.

Time expressions in Gurage in general, and in Gumer in particular have not been studied in detail. The aim of this paper is, therefore, to provide a comprehensive description of grammatical markers of time in Gumer. Methodologically, the study is descriptive and follows a structural approach. Most of the data stem from introspection, as I am a native speaker of Gumer, but were crosschecked with other Gumer speakers in various discussions.

2 Theoretical background

Tense and aspect are grammatical categories concerned with the temporal arrangement of verbal situations (Timberlake 2007:315; see also Meyer 2016). The semantics of tense and aspect is often confusing. Tense refers to a situation with a specific point in time as deictic center, which is frequently the moment of speaking (Comrie 1976:1–2). Thus, “tense is grammaticalized expression of location in time” (Comrie 1985:9).

Typologically, languages that mark tense may distinguish between present (at the moment of speaking), past (anterior to the moment of speaking), and future (following the moment of speaking) (Comrie 1976:2).

Aspect denotes “different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation” (Comrie 1976:3). It denotes whether the expressed situation is completed (perfective), or not (imperfective). According to Comrie (1976), the meanings of perfective and imperfective are not just a matter of the completion of the event, but also about whether the internal phases of a situation are structurally distinguished or not. Comrie (1976:4) states,

“[t]he perfective looks at the situation from outside, without necessarily distinguishing any of the internal structure of the situation, whereas the imperfective looks at the situation from inside, and as such is crucially concerned with the internal structure of the situation, since it can both look backwards towards the start of the situation, and look forwards to the end of the situation, and indeed is equally appropriate if the situation is one that lasts through all time, without any beginning and without any end.”

According to Comrie (1976:6), the main differences between tense and aspect is as follows:

“Tense ... locates situations in time, usually with reference to the present moment, though also with reference to other situations. Aspect is not concerned with relating the time of the situation to any other time-point, but rather with the internal temporal constituency of the one situation; one could state the difference as one between situation-internal time (aspect) and situation-external time (tense).”

With regard to past tense and perfective aspect, both designate a completed anterior action. Moreover, a verb inflected for the perfective aspect may have a resultative meaning with a present reading. Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca (1994: 51) describe the differences between past tense and perfective aspect as follows:

“Whether a particular gram is interpreted as past or perfective depends on whether the language in which it occurs has an imperfective and whether the gram in question contrasts with the imperfective, in which case it is perfective, or co-occurs with it, in which case it is past.”

Comrie (1976:6), moreover, observes that cross-linguistically,

“a language may have a grammatical category that expresses time reference, in which case we say that the language has tenses. Many languages lack tenses, i.e. do not have grammaticalized time reference, though probably all languages can lexicalize time reference, i.e. have temporal adverbials that locate situations in time ...”

Dahl (1985) and Bybee (1985) identified three ways of the grammaticalization of tense and aspect, which they describe in Bybee and Dahl (1989: 57) as follows:

- “a. expressions with a copula or possession verb plus a past participle, or verbs meaning ‘finish’, ‘come from’ or ‘throw away’, develop into grams marking anterior or perfect, which in turn develop into perfectives or pasts;
- b. expressions with a copula, locative or movement verb develop into progressives which in turn develop into imperfectives;
- c. expressions with a verb meaning ‘desire’, ‘movement towards a goal’ or ‘obligation’ develop into grams expressing intention and future.”

The developmental notion of grammaticalization seems important to the study of tense and aspect in Gurage, including the Gumer variety. Time in Gurage is not only a feature of verbs, but it can also be expressed through adverbs and nominalized verbal expressions used as proper names. There is no consensus whether Ethio-Semitic languages – to which the Gurage varieties belong – mark aspect or tense (cf. Meyer 2016).

As for Gumer, it will be shown in the following sections that aspect and tense co-occur so that it is difficult to consider Gumer as either tense or aspect language. The grammatical expression of time in Gumer has not yet been well researched. This also applies to Gurage in general, although a few works briefly deal with this topic (e.g. Hetzron 1977; Degif 1996; Fekede 2002; Rose 2007). Generally, there are two basic morphological types of aspect/tense marker in Gurage. The aspect opposition between perfective and imperfective is expressed through different verb conjugations involving specific vocalization patterns (templates) and subject affixes. Tense, in contrast, is marked through additional morphemes attached to or combined with verbs in these conjugations. The past tense on affirmative perfective verbs in main clauses is indicated by the suffix *-m* (Degif 1996:135–136), which alternatively is considered a main verb marker, as it is lacking in subordination (Hetzron 1977:81). Rose (2007:213–214) observes that the past suffix *-m* has the same distribution like the future suffixes, i.e. they only occur in affirmative main clauses, but not in subordinate clauses or negation. Therefore, she concludes that the suffix *-m* must be a past tense marker. There is no special marker for present tense, which is simply expressed through the imperfective conjugation of verbs. Future tense is expressed variously in Gurage. Gumer, similar to other Western Gurage varieties, overtly marks future references: If the suffix *-te* is attached to imperfective verbs, the resulting predicate expresses predetermined future actions or events. In another construction, the morpheme *-šä* in combination with the jussive conjugation of a verb indicates uncertain or probable future situations, but may also refer to such situations in the present or past.

3 Basic verb conjugations

There are two basic conjugations for indicative verbs in Gumer, which distinguish between the perfective and imperfective aspect:

- (1) a. *säppär-ä-m* vs. b. *ji-säbr*
 break\PFV-3SM-PST 3SM-break\IPFV
 ‘he broke’ ‘he breaks’

In affirmative main clauses, a verb in the perfective conjugation is obligatorily followed by the suffix *-m* as past marker (1a), which, however, disappears in negation:

- (2) *an-säppär-ä*
 NEG-break\PFV-3SM
 ‘he did not break’

In fact, negative verbs in the perfective conjugation assume a meaning that the situation they denote has not been fulfilled; hence, they are not marked for past. The action in (2) did not take place, thus it is only perfective, but not past tense.

The vocalization pattern of the two aspect conjugations, as well as for the jussive and imperative vary depending on the verb types, often called Type A, B, C and D (Rose 2007:405–406). Fekede (2002:63–64) argues that Type D is actually a subtype of Type A, B or C, since they have the same patterns, except that Type D verbs labialize their initial consonant.

3.1 Perfective conjugation

Triliteral Type A verbs have the following conjugation patterns in the perfective aspect:

- (3) **PERFECTIVE CONJUGATION OF TRILITERAL TYPE A VERBS**
 PATTERN GLOSS
 a. *säppär-* ‘break’
 b. *säkkär-* ‘be drunk’
 c. *hättär-* ‘cover (roof)’
 d. *bässär-* ‘get cook, ripe’
 e. *dänäg-* ‘hit’
 f. *ḍäkäm-* ‘kick’
 g. *k’änäm-* ‘insult’

Type A verbs have the template of $C_1\ddot{a}(C)C_2\ddot{a}C_3$ to which still person marking suffixes have to be obligatorily attached. The penultimate consonant of the root, i.e. C_2 , may be single (3e–g) or geminated (3a–d). Gemination in Gumer is not governed by verb types, but a lexical property, as C_2 in verbs of all types (A, B and C) can be single or geminated, as shown in (4) and (5) for Type B and C, respectively. In negation, moreover, geminated C_2 is retained, as shown in (2), in contrast to other Gurage varieties, in which it becomes a singleton consonant.

Leslau (1976) observes that the medial consonant of certain trilateral verbs is geminated in certain Gurage varieties if the last consonant is the trill *r*, but singleton otherwise. Rose (2006) attributes the gemination of C_2 in Endegegn, another Gurage variety, to the phonological duration of the final consonant. According to her, if the root-final consonant has a short duration, C_2 is geminated, if the root-final consonant has a long duration, as in voiceless fricatives or ejectives, C_2 is not geminated (Rose 2006:849). This analysis works for most – but not for all – verbs in Gumer, as shown in the comparison of the affirmative perfective verb forms for Gumer, Chaha and Ezha (all Central West Gurage varieties) in (4):

(4)	GUMER	CHAHA	EZHA	GLOSS
a.	<i>mesäh-</i>	<i>mesäh-</i>	<i>messäh-</i>	‘chew’
b.	<i>met’äs-</i>	<i>met’äs-</i>	<i>mett’äs-</i>	‘break off’
c.	<i>täkäs-</i>	<i>täkäs-</i>	<i>täkkäs-</i>	‘fire on’
d.	<i>säppär-</i>	<i>säpär-</i>	<i>säbbär-</i>	‘break’
e.	<i>bannär-</i>	<i>banär-</i>	<i>bannär-</i>	‘demolish’
f.	<i>bättär-</i>	<i>bätär-</i>	<i>bäddär-</i>	‘advance’
g.	<i>näggäd-</i>	<i>näggäd-</i>	<i>näggäd-</i>	‘touch’
h.	<i>näggäd-</i>	<i>näggäd-</i>	<i>näggäd-</i>	‘trade’

While C_2 in the Ezha verbs in (4) is regularly geminated, its duration varies in the corresponding Gumer and Chaha forms. As shown in (4a–c), the respective C_2 is not geminated in Chaha and Gumer, if the root-final consonant is a (phonologically long) fricative. In (4d–f), however, C_2 is not geminated in Chaha, but in Gumer, although the verbs end with the (phonologically long) sonorant *r*. Finally, although the two verbs in (4g–h) end in the (phonologically short) plosive *d*, the preceding C_2 is not geminated in (4g), but in (4h). These examples demonstrate that the phonological duration of the root-final consonant may affect the gemination of C_2 , but the proposed phonological process does not ac-

count for all verbs in Gumer (as well as in the other Gurage varieties). Therefore, I consider the gemination of C_2 as a lexical property of each verb.

The perfective template is $C_1V(C)C_2\ddot{a}C_3$ for all verb types, with the vowel \ddot{a} between C_2 and C_3 as perfective marker. This vowel further spreads to the initial (unspecified) V slot between C_1 and C_2 of Type A verbs, which is blocked in the other verb types, as they have a specific thematic vowel in this position. For Type B verbs, the thematic vowel is e :

(5) **PERFECTIVE CONJUGATION OF TRILITERAL TYPE B VERBS**

PATTERN GLOSS

- a. *bettär-* ‘separate’
- b. *mett’är-* ‘select’
- c. *bessär-* ‘distinguish’
- d. *mezzär-* ‘count’
- e. *mesäg-* ‘bless (with promise to offer something)’
- f. *mesäh-* ‘chew’

Triliteral Type B verbs, thus, have the perfective template $C_1e(C)C_2\ddot{a}C_3$, in which the spread of the perfective marker \ddot{a} is blocked because the initial V slot is taken by the thematic vowel e . In fact, *bässär-* (Type A) ‘be cooked, be ripe’ and *bessär-* (Type B) ‘distinguish’ are two different conjugation patterns of the perfective aspect from a root with identical root consonants, which only differ in their stem initial vowels.

Previous studies show that in addition to the gemination of C_2 (in geminating languages like Amharic or Ezha) Type B verbs are also characterized by palatalization of the root-initial consonant C_1 , or by a front vowel following C_1 (cf. Rose 1994:119). As for Gumer, I only consider the thematic vowel e the distinctive feature of Type B verbs, which might also trigger palatalization of the root-initial or -medial consonants.

Type C verbs are characterized by the thematic vowel a placed between C_1 and C_2 :

(6) **PERFECTIVE CONJUGATION FOR TRI-RADICAL TYPE C VERBS**

PATTERN GLOSS

- a. *sappär-* ‘splice tilled soil into pieces’
- b. *bannär-* ‘demolish’
- c. *k’att’är-* ‘tie’
- d. *m^wanäh-* ‘confiscate’
- e. *m^wak’ät’-* ‘spoil’

As shown in (6), Type C verbs have the conjugation pattern $C_1a(C)C_2äC_3$ in the perfective aspect.

To summarize, in addition to a specific suffix set as subject index, the conjugation template of the perfective aspect is characterized by the vowel *ä* between C_2 and C_3 , while the initial vowel between C_1 and C_2 depends on the verb type. Gemination in Gumer verbs is not predicted by verb types, but a lexical property of a verb. In affirmative main clauses, a verb in the perfective conjugation is obligatorily followed by the past marker *-m*.

3.2 Imperfective conjugation

The imperfective aspect, which expresses an incomplete action or event, is also marked by specific conjugational templates in combination with an obligatory subject index. As shown in (7), the imperfective template has the vowel *i* between C_2 and C_3 . The respective thematic vowels of Type B and C verbs precede C_2 , whereas Type A verbs use the vowel *ä* in this function:

(7) VERB TYPE	IMPERFECTIVE (3SM)	GLOSS
A	<i>jä-säbir</i>	‘break’
B	<i>jä-bettir</i>	‘separate’
C	<i>jä-banir</i>	‘demolish’

It is worth mentioning that the subject indexes are exclusively suffixed to a verb in the perfective conjugation, but consist of prefix and suffixes in the imperfective conjugation. Thus, the imperfective conjugation template is $C_1V(C)C_2iC_3$.

4 Tense on verbs

4.1 Perfective in the past tense

The inflectional past tense marker is the suffix *-m*, which co-occurs with a verb in the perfective aspect in affirmative main clauses, but is omitted on negated verbs, as in the following example of a Type B verb (or in (1a) vs. (2) for a Type A verb):

(8) a. AFFIRMATIVE	b. NEGATIVE
<i>bettär-ä-m</i>	<i>an-bettär-ä</i> [<i>ambettärä</i>]
separate\PFV-3SM-PST	NEG-separate\PFV-3SM
‘he separated’	‘he did not separate’

In negation, the past marker is probably lacking because the action has not been fulfilled. In subordinate clauses, the past marker *-m* does not occur. If a suffix *-m* is attached to negated or subordinated verbs, it marks focus or functions as converb marker, but does not indicate tense:

- (9) *bāna-m* *an-bāna-m* *ji-kās-te*
 eat\PFV.3SM-FOC NEG-eat\PFV.3SM-FOC 3SM-pay\IPFV-FUT
 ‘Whether he ate or not, he will pay’

Thus, there are at least two different homophonous morphemes *-m* in Gumer.

Past tense can also be expressed through the auxiliary verb *banä* ‘there was/existed’ discussed in §4.3. The verb *banä* can be used as existential past-tense copula or as an auxiliary with a main verb. In the former case, the past marker *-m* is not used, but in the latter case *-m* is attached to the main verb, but not to the auxiliary.

4.2 Imperfective in present and future tenses

There is no difference between the imperfective and the present tense in the examples (10) and (11). Thus, present tense is not marked by a separate morpheme but is integral part of the imperfective conjugation.

- (10) a. *mir* *ji-mäsir* b. *zägwara* *ji-mäsir*
 what 3SM-look\IPFV leopard 3SM-look\IPFV
 ‘What does it looks like?’ ‘It looks like a leopard’

- (11) *kābädä* *ädja* *ji-bära*
 Kebede lunch 3SM-eat\IPFV
 ‘Kebede eats/is eating lunch’

What is more, the same form can express the semantics of present and present continuous tense, as in (11). In other words, present tense and present continuous tense are conceptualized in the same way.

Gumer has two constructions referring to a future situation. In one construction, future tense is expressed by the suffix *-te* attached to an imperfective verb, as in most West Gurage languages (cf. Meyer 2014:241; Rose 2007:414). The denoted situation is usually considered to take place with certainty:

- (12) a. *säbmäka nägä ji-fän-te*
 Sebmeka tomorrow 3SM-come\IPFV-FUT
 ‘Sebmeka will come tomorrow’
- b. *jä-k^wa samt fäwa ar-te*
 GEN-today week Addis_Ababa 1S.go\IPFV-FUT
 ‘I will go to Addis Ababa next week’

Less certain future situations are expressed through a construction, in which a verb in the jussive conjugation (with the subject index of imperfective verbs) is combined with the suffix *-fä*, as in (13):

- (13) a. *säbmäka nägä ji-tän-fä*
 Sebmeka tomorrow 3SM-come\JUSS-PROP
 ‘Sebmeka shall come tomorrow’
- b. *jä-k^wa samt fäwa ä-wär-fä*
 GEN-today week Addis_Ababa 1S-go\JUSS-PROP
 ‘I may go to Addis Ababa next week’

The two future constructions can also be formed from an auxiliary, or from verbs in subordinate clauses. Furthermore, they can be combined with each other in complex constructions:

- (14) a. *tenna gäbja t-ar-te ji-hir-fä*
 Tenna market 3SM-go\IPFV-FUT 3SM-be\JUSS-PROP
 ‘Might Tenna go to (the) market?’
- b. *zäbärga nägä ji-tän-fä ji-hir-fä*
 Zeberga tomorrow 3SM-come\JUSS-PROP 3SM-be\JUSS-PROP
 ‘Might it be that Zeberga comes tomorrow?’
- c. *teni tirama fänä-m ji-hir-fä*
 Teni yesterday come\PFV.3SM-PST 3SM-be\JUSS-PROP
 ‘Might Teni have come yesterday?’
- d. *teni tirama fänä-m-ba ji-hir-fä*
 Teni yesterday come\PFV.3SM-CVB-AUX.PST 3SM-be\JUSS-PROP
 ‘Might Teni had come yesterday?’

Note that the verb *här-* ‘be’ is used as auxiliary in (14). It can, however, also function as a main verb:

- (15) a. *sāb här-ä-m* b. *sāb ji-hir-fä*
 man be\PFV-3SM-PST man 3SM-be\JUUS-PROP
 ‘He became human ‘He should become human
 (i.e. He became rich)’ (i.e. He should succeed in life/become rich)’

In the Gurage culture, one who is very poor is considered less human than one who is rich.

The examples in (14), do not express certainty in the future, but a kind of probability. This becomes obvious in (14c–d), which refer to a past event, while (14a–b) denote a possible future event. Thus, it seems that *-te* invariably marks future tense, but *-fä* uncertainty in the future or past.

4.3 Auxiliary verbs *närä* and *banä*

There are two verbs in Gumer with an existential meaning that only inflect in the perfective, but not in any other conjugation, and whose occurrence is limited to affirmative main clauses. These irregular verbs are *närä* ‘exist’ and *banä* ‘(there) was’, which are biliteral roots of Type A or C, respectively. Despite its perfective conjugation, *närä* exclusively has present time reference, whereas *banä* solely denotes past situations. The two verbs commonly occur in existential copula clauses:

- (16) a. *sāb när-ä*
 man AUX.exist.PRS-3SM
 ‘There are people (lit. man).’
 b. *sāb banä*
 man AUX.PST.3SM
 ‘There were people (lit. man).’

The auxiliary *banä* is also used as a past marker in the past perfect construction with a perfective co-verb (17a), or in the past continuous/habitual with an imperfective converb (17b):

- (17) a. *mis-hut* *ʃänä-m* *banä*
 man-DEF.SM come\PFV.3SM-CVB AUX.PST
 i. ‘The man had come (i.e. he was here before, but left then).’
 ii. ‘The man would have come.’
- b. *ji-ʃʃot* *banä*
 3SM-till\IPFV AUX.PST
 ‘He was tilling.’

In (17a), the morpheme *-m* does not mark past, but functions as converb marker (Hetzron 1977:81), whereas past is marked through the auxiliary *banä*. Past perfect constructions are sometimes used to express irreal situations in the past (18a), or in the present (18b):

- (18) a. *sin säppär-hä-m* *banä*
 cup break\PFV-2SM-CVB AUX.PST
 ‘You were about to break a cup’
- b. *äh^wa dar säna-hä-m* *banä*
 now until arrive\PFV-2SM-CVB AUX.PST
 ‘By now, you would have arrived’

Thus, the past perfect can convey two alternative meanings. It can refer to an anterior situation that is no longer existent at the moment of speaking, or to an irreal imagined situation in the past or future.

The intention to do an action is expressed by a verb inflected in the imperfective conjugation followed by the intentional suffix *-e* (20a) – with the allomorph *-j* after vowels (20b). If such an intention refers to a past situation, the past auxiliary *banä* is juxtaposed:

- (19) a. *ji-ʃʃot-e* *banä*
 3SM-till\IPFV-INT AUX.PST
 ‘He had intended to till’
- b. *ji-bära-j* *banä*
 3SM-eat\IPFV-INT AUX.PST
 ‘He had intended to eat’

5 Time reference on demonstratives and adverbs

There are two demonstratives in Gumer, viz. proximal *zi* ‘this’ and distal *za* ‘that’. These demonstratives are basically invariable, i.e. they inflect neither for gender nor for number, thus *za gāräd* ‘that girl’ or *za gired* ‘those girls’. That means the demonstratives are interpreted as singular or plural, or masculine or feminine in accordance with their head noun or referent. In discourse, the demonstratives are also used to indicate a specific time reference, i.e. *za* refers to the past, but *zi* to the present or future:

- (20) a. *za kārä täfgakär-ä-m*
 DST day change\PFV-3SM-PST
 ‘That day has passed’
- b. *za jä-mkat zäbär alläf-ä-m*
 DST GEN-problem year pass\PFV-3SM-PST
 ‘That problem years have gone’
- (21) a. *zi gızjä mämır jı-rot*
 PRX time how 3SM-run\IPFV
 ‘How (this) time runs!’
- b. *zi zäbär jä-ker jä-hir*
 PRX year GEN-peace 3SM-be\JUUS
 ‘Let this year be peace’

The basic time adverbs in Gumer are *äk^wa* ‘today’, *nägä* ‘tomorrow’, *trama* ‘yesterday’. The question word ‘when’, and a number of time adverbs, which denote a specific time period, are obligatorily marked by a specific suffix for past or future reference in Gumer, as shown in (22):

(22)	BASE	PAST	VS.	FUTURE
a.	<i>mätf-</i> ‘when’	<i>mätf-ra</i> ‘when (PST)’		<i>mätf-ä</i> ‘when (FUT)’
b.	<i>säst-</i> ‘3 days including the day of speaking’	<i>sästi-ra</i> ‘two days ago’		<i>säst -ä</i> ‘after three days from today’
c.	<i>näbät-</i> ‘4 days including the day of speaking’	<i>näbät-rä</i> ‘three days ago’		<i>näbat-ä</i> ‘after four days from today’

d.	<i>amist-</i> '5 days including the day of speaking'	<i>amisti-ra</i> 'four days ago'	<i>amist-ä</i> 'after five days from today'
e.	<i>sidist-</i> '6 days including the day of speaking'	<i>sidisti-ra</i> 'five days ago'	<i>sidist-ä</i> 'after six days from today'
f.	<i>samt</i> 'a week'	<i>samti-ra</i> 'last week'	<i>samt-ä</i> 'next week'

The temporal deictic center for the adverbs in (22) is the day of speaking. Time adverbs referring to a period preceding it are marked by the suffix *-ra*, but following it by *-ä*. The base of these adverbs is identical; they only differ in the suffixes denoting past or future reference. The adverb base *säst-* 'three days' in (22b), for instance, is derived from the numeral *sost* 'three'. When the future suffix *-ä* is attached to *säst-*, it denotes a period of three days from now (including the day of speaking), but with the suffix *-ra* it shows the same period preceding the moment of speech. Note that the past suffix *-ra* changes into *-ira* when the base of a word ends in consonant clusters, as in (22d).

The morphemes *-ra* and *-ä* are also part of time adverbs denoting a period of one year, namely *em-ra* 'last year' and *mähär-ä* 'next year'. In this case the bases differ, but the affixes retain the pattern. The final vowels of the adverbs *äk^wa* 'today' and *trama* 'yesterday' belong to the base, i.e. these adverbs are not morphologically marked for a specific time. In *näg-ä* 'tomorrow', however, the final vowel *-ä* represents the future suffix.

A few time adverbs denoting a period in years have the past suffix *-äja* instead of *-ra*, which is probably an instance of sonorant alternation. The future form of these adverbs, however, regularly ends in the suffix *-ä*:

(23)	BASE	PAST	FUTURE
a.	<i>sars-</i> 'three years including the current year'	<i>sars-äja</i> 'two years ago'	<i>sars-ä</i> 'in two years'
b.	<i>nab-</i> 'four years including the current year'	<i>nab-äja</i> 'three years ago'	<i>nab-ä</i> 'in three years'

It seems that four is the highest possible lexical category for years. For time reference greater than four years, Gumer uses the regular cardinal numbers as modifier to the noun *zäbär* ‘year’, as in (24):

- (24) a. *t-amis t zäbär ank^ʃe* b. *t-amist zäbär jifte*
 ABL-five year after ABL-five year before
 ‘after five years’ ‘five years ago’

The time adverbs in (22) and (23) are formed from a nominal or adjectival base before the time suffixes are attached to them. Thus, these adverbs are both derivational and inflectional. They are derivational since they are derived from a nominal. As they are marked for either past or future reference, they are also inflectional. This double role is a theoretical problem for the categorization of inflectional and derivational morphemes.

6 Proper names and time reference

In Gumer, human proper names are often formed from verbs or clauses. They express certain circumstances, expectations, wishes, etc. in relation to the birth of a child (cf. Fekede 2014). As verbs may refer to a specific time, these proper names are also marked for time, as shown in the following examples:

- (25) a. *säbmäka* = *säb mäka*
 man be_in_need\PFV.3SM
 ‘he ran short of a human being/is lonely’
 b. *fäk’ädä* = *fäk’äd-ä*
 permit\PFV-3SM
 ‘he permitted’
 c. *k^wärgazä* = *k^wär gaz-ä*
 saddle shake\PFV-3SM
 ‘power has gone (metaphorical)’
 d. *tamäfe* = *tamäf-e*
 be_sweet\PFV.3SF-1S
 ‘she was sweet for me’

In (24c), ‘power has gone’ is metaphorical. Similar to *chair*, which metaphorically represents power in English, *k^wär* ‘saddle’ in Gumer symbolizes power as

Some human names are formed from jussive verbs. Such names denote wishes in relation to the name bearer for the future:

- b. *järm^wädʒja* = *jä-rm^wädʒ-ja*
 3-like\JUSS.IP-3SF
 ‘Let her be liked’

$$-ni:$$

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| b. <i>sirani</i> | = | <i>sira-ni</i>
reach\IMP.2SM-BEN.1S
'reach for me' |
| c. <i>bizani</i> | = | <i>biza-ni</i>
be_plenty\IMP.2SM-BEN.1S
'be plenty for me' |
| d. <i>nimani</i> | = | <i>nima-ni</i>
grow\IMP.2SM-BEN.1S
'grow for me' |
| e. <i>teni</i> | = | <i>taj-ni</i>
leave\IMP.2SF-BEN.1S
'leave (do not kill) for me' |
| f. <i>kersima</i> | = | <i>ker sima</i>
peace hear\IMP.2SM
'listen to peace' |

g. *kornisa* = *k^wär nisa*
 saddle pick\IMP.2SM
 ‘take power/responsibility’

There are also human names denoted by a negated verb, or a clause consisting of a negated verb:

- (28) a. *anfäbi* = *an-fä-bi*
 NEG-leave\PFV.3SM-MIL.1S
 ‘(God) did not leave me’
- b. *ank’afjä* = *an-k’af-jä*
 NEG-drop\PFV.3SM-1S
 ‘It did not drop on me’/ ‘It never let me down’
- c. *murefi* = *mura e-f-i*
 full NEG.3-leave\IPFV.IP-3SM
 ‘(what is) full will not be left’
- d. *m^wanefi* = *m^wan e-f-i*
 who NEG.3-leave\IPFV.IP-3SM
 ‘who will not leave (i.e. everyone dies)’
- e. *nimefi* = *nim e-f-i*
 pride NEG.3-leave\IPFV.IP-3SM
 ‘pride will not be left out’
- f. *atsebi* = *at-saj-bi*
 NEG.2SF-search\IMP.2SF-MIL.1S
 ‘do not seek against me’

7 Conclusion

Time in Gumer is not only expressed by verbs but also on demonstratives, adverbs, and proper names. Verbs inflect for the perfective and imperfective aspect through non-linear morphology, combining a lexical root with inflectional templates. Tense co-occurs with aspect. Past tense is marked with the suffix *-m* on perfective verbs in affirmative main clauses. The future tense is expressed by the suffix *-te* attached to verbs in the imperfective aspect. Probability of an event (in future, past or present contexts) is marked by the suffix *-fä* attached to a verb in the jussive conjugation.

Certain time adverbs denoting a specific period of time are marked for past and present reference. Past reference is indicated by the suffixes *-ra* or *-ija*, but future by the suffix *-ä*. Demonstratives are also associated with time: *za* ‘that’ is used for referring to the past, but *zi* ‘this’ to the present or future. As human names can be formed from verbs, they are also marked for a specific time.

The Gumer data show that marking of time with inflectional affixes is not only a feature of verbs, but also of non-verbal elements, particularly time adverbs, demonstratives, and proper names. Another important finding is that the same morpheme, such as the past markers *-ra* or *-ija*, and the future marker *-ä* on adverbs, are used for both, inflection and derivation, to mark past and future reference and to derive adverbs from nominals. Thus, the boundary between inflection and derivation becomes fuzzy. The fact that verbs in Gumer can be used as proper nouns (which are subsequently inflected for time) is a theoretical problem for classifying words into lexical classes.

Finally, the role of the suffix *-m* in Gumer and other Gurage varieties needs further research, as it has multiple functions, i.e. it marks past, focus, and converbs.

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Abbreviations

123	First, second, third person	JUSS	Jussive
AUX	Auxiliary	MIL	Malefactive, instrumental,
CVB	Converb		locative
DEF	Definite	NEG	Negation
DST	Distal	PFV	Perfective
FOC	Focus	PROP	Probability
FUT	Future	PRS	Present
GEN	Genitive	PRX	Proximal
IMP	Imperative	PST	Past
INT	Intentional	S	Singular
IP	Impersonal	SF	Singular-feminine
IPFV	Imperfective	SM	Singular-masculine

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Interaction of Time and Epistemic Modality in Amharic

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1 Introduction

This paper presents the Amharic modal epistemic expressions with **ይሆናል** *yəhonall* ‘may’ (i.e. *yə-hon=all* 3SM-be\IPFV=AUX.NPST ‘lit. it/he will be’) in interaction with the categories of tense and aspect. The semantic category of epistemic modality is understood as the sender’s assessment of her/his knowledge about the truth of the proposition. This includes, but is not limited to, the sender’s degree of certainty about the truth of the proposition. It implies that any utterance containing an epistemic modal expression involves two points in time. These are: (i) the moment of the sender’s epistemic assessment, and (ii) the location in time of the state of affairs, which is expressed in the content of the proposition. Consider the following example:

- (1) **ወሎ አድሮ በፈጸሙት ጥፋት ይጸጸቱ ይሆናል** ^[TS 4]
[wəlo_adro bā-fäṣṣām-u-t təfat yə-ṣṣäṣṣät-u]_P
sooner_or_later INST-commit\PFV-3PL-OBJ.3SM wrongdoing 3PL-regret\IPFV-3PL
[yəhonall]_{MEE}
EPST
‘Sooner or later they may feel sorry for any wrongdoing they have done’

The moment of the sender’s epistemic assessment is conveyed by the modal epistemic expression (MEE), **ይሆናል** *yəhonall* ‘may’. The state of affairs, expressed in the content of the proposition (P), is localized in the future by the adverbial expression **ወሎ አድሮ** *wəlo adro* ‘sooner or later (lit. having spent the day and the night)’ while the imperfective form of the verb **ይጸጸቱ** *yəṣṣäṣṣätu* ‘they feel sorry’ indicates the Imperfective aspect.¹

In addition to the imperfective, *yəhonall* can be preceded by the gerund (which is also referred to as converb) and the progressive. Thus far grammars

1 IMPERFECTIVE and PROGRESSIVE written with an initial upper case letter refer to the grammatical category of aspect whereas IMPERFECTIVE and PROGRESSIVE with an initial lower case letter refer to the form.

of Amharic have dealt with the location in time of the imperfective and the gerund forms. Followed by *yəhonall* the two items are considered to convey the same modal epistemic meaning and to occur in similar syntactic structures; their difference lies essentially in indicating distinct meanings within the category of time. Thus, the imperfective is said to refer to the non-past (Goldenberg 1966:248; Leslau 1995:326) or only to the future (Hartmann 1980:193) while the gerund is considered to be the marker of the past (Hartmann 1980:201; Leslau 1995:380). Cohen (1970 [1936]:378) interprets the imperfective as “in-accomplī” (aspect?) and the gerund as “accompli-résultatīf”. Guss-Kosicka (2014) does not ascribe any temporal characteristics to the gerund+*yəhonall*. The progressive followed by *yəhonall* has not yet been registered in descriptions of Amharic grammar. Goldenberg (1966:174; 2013:220) only notes that he has not come across this form in his research.

I will begin by presenting the modal epistemic expressions in §2. I will show that there are actually two, often confused, distinct linguistic constructions composed of the gerund+*yəhonall*, which convey different meanings and which occur in different syntactic environments. After this preliminary survey, a prerequisite for understanding the temporal characteristics of the expressions in question, I will discuss the location in time of the sender’s epistemic assessment in §3. Much of the analysis will be devoted to the sender’s epistemic assessment in a narration in which the point of reference may differ from the moment of speaking. In the subsequent §4, which deals with the temporal location of the state of affairs, I will show that the imperfective, the gerund and the progressive convey various aspectual meanings, which are interpreted as conveying relative tense. The analysis will be conducted starting from the lexical aspect of the verbs, which impinges on the grammatical aspect and, consequently, on the temporal interpretation. The last section, §5, contains the conclusion.

The analysis will be illustrated with examples drawn from both spoken and written Amharic. The sources encompass radio programs, contemporary literature, newspapers and online articles.²

2 Modal epistemic expressions

The modal epistemic expressions whose temporal characteristics will be discussed are as follows (illustrated with the verb *näggärä* ‘tell’):³

2 Each example is provided with an abbreviated code indicating its source; these abbreviations are listed and expanded at the end of the article. Examples from novels are furnished with information about page and line number.

- (i) IMPERFECTIVE+
- yəhonall*

ይነግር_S ይሆናል *yənägər_S yəhonall* ‘he may tell’

- (ii) PROGRESSIVE+
- yəhonall*

እየነገረ_S ይሆናል *əyyänäggärä_S yəhonall* ‘he may be telling’

- (iii) GERUND+
- yəhonall*

ነግሮ_S ይሆናል *nägro_S yəhonall* ‘he might have told’

- (iv) GERUND+
- yəhonall*
- in a (reduced) cleft sentence

ነግሮ_S ይሆናል_{COP} nägro_S yəhonall_{COP} ‘it may be_{COP} (that) he told’

The common component of the four expressions is *yəhonall*, which does not inflect and whose form is frozen. In the expressions (i)–(iii) *yəhonall* functions as an auxiliary, whereas in (iv) it serves as a copula. I will now describe the meaning of the expressions and their relation to their counterparts in the indicative mood.

The imperfective+*yəhonall* refers to a pure conjecture on the part of the speaker. Here the form *yəhonall* is an auxiliary which is in complementary opposition to the temporal auxiliary **አለ** *allä* (referring to the non-past tense).⁴ In sentence (2) the speaker expresses uncertainty as to whether the given state of affairs will take place:

- (2)
- እንግዲህ ሌሎችም በዚህ ታችና በራጉኤል በኩል ይመጡ ይሆናል**
- [MAH 338: 10-11]

əngədih leločč-u-mm bā-zzih tačč-ənnā bā-ragu’el
 well other.PL-DEF-FOC LOC-PRX.SM down-and LOC-Ragu’el

bäkkul yə-mäṭu yəhonall
 on_the_side 3PL-come\IPFV.3PL EPST

‘Well, the others may come from down here and from the side of the Ragu’el [church]’

If the speaker knows that the state of affairs will take place, s/he would say:

- (3)
- እንግዲህ ሌሎችም በዚህ ታችና በራጉኤል በኩል ይመጣሉ**

əngədih leločč-u-mm bā-zzih tačč-ənnā bā-ragu’el
 well other.PL-DEF-FOC LOC-PRX.SM down-and LOC-Ragu’el

3 The subscript letter S (for S[subject]) indicates that the verbal form agrees with the subject of the sentence.

4 Whether it also is in complementary opposition with **ነበር** *näbbär* (with reference to the past tense) will be dealt with in §4.

bäkkul yə-mäṭallu

on_the_side 3PL-come\IPFV.AUX.NPST.3PL

‘Well, the others will come from down here and from the side of the Ragu’el [church]’

Both of these sentences, with the epistemic auxiliary *yəhonall* in (2) and the non-past auxiliary *allā* in (3), are semantically fully acceptable and indeed almost equivalent. Sentence (3) is at variance with (2) only with respect to the category of epistemic modality.

The expression comprised of the progressive+*yəhonall*⁵ is in complementary opposition to the assertive copula *ነው nāw* (referring to the present tense) and *ነበር näbbär* (referring to the past tense).

- (4) [ጩረቃ] የሰዓሊ ስሜትክን እየማረከችው ይሆናል_[KB 29: 6]

[čäräqa] yä-sä’ali səmet-k-ən əyyä-marräk-äčč-əw

[moon] GEN-painter feeling-POSS.2SM-ACC PRG-attract\PFV-3SF-OBJ.3SM

yəhonall

EPST

‘[The moon] may be attracting your artistic sense’

If the speaker knows that this statement is true, s/he would say:

- (5) [ጩረቃ] የሰዓሊ ስሜትክን እየማረከችው ነው

[čäräqa] yä-sä’ali səmet-k-ən əyyä-marräk-äčč-əw

[moon] GEN-painter feeling-POSS.2SM-ACC PRG-attract\PFV-3SF-OBJ.3SM

nāw

COP.PRS.3SM

‘[The moon] is attracting your artistic sense’

The epistemic meaning of the expression in (4) differs from that in (2) in that the speaker makes her/his hypothesis with reference to another state of affairs provided explicitly in the (preceding) sentence or implicitly by the context. Sentence (4) is a speaker’s careful reaction to another speaker’s reflections about the beauty of the moon:

5 It would be worth examining whether the progressive+*yəhonall* should not be analysed as a (reduced) cleft sentence, similarly to the gerund+*yəhonall* (see further on). However, at this moment there are too few examples in my corpus to argue in this direction.

(6) የጨረቃ ውበት አይገርምህም፤ ድምቀት ከቅዝቃዜ ጋር [...]_[KB 29: 3]

yä-čäräqawəbät a-y-gärm-əh-əmm; dämqät

GEN-moon beauty NEG-3SM-be_amazing\IPFV-OBJ.2SM-NEG brightness

kä-qəzəqqaze gar

with-coldness with

‘Doesn’t the beauty of the moon amaze you; brightness together with coldness...[...]

The last expression, the gerund+*yəhonall*, may occur in two different meanings and in various syntactic environments. It can occur as an expression parallel to the imperfective+*yəhonall* indicating a pure guess on the part of the speaker. But predominantly it is found in a cleft or reduced cleft sentence.

In order to make the ensuing presentation comprehensible, it is necessary here to digress to present a concise discussion of clefts and their terminology. A simple cleft, exemplified in (slightly Amharicized) English by [(*The one*) *who told me the news*] *is John*, is an equational sentence. Two nominal entities, a headless relative clause and a simple noun, are equated; the relative clause presents the theme (old information), while the noun presents the rheme (new information). I will refer to the theme nominal [(*the one*) *who told me the news*] as the subject of the cleft, while the rheme [*John*] is the predicate. In a cleft, as a matter of definition, the subject is necessarily a headless relative clause.

The kind of cleft, which is involved in the gerund+*yəhonall*, is of a more complex type: the rheme is not a simple noun but is itself a nominalized clause. This type, which is much more common in Amharic than in English, can be exemplified by an (Amharicized) English translation based on a non-modalized version of example (11) below: (*The reason*) [*that your students didn’t come*] *is* [(*that*) *they thought you would not come*]. In standard English it is difficult to conceptualize and express the clausal subject of such a cleft *that your students didn’t come* as a headless relative clause; but in Amharic such an analysis is fully appropriate – as if one were to say (*the why*) *that* ... (=the reason *that*) analogously to (*the one*) *who* ... And the rheme, as noted, is itself a nominalized clause (*that*) *they thought you would not come*.

Finally, it can happen that the subject of such a cleft is omitted, a construction that can be called a REDUCED CLEFT.⁶ In the above example, this would yield *It is* [(*that*) *they thought you would not come*]. The omitted subject (head-

6 I have taken the term “reduced cleft sentence” from Mikkelsen (2006).

less relative) must be recoverable from context or from the preceding discourse. The reduced cleft itself presents only the rheme.

We return to our main discussion. In previous work the above two usages of the gerund+*yəhonall* have not been properly distinguished and simply treated as one expression parallel to the imperfective+*yəhonall* (Goldenberg 1966:209; Leslau 1995:380–381). Surprisingly, in my corpus there are as many as 30 examples where the gerund+*yəhonall* appears either in a cleft sentence or, most often, in a reduced cleft sentence. Only in six examples can the gerund+*yəhonall* be identified as an expression analogous to the imperfective+*yəhonall*. The following sentence illustrates the latter expression:

- (7) ኤሌክትሪክ ፖዎር ችግር አለበት። ኤሌክትሪክ ወደ ጎረቤት አገራት በማስተላለፍ የውጭ ምንዛሬ አገኛለሁ እያለ ለበርካታ ዓመታት እቅዱን ሲናገር ሰምታችሁ ይሆናል^[AA 848]

elṗa-mm tāmāsassay ċəggər allä-bb-ät.

ELPA-FOC similar problem exist\PFV.3SM-APL-OBJ.3SM

elektrik wädä goräbet agär-at bä-mastäläläf yä-wəččə

electricity to neighbor country-PL INST-transmit\VN GEN-foreign

mənəzzare ə-agäññ=allä-hu əyyä-al-ä lä-bärkata

currency 1SG-gain\IPFV=AUX.NPST-1SG PRG-say\PFV-3SM for-many

amät-at əqəd-u-n s-i-nnaggär sämtäččəhu yəhonall

year-PL plan-POSS.3SM-ACC when-3SM-talk\IPFV hear\GER.2PL EPST

‘ELPA⁷ has got a similar problem. You might have heard when it talked for years about its plan saying, “I will gain foreign currency by transmitting electricity to neighboring countries”’

In sentence (7), *yəhonall* can be replaced by the temporal auxiliary **አለ** *allä* (non-past, here expressing the perfect) rendering **ሰምታችኋል** *sämtäččəh^wall* ‘you (PL) have heard’, but it cannot be substituted by the copula **ነው** *näw*.

In contrast, in cleft and reduced cleft sentences (which are equational sentences), *yəhonall* stands in opposition to the assertive copula *näw* and not to the temporal auxiliaries *allä* or *näbbär*. Suppose the speaker is asked the following question:

⁷ Ethiopian Electric Light and Power Authority.

(8) ተግሪዎቹ ለምን አልመጡም?

tāmari-wočč-e lāmən al-mäṭṭu-mm?
 student-PL-POSS.1SG why NEG-come\PFV.3PL-NEG
 ‘Why didn’t my students come?’

Because the speaker is uncertain about the reason for the students’ absence s/he answers:

(9) አንቺ እንደማትመጡ አስበው ይሆናል

anči ändä-mm-a-t-mäčī assəbāw yəhonall
 2SF COMP-REL-NEG-2SF-come\IPFV.2SF think\GER.3PL EPST.COP.3SM
 ‘It may be (that) they thought you would not come’

However, if the speaker definitely knew that the students thought the teacher would not come, s/he would reply using the assertive copula *nāw*:

(10) አንቺ እንደማትመጡ አስበው ነው

anči ändä-mm-a-t-mäčī assəbāw nāw
 2SF COMP-REL-NEG-2SF-come\IPFV.SF think\GER.3PL COP.PRS.3SM
 ‘It is (that) they thought you would not come’

Substituting *yəhonall* in (9) by the temporal auxiliaries **አለ** *allä* (→ **አስበዋል** *assəbāwall* ‘they have thought’) or **ነበር** *näbbär* (→ **አስበው ነበር** *assəbāw näbbär* ‘they (had) thought’), or by the perfective **አሰቡ** *assäbu* ‘they thought’, even if in some cases semantically acceptable,⁸ conveys a different meaning: such a sentence expresses a new thought disconnected from the previous context. In our case, only (9) or (10) could be a felicitous answer for (8). The substitution test above demonstrates then that the gerund followed by *yəhonall* should be analyzed in a similar way to the gerund followed by the assertive copula *nāw*.⁹

What frequently takes place in cleft sentences with the gerund+*yəhonall* is the deletion of the clausal subject of the cleft – the “reduced cleft” referred to

8 In cleft sentences proper such a substitution results always in an ill-constructed sentence.

9 Goldenberg (1966:203–205) argues that the gerund followed by the assertive copula *nāw* constitutes a copular clause and not a construction in which *nāw* serves as a temporal auxiliary. See also Guss-Kosicka (2014:584–585). About the gerund functioning as the predicative complement in cleft sentences see Kapeliuk (1988:135–137).

above.¹⁰ It is perhaps for this reason that the gerund followed by *yəhonall* has not been identified as forming a copular sentence. In example (9) the subject of the cleft sentence is not mentioned, but it was contained in question (8). The same sentence with the reconstructed subject is as follows:¹¹

(11) ተማሪዎችሽ ያልመጡት አንቺ እንደማትመጧ አስበው ይሆናል

tāmari-wočč-əš yal-mäṭṭu-t anči

student-PL-POSS.2SF REL.NEG-come\PFV.3PL-DEF 2SF

əndä-mm-a-t-mäčči assəbäw yəhonall

COMP-REL-NEG-2SF-come\IPFV.SF think\GER.3PL EPST.COP.3SM

Lit. ‘That your students didn’t come may be (that) they thought you would not come’

Idiomatic: ‘If your students didn’t come it may be because they thought you would not come’ or ‘The reason why your students didn’t come may be that they thought you would not come’

In sentence (12) the subject is overt:

(12) የፕሮግራሙ ባለቤቶች ገንዘብ ወይም ስም እናገኝበታለን ብለው ይሆናል
ያቀዱት^[AA 836]

yä-program-u baläbet-očč gänzäb wäyəmm səm

GEN-program-DEF owner-PL money or name

ənn-agäññə-bb-ät=allä-n bäläw yəhonall

1PL-gain\IPFV-APL-OBJ.3SM=AUX.NPST-1PL say\GER.3PL EPST.COP.3SM

yä-aqqäd-u-t

REL-plan\PFV-3PL-DEF

Lit. ‘That the owners of the program planned it, it might be (that) they thought, “We will gain money and name through it”’

Idiomatic: ‘The owners of the program planned it because they might have thought, “We will gain money or fame through it”’ or ‘The reason why the owners of the program planned it might be that they thought, “We will gain money and fame through it”’

¹⁰ On deletion of subject in Amharic cleft sentences see Kapeliuk (1988:126–127).

¹¹ In the remainder of this section I will translate the example sentences twice, once giving a literal paraphrase that structurally mimics the Amharic cleft syntax, the other in more idiomatic English. I will use the same convention again in §2.

Most of the time, however, the clausal subject of the cleft is passed over and can only be reconstructed from the preceding sentences (or the context). Thus, the gerund+*yəhonall* appears in a reduced cleft sentence comprised solely of the clefted constituent that is being focused. The absent clausal subject, which is the theme of the statement, is retrievable from the context. As an illustration of this, consider sentences (13) and (14).

(13) የጫልቱ ቤት በር ተዘግቷል። ምናልባት የእኔ ነገር አበሳጭቶዋት ቶሎ መተኛት ፈልጋለሁ።

ይሆናል [GQ 377: 21-23]

yä-čaltu bet bārr tǝzǝgto^w=all. mənalbat yä-əne

GEN-Chaltu house door be_closed\GER.3SM=AUX.NPST.3SM perhaps GEN-1SG

nǝgār abbäsačto^w-at tolo mätǝññat fǝlləga yəhonall

thing annoy\GER.3SM-OBJ.3SF early sleep\VN want\GER.3SM EPST.COP.3SM

Lit. ‘The door to Chaltu’s house was closed. It may be (that) perhaps my behavior annoyed her and she wanted to go to bed early’

Idiomatic: ‘The door to Chaltu’s house was closed. Perhaps my behavior might have annoyed her and she might have wanted to go to bed early’

(14) የጫልቱ ቤት በር የተዘጋው ምናልባት የእኔ ነገር አበሳጭቶዋት ቶሎ መተኛት ፈልጋለሁ።

ይሆናል

yä-čaltu bet bārr yä-tǝzǝgga-w mənalbat yä-əne

GEN-Chaltu house door REL-be_closed\PFV.3SM-DEF perhaps GEN-1SG

nǝgār abbäsačto^w-at tolo mätǝññat fǝlləga yəhonall

thing annoy\GER.3SM-OBJ.3SF early sleep\VN want\GER.3SM EPST.COP.3SM

Lit. ‘That the door to Chaltu’s house was closed it may be (that) perhaps my behavior annoyed her and she wanted to go to bed early’

Idiomatic: ‘The door to Chaltu’s house was closed because perhaps my behavior might have annoyed her and she might have wanted to go to bed early’ or ‘If the door to Chaltu’s house was closed it may be because perhaps my behavior annoyed her and she wanted to go to bed early’

In (13) we have two separate sentences, with the verb ‘be closed’ expressed as a finite verb; the second sentence is a reduced cleft, with its absent subject reconstructable from the context provided by the first sentence. In (14) the two sentences are combined into a full (unreduced) cleft construction, with the verb ‘be closed’ now appearing as a relative verb form, the hallmark of a cleft.

As for the meaning of the gerund+*yəhonall* in these cleft and reduced cleft sentences, it is used here to indicate the relation of causality between two states

of affairs.¹² Namely, the gerund refers to a state of affairs that took place prior to another state of affairs¹³ and which is the cause of that other state of affairs, the latter being expressed either by a relative clause in a full cleft sentence (as in (14)) or by the context (as in (13)). The causal clause is clefted and hence receives focus (schematically: *It is (because) [CLAUSE]*). Now, this cleft construction can itself be modalized. If the speaker definitely knows that the relation holds, the assertive copula *nāw* is used; if the speaker does not definitely know whether the relation holds, s/he uses the non-assertive, modal copula *yəhonall*. That the cleft and reduced cleft sentences embody an implicit causal relation is supported by the fact that the gerund can be replaced by the explicit causal conjunction **ስለ** *sälä* ‘because’ followed by the perfective (or imperfective), rendering the same meaning:

(15) ተግሪዎችሽ ያልመጡት አንቺ እንደማትመጧ ስላሰቡ ይሆናል

tāmari-wočč-əš yal-mäṭṭu-t anči

student-PL-POSS.2SF REL.NEG-come\PFV.3PL-DEF 2SF

əndä-mm-a-t-mäčī

sälä-assüb-u

yəhonall

COMP-REL-NEG-2SF-come\IPFV.SF because-think\PFV-3PL EPST.COP.3SM

Lit. ‘That your students have not come it may be (that) they thought you would not come’

Idiomatic: ‘If your students have not come it may be because they thought you would not come’

The fundamental semantic difference between the gerund followed by the auxiliary *yəhonall* (illustrated by example (7)) and the gerund followed by the copula *yəhonall* in a cleft sentence is that in the former construction there is no

12 Actually, the cause and effect relation is just one of the possible relations that may obtain between the clauses. In the example (i) quoted by Kapeliuk (1988:127) the relation between the clauses concerns the manner in which the state of affairs came into being:

(i) እንዴት ነው ሳይለምን የወሰደው? – ስርቆ ነዋ

əndet nāw

s-a-y-lämmən

yä-wässäd-ä-w?–

särqo

how COP.PRS.3SM while-NEG-3SM-beg\IPFV REL-take\PFV-3SM-OBJ.3SM steal\GER.3SM

nāw-wa

COP.PRS.3SM-FOC

‘How is it that he took it without begging? – Evidently by stealing!’

The type of relation existing between the states of affairs is determined by the kind of wh-question that is being asked: either **እንዴት** *əndet* ‘how’ or **ለምን** *lämən* ‘why’.

13 A common role of the Amharic gerund in a clause is to indicate a state of affairs, which happens before another state of affairs (Leslau 1995:358).

causal relation implied between two states of affairs. The gerund form simply shows temporal anteriority with respect to the moment of epistemic assessment.

In connection with this, it is interesting to see a significant, even if predictable, semantic difference between making hypotheses about future and general truth states of affairs, and about present and past states of affairs. As we could note, a hypothesis is made about present and past states of affairs, which trigger an effect expressed by another state of affairs. That is why the cleft sentence, in which it is possible to separate out transparently the semantics of cause and effect, is a favored device for this purpose in Amharic. By contrast, a hypothesis about future and general truth states of affairs is a pure conjecture, drawing only on one's own experience and knowledge.

3 Moment of the sender's epistemic assessment

What I want to discuss in this section is that for an epistemically modalized proposition the basic temporal reference point, that is, the moment of the sender's epistemic assessment of the state of affairs, is NOW. Prototypically this now is a deictic now: it is the moment of speaking. Halliday (1970:336) emphasizes this feature, saying that epistemic modality is "outside the domain of tense". What he means is that epistemic modality as a category is indeed anchored in time – prototypically the moment of speaking – but *within* this category there is no time opposition.¹⁴ The neutralization of the category of time results from the fact that epistemic expressions function as meta-operators (Wajszczuk 2005:112): they are the speaker's current comment (uttered *here and now*) on the proposition. Sentence (16) illustrates an epistemic assessment at the moment of speaking:

(16) [ሻምበል] ነገስ ይመጡ ይሆን? – መቼም ከዚህ ቤት ጠፍተው አያውቁም፤ ይመጡ

ይሆናል [MAH 177: 9-11]

[šambāl] nāgä-ss yə-mät-u yəhon? mäčemm

[captain] tomorrow-TOP 3POL-come\IPFV-3POL EPST.Q never

kä-zzih bet täftäw a-y-awq-u-əmm;

from-PRX.SM house disappear\GER.3POL NEG-3POL-know\IPFV.3POL-NEG

yə-mätu yəhonall

3POL-come\IPFV.3POL EPST

'How about tomorrow? Might [the captain] come? – He has never disappeared from this house; he may come'

14 Cf. Holvoet (1989:20); Palmer (1986:60; 1990:10–11, 44–45).

The moment of sending (now), however, can be relativized – it does not have to be in the deictic present. This happens very commonly in narratives. Thus, in narratives (both fictional and non-fictional) the vantage point for an epistemically modalized proposition can be, and often is, localized in the past – a NARRATIVE NOW. In reported speech, epistemic modality can be expressed from a past or future point of reference as well as present. In the literature on epistemic modality these non-present reference points have not as yet been given sufficient attention. They are either mentioned in passing (as in Palmer 1990), relegated to a brief footnote (Holvoet 1989:20) or simply presented as example sentences (Coates 1983:155). A concise but to the point discussion on the temporal location of the epistemic judgment, mostly based on Palmer's (1990) account, is provided by Depraetere (2012:997–999).

Because a large number of example sentences in my corpus are culled from Amharic narratives, it was crucial for me to confront this issue directly. The classic of narratology, Gérard Genette (1980:215), observes “[...] it is almost impossible for me not to locate the story in time with respect to my narrating act, since I must necessarily tell the story in a present, past or future tense.” Further on, he introduces four types of narrating, depending on the temporal relationship between the narrator and her/his act of narration, on the one hand, and the events in the story world, on the other: prior narrating, simultaneous narrating, subsequent narrating, and a mixed type called interpolated narrating (Genette 1980:217). I will deal here only with subsequent narrating (i.e. narrating of events that are seen as already completed), which has always dominated in narrative (Genette 1980:220). The following (invented) passage, containing epistemically modalized propositions, illustrates this type of narrating:

*Inspector Ullendorff was very confused. He had just heard Leslau's theory about the murder and he didn't know what to think. It **might have** happened that way or it might not have happened that way. The murderer **might** try to attack once again or he might not try* (invented by Orin Gensler).

In both of the last two sentences the reference point for the assessment of epistemic modality (*it might have*, *he might*) is localized in the past; the main verb is itself in the past and the future respectively.

In English, a future-oriented modal sentence is encoded in a special way when presented from the perspective of a past moment of epistemic assessment: *may* becomes *might*. This is illustrated by the sentence *The murderer **might** try to attack once again or he **might** not try*, which contrasts with the following sentence in non-narrative context: *He **may** try to attack once again*.

On the other hand a past-oriented modal sentence in a past narrative context (past within the past) has no special coding: *It **might have happened** that way*

or it *might not have happened* that way. It contrasts, in non-narrative context, with the following sentence that Inspector Ullendorff might say: *I might have solved the murder at the very moment if only I had focused on the really important evidence*. Here the moment of the epistemic assessment is the present while the state of affairs is localized in the past, yet the form of the main verb remains identical in the two cases: *might have VERB-ed*.

Now let me turn to Amharic. In the novel by Bərhanu Zārihun *Ma'əbāl* ('The Wave') the detached narrator pushes forward the plotline in the past tense, while the protagonist's own consciousness (mental states) and depiction of background facts about the narrated world are localized in the present tense. This pattern is much more common in Amharic than in English. In the examples below (as I did earlier), I will translate the Amharic in two ways: first, following the tense usage of Amharic; second, following the tense usage of English.

- (17) ለሥጋቱ ብዙ ምክንያቶች ነበሩት። ሥራ የለውም። እንዴት ይኖራል? [...] ይኖርበት የነበረው ቤት ሌላ ሰው እንደተከራየው ጓደኞቹ አይተው ነግረውታል። [...] ጓደኞቹ ካላስጠጉት በስተቀር ሌላ መግቢያ የለውም። እርግጥ አፍ አውጥተው እምቢ አይሉት ይሆናል። ከልብ ፈቃደኞች ስለ መሆናቸው እርግጠኛ አይደለም [MBL 11: 7-21]

lā-səgat-u *bəzu* *məknyat-očč* *näbbär-u-t.* *səra*
for-anxiety-POSS.3SM many reason-PL AUX.PST-3PL-OBJ.3SM job

yällä-wə-mm. *əndet* *yə-nor=all?*

COP.NOT_EXIST.3SM-OBJ.3SM-NEG how 3SM-live\IPFV=AUX.NPST.3SM

yə-norə-bb-ät *yä-näbbär-ä-w* *bet* *lela* *säw*

3SM-live\IPFV-APL-OBJ.3SM REL-AUX.PST-3SM-DEF house other man

əndä-täkarayyā-w *g^waddännöčč-u* *aytāw*

COMP-rent\PFV.3SM-OBJ.3SM friend.PL-POSS.3SM see\GER.3PL

nägrāw-ət=all. *g^waddännöčč-u*

tell\GER.3PL-OBJ.3SM=AUX.NPST.3SM friend.PL-POSS.3SM

kal-asṭäggū-t *bästäqär* *lela* *mägbiya*

if.NEG-approach\PFV.3PL-OBJ.3SM unless other entrance

yällä-wə-mm. *ərgəṭ* *af* *awṭəṭāw*

COP.NOT_EXIST.3SM-OBJ.3SM-NEG of_course mouth bring_out\GER.3PL

əmbi *a-y-l-u-t* *yəhonall.* *kä-ləbb*

no NEG-3PL-say\IPFV-PL-OBJ.3SM EPST from-heart

fäqadännöčč *sälä* *māhon-aččāw* *ərgəṭännä* *aydällä-mm*

volunteer.PL about be\VN-POSS.3PL sure COP.NOT_BE.3SM-NEG

Lit. ‘He had lots of reasons for his concern. He doesn’t have work. How is he going to live? [...] His friends have seen that somebody else rented the house where he used to live and told him so [...]. Unless his friends take him in, he has no place to stay. Of course, they may not openly refuse him. He is not sure whether their offer will be sincere’

Idiomatic: ‘He had lots of reasons for his concern. He didn’t have work. How was he going to live? [...] His friends had seen that somebody else had rented the house where he used to live and had told him so [...] Unless his friends took him in, he would have no place to stay. Of course, they might not openly refuse him (they probably wouldn’t openly refuse him). He was not sure whether their offer would be sincere’

Now let us change the temporal structure of this Amharic narration so that it consistently recounts the protagonist’s stream of consciousness from a vantage point located in the past. This too, is a possible way to use tense in an Amharic narrative.

- (18) ለሥጋቱ ብዙ ምክንያቶች ነበሩት። ሥራ አልነበረውም። እንዴት ይኖራል? [...] ይኖርበት የነበረው ቤት ሌላ ሰው ተከራይቶ እንደነበር ጓደኞቹ አይተው ነግረውት ነበር። ጓደኞቹ ባያስጠጉት ኖሮ ሌላ መግቢያ አልነበረውም። እርግጥ አፍ አውጥተው እምቢ አይሉት ይሆናል። ከልብ ፈቃደኞች ስለ መሆናቸው እርግጠኛ አልነበርም

lä-səgat-u *bəzu* *məknyat-očč* *näbbär-u-t.* *səra*
for-anxiety-POSS.3SM many reason-PL AUX.PST-3PL-OBJ.3SM job
al-näbbär-ä-wə-mm. *əndet* *yə-nor=all?*
NEG-AUX.PST-3SM-OBJ.3SM-NEG how 3SM-live\IPFV=AUX.NPST.3SM
yə-norə-bb-ät *yä-näbbär-ä-w* *bet* *lela* *säw*
3SM-live\IPFV-APL-OBJ.3SM REL-AUX.PST-3SM-DEF house other man
tākārayto *əndä-näbbär* *g^waddäññočč-u* *aytäw*
rent\GER.3SM COMP-AUX.PST friend.PL-POSS.3SM see\GER.3PL
nägräw-ət *näbbär.* *g^waddäññočč-u*
tell\GER.3PL-OBJ.3SM AUX.PST friend.PL-POSS.3SM
b-a-y-asṭäggü-t *noro* *lela* *mägbiya*
if-NEG-3PL-approach\IPFV.3PL-OBJ.3SM IRR other entrance
al-näbbär-ä-wə-mm *ərgəṭ* *af* *awṭəṭäw*
NEG-AUX.PST-3SM-OBJ.3SM-NEG of_course mouth bring_out\GER.3PL
əmbi *a-y-l-u-t* *yəhonall* *kä-ləbb*
no NEG-3PL-say\IPFV-PL-OBJ.3SM EPST from-heart

fäqadāññočč səlā mähon-aččäw argəṭäñña al-näbbär-ä-mm
 volunteer.PL about be\VN-POSS.3PL sure NEG-AUX.PST-3SM-NEG

‘He had lots of reasons for his concern. He didn’t have work. How was he going to live? [...] His friends had seen that somebody else had rented the house where he used to live and had told him so [...] If his friends did not take him in, he would have no place to stay. Of course, they **might not openly refuse him (they probably wouldn’t openly refuse him)**. He was not sure whether their offer would be sincere’

We observe that here, with the moment of epistemic assessment shifted to the past, if we wish to retain the temporal location of the state of affairs እምቢ አይሉት *ambi aylut* ‘they will not refuse’ in the future there is no choice but to leave the verb form as it is. Turning it into the negative perfective¹⁵ (እምቢ አላሉት *ambi alalut* ‘they did not refuse’) would change the meaning: it would localize the situation of not refusing in the past.

If the narrator pushes the plotline forward in the past and the state of affairs is localized in the past (in respect to the time of narration) the form that the main verb takes is the gerund:

- (19) ወደ ጫልቱ ቤት በሩጫ ተመለስኩ። የጫልቱ ቤት በር ተዘግቷል። ምናልባት የእኔ ነገር አበላጭቶባት ቶሎ መተኛት ፈልጋለሁ።^[GQ 377: 21-23]
wädä çaltu bet bä-ruça tāmälläs-k^w yä-çaltu bet bärr
 to Chaltu house INST-running return\PFV-1SG GEN-Chaltu house door
täzägto^w=all. mənalbat yä-əne nägär
 be_closed\GER.3SM=AUX.NPST.3SM perhaps GEN-1SG thing
abbäsaçto^w-at tolo mätäññat fälləga yəhonall
 annoy\GER.3SM-OBJ.3SF early sleep\VN want\GER.3SF EPST.COP.3SM

‘I ran back to Chaltu’s house. The door to Chaltu’s house was closed. It may be my behavior annoyed her and she wanted to go to bed early’ (or ‘My behavior might have annoyed her and she might have wanted to go to bed early’)

From the analysis of the examples above we can see that, when the temporal reference point is localized in the past, Amharic has no way to unambigu-

¹⁵ We might expect a negative gerund here, but the gerund form cannot be negated in standard Amharic; the negative perfective is used instead.

ously refer to a present/future state of affairs expressed by a proposition modalized with *yəhonall* ‘may’.

From autobiographical texts we learn how the moment of epistemic assessment, irrespective of the temporal reference of the state of affairs, can also be located in the past just like the remainder of the text. The basic means for doing this is to put it into the frame of ... **ብሎ** *bəlo* (say\GER.3SM) ‘saying’ followed by a finite verb of speech, emotion or mental state. Now, this latter verb is responsible for the temporal determination of the moment of epistemic assessment, while the main verb of the modalized sentence is responsible for the temporal localization of the state of affairs. The examples below are drawn from Mängəstu Lämman’s autobiography *Dämamu Bə’əräñña (yägəll tarik)* (‘The handsome writer (autobiography)’) in which the writer is relatively consistent in depicting his childhood and youth in the past.

(20) የቁሱን መውጣት ስጦብቅ ጊዜው አለቅጥ ረዘመብኝ። እንዳልገለጥ፤

ያጎግረኝ ይሆናል ብዬ ፈራሁ [DB 154: 7-9]

yä-qes-u-n mawtat s-ə-ṭäbbəq gize-w aläqəṭ
 GEN-priest-DEF-ACC go_out\VN when-1SG-wait\IPFV time-DEF illimitable
räzzäm-ä-bb-əññ and-al-ə-ggällät
 be_long\PFV-3SM-APL-OBJ.1SG COMP-NEG-1SG-be_revealed\IPFV
y-anägaggər-äññ yəhonall bəyye fär-ra-h^w
 3SM-talk\IPFV-OBJ.1SG EPST say\GER.1SG be_afraid\PFV-1SG

Lit. ‘As I was waiting for the moment that the priest would leave, the time seemed to be endless. I didn’t want to reveal my presence because I was afraid, saying: “He may talk to me”’

Idiomatic: ‘As I was waiting for the moment that the priest would leave, the time seemed to be endless. I didn’t want to reveal my presence because I was afraid that he might talk to me’

The analysis above was meant to examine how the temporal localization of the moment of epistemic assessment may be reflected in modal epistemic expressions. The table below compares which modal forms are employed in English and Amharic with respect to two parameters: the moment of epistemic assessment and the temporal localization of the state of affairs.

Table 1 Comparison of English modal may vs. Amharic modal yəhonall

MOMENT OF EPISTEMIC ASSESSMENT	TEMPORAL LOCALIZATION OF THE STATE OF AFFAIRS		
		PRESENT	PAST
PRESENT	English	<i>may</i>	<i>might have</i>
	Amharic	<i>yənägər_s yəhonall</i>	<i>nägros yəhonall</i>
PAST	English	<i>might</i>	<i>might have</i>
	Amharic	<i>yənägər_s yəhonall</i>	<i>nägros yəhonall</i>

In English the modal verb can express tense, but this option does not exist in Amharic. In English when the modal verb changes its tense, the modal proposition changes its tense. In Amharic the choice of the tense form of the embedded proposition has nothing to do with the moment of epistemic assessment. It does not matter if the moment is deictic now or narrative. In English we do express this difference by conjugating the modal verb by tense. In Amharic we do not have this option; the language can convey temporality differences only by appealing to the context. Context will tell us whether the moment of epistemic assessment lies in the present or the past; this difference is not realized by any formal marking.

4 Location in time of the state of affairs

This section deals with the location in time of the state of affairs which is expressed by the content of the proposition. An epistemically modalized verb form is a complex predicate consisting of a dependent main verb and the independent form of the modal verb *yəhonall*, which occupies the slot of a temporal auxiliary and morphologically conveys the present tense. This is the moment of epistemic assessment, which belongs to the meta-level of the statement.

It might plausibly be assumed that the location of the state of affairs in time is encoded on the dependent form, that is, by the main verb. This is not as obvious as it might seem, however. There are three forms that the main verb can take: the imperfective, the gerund and the progressive. In the indicative mood, these verb forms do not express tense but convey the grammatical category of aspect: Imperfective, Perfective and Progressive, respectively. Temporal distinctions, instead, are conveyed by the temporal auxiliaries **አለ** *allä* (referring to the non-past) and **ነበር** *näbbär* (referring to the past). However, when we analyze an epistemically modalized sentence containing the imperfective or the gerund (deprived of any overt tense markers), we see that these forms do express temporal information: we can tell unambiguously that they refer to the

non-past and the past, respectively. Thus, sentence (21), whose main verb takes the imperfective, is interpreted as localized in the present.

- (21) **ምናልባት ይሄ ሰው እንቅልፍ ማጣቱን ይፈልግ ይሆናል**_[GQ 385: 25]
mənalbat yəhe säw ənqəlf maʔat-e-n yə-fülləg yəhonall
 perhaps PRX man sleep lose\VN-POSS.1SG-ACC 3SM-want\IPFV EPST
 ‘Perhaps this man may want me to lose sleep’

In contrast, sentence (22), with the gerundial complement conveying the Perfective aspect, is interpreted as localized in the past.

- (22) **ጥርሶቼን ሰው አውልቆልኝ አያውቅም። [...] አንድ ሁለቱን በኪሴ ይገድያቸው ነው የጠፉብኝ። ምናልባት ዶሮዎች ለቅመው በልተዋቸው ይሆናል**_[GQ 77: 16-32]
ʔərs-očč-e-n säw awləqo-ll-əññ a-y-awq-əmm.
 tooth-PL-POSS.1SG-ACC man pull_out\GER.3SM-APL-OBJ.1SG NEG-3SM-know\IPFV-NEG
and hulätt-u-n bā-kis-e yəžžə-yaččäw
 one two-DEF-ACC LOC-pocket-POSS.1SG hold\GER.1SG-OBJ.3PL
näw yä-ʔäffu-bb-əññ mənalbat doro-^wočč
 COP.NPST.3SM REL-disappear\PFV.3PL-APL-OBJ.1SG perhaps hen-PL
läqmāw bältäw-aččäw yəhonall
 peck\GER.3PL eat\GER.3PL-OBJ.3PL EPST
 ‘No one has ever pulled out my teeth. I lost one or two which I kept in my pocket. [...] Perhaps hens might have pecked and eaten them’

We see then that, unlike in the indicative, here the imperfective and the gerund are restricted to non-past and past time, respectively. This means that they do not carry purely aspectual meanings, or not only aspectual meanings, but also indicate location in time.

It is different with the progressive: it conveys solely aspectual meaning and its location in time is dependent on the context. Because of this, the state of affairs in sentence (23) can be interpreted either as having taken place in the past or as happening at the moment of speaking.

- (23) **የአለባበሴ ድህነት ለቅልውጥና እንደመጣሁ እየተናገረብኝ ይሆናል**_[GQ 147: 8-9]
yä-alläbabäs-e dəhənnät lä-qəlwəʔənnə əndä-mäʔta-h^w
 GEN-outfit-POSS.1SG poverty for-sponging COMP-come\PFV-1SG

əyyä-tänaggär-ä-bb-əññ *yəhonall*

PRG-speak\PFV-3SM-APL-OBJ.1SG EPST

‘The poverty of my outfit might have been speaking against me that I came to sponge [some free food]’ or ‘The poverty of my outfit may be speaking against me that I have come to sponge [some free food]’

In example (23) it is the preceding sentence given in (24) that enables us to localize the state of affairs as being in the past:

(24) በፈለግኩ ሰዓት ሄጄ የሚበላ ነገር አላጣም ነበር_[GQ 147 7-8]

bä-fälläg-k^w *sä 'at* *heḡḡe* *yämm-i-bbälla* *nägär*

LOC-want\PFV-1SG hour go\GER.1SG REL-3SM-be_eaten\IPFV thing

al-aṭa-mm *näbbär*

NEG.1SG-fail_to_find\IPFV-NEG AUX.PST

‘I could go [there] at any time and did not fail to find something to eat’

Returning to the imperfective and the gerund, the question arises how we can explain their ability to convey temporal distinctions. My thesis is that the moment of epistemic assessment, NOW, serves as the point of reference for the temporal interpretation of the main verb. In other words, the modal epistemic expression *yəhonall* provides the absolute time reference (NOW, whether deictic or narrative) which constitutes the reference point to establish the relative tense of the predicate: either relative non-past tense expressed by the imperfective of the main verb or relative past tense expressed by the gerund.¹⁶ In the case of cleft and reduced cleft sentences, apart from the moment of the epistemic assessment, another reference time is provided by the relative verb of the cleft clause or the context. The state of affairs expressed by the gerund is temporally prior to or simultaneous with this other state of affairs. This is illustrated by the following example:

(25) ወንድሰን ዛሬ ምን ነካው? [...] ጉዳይ ገጥሞት ይሆናል_[BQ]

wändossän *zare* *mən* *näkkä-w?* *gudday*

Wändossän today what touch\PFV.3SM-OBJ.3SM matter

gäṭmo-t *yəhonall*

happen\GER.3SM-OBJ.3SM EPST

16 On relative tense see Comrie (1985:56–64).

‘What’s going on with Wändossän today? [...] Something (= a matter) might have happened to him’

Wändossän’s absence at the present moment (when the conversation is taking place) is perhaps caused by a state of affairs that happened to him at some time before.

This clear picture is complicated, however, by the fact that different verbs exhibit different lexical aspectual features. The model presented above works neatly only for mono-aspectual verbs, i.e. for stative and achievement verbs. As argued by Sasse (1991:37) the lexical aspect affects the grammatical aspect in the sense that various lexical aspects “select specific portions of states of affairs which are typical for their respective class.” For instance, activity verbs in the perfective have a holistic reading whereas in the imperfective they are interpreted as being in progress (Sasse 1991:37).¹⁷ As a result of the interplay of lexical aspect, grammatical aspect and relative tense we receive a fairly complex picture, which will be presented in detail below.

4.1 Lexical aspectual types

The verbs that appear in this study belong to two major lexical aspectual types: stative and non-stative. However, a given verb, as a lexeme, may be assigned different lexical aspects depending on its valence and form (imperfective, gerund, progressive).¹⁸ For instance, አሰብ *assäbä* ‘think’ may be an inceptive state verb as well as an action verb. For this reason a verbal lexeme that is given here as an example of one type of lexical aspect may also belong to another type.

The lexical aspectual types that will be examined in this study are as follows:¹⁹

(i) STATIVE VERBS

a. Inceptive states (inchoative-stative verbs): Verbs which have the potential to be interpreted either as states or as achievements, depending on the context. In the gerund they appear as having an initial point followed by a state. To this class belong the Amharic verbs of emotion, e.g. ቀኝ *qänna* ‘be(come) jealous’, አዘኝ *azzänä* ‘be(come) sad’, ወደደ *wäddädä* ‘(start to) like’; verbs of cognition, e.g. አወቀ *awwäqä* ‘(get to) know’, አሰብ *assäbä* ‘(start to) think’, አመኝ *ammänä*

17 Here Sasse seems to have had in mind the distinction between the Imperfective and Perfective aspects in Slavic languages. This concept does not apply fully for Amharic.

18 On this topic see Croft (2012).

19 For the construal of (some) Amharic aspectual types I have referred to the works of Croft (2012: esp. 31–57) and Sasse (1991).

‘(start to) believe’; verbs of physical experience,²⁰ e.g. አመመ(ው) *ammāmā(w)* ‘be(come) ill’, በረደ(ው) *bärrädä(w)* ‘be(come) cold’, ሞቀ(ው) *moqā(w)* ‘be(-come) warm’; postural verbs, such as ተቀመጠ *täqämmätä* ‘sit (down)’, ቆመ *qomä* ‘stand (up)’, ተኝ *täñña* ‘lie (down)’.

b. Inherent states: Verbs which refer to a state that is a stable property of an entity, e.g. ኢትዮጵያዊ ሆነ *ityopyawi honä* ‘be(come) an Ethiopian’. Some inherent states can also be acquired during one’s lifetime, e.g. ትልቅ ሆነ *talläq honä* ‘be(come) big’.

(ii) NON-STATIVE VERBS

a. Activities: Verbs which refer to a change over a period of time, and which do not have a beginning and terminative point, e.g. ሠራ *särra* ‘work’, ሄደ *hedä* ‘go’, ዘፈነ *zäffänä* ‘sing’, ሮጠ *roṭä* ‘run’, ነሰነሰ *näsännäsä* ‘spread’.

b. Achievements: Verbs referring to an instantaneous change, e.g. ደረሰ *därräsä* ‘reach’, ዘጋ *zägga* ‘close’, መጣ *mätta* ‘come’, ገባ *gäbba* ‘enter,’ ነቃ *näqqa* ‘wake up’.

In the next two sub-sections, §§4.2–4.3, I shall examine which temporal distinctions are conveyed by the lexical aspectual types depending on their form (and at the same time their grammatical aspect) – that is imperfective, gerund or progressive – in epistemically modalized sentences.

4.2 Relative non-past tense

Within the relative non-past tense the present tense, with different aspectual meanings, and the future tense will be examined.

With verbs of inceptive state (26)–(27) and inherent state (28) the imperfective is used whenever the meaning of a general truth is indicated.

(26) ቀደም ብዬ ያነሳሁት የእርዳታ ጉዳይም፣ ከበድ ያለ ጉዳይ ነው።

ብዙዎች ከባድነቱን ለማመን ይቸገሩ ይሆናል_[AA 794]

qäddämm bəyye yä-anässa-hu-t yä-ərdata gudday-əmm:

earlier say\GER.1SG REL-raise\PFV-1SG-DEF GEN-aid issue-FOC

käbädd yä-al-ä gudday näw. bəzu-^wočč

somewhat_difficult REL-say\PFV-3SM issue COP.PRS.3SM many-PL

käbbadənnät-u-n lä-mamän yə-ččäggär-u yəhonall

difficulty-POSS.3SM-ACC for-believe\VN 3PL-be_troubled\IPFV-3PL EPST

20 Verbs whose actions are out of the experiencer’s control.

‘As for the issue of the aid that I have raised earlier: it is a slightly difficult issue. Many may have trouble to believe in its difficulty’

(27) ለነገሩ የዚህ ሃገር ሰው ለምን ዝም እንደሚል አይታወቅም።

ምናልባት ጥቁር አይወድ ይሆናል ብዬ አሰብኩ²¹

länägäru yä-zzih hagär säw lämən zəmm əndä-mm-i-l
by_the_way GEN-PRX.SM country man why silent COMP-REL-3SM-say\IPFV
a-y-tawwäq-əmm. mənəlbət təqur a-y-wädd yəhonall
NEG-3SM-be_known\IPFV-NEG perhaps black NEG-3SM-like\IPFV EPST
bəyye assäb-k^w
say\GER.1SG think\PFV-1SG

‘By the way, it is not known why the people of this country keep silent. I thought that perhaps they don’t like Blacks’

(28) ሌላው የበቀል ምክንያቱም እኛው እንሆን ይሆናል^[MBL 214: 24]

lela-w yä-bäqäl məknyat-u-mm əñña-w ənnə-hon yəhonall
other-DEF GEN-revenge reason-DEF-FOC 1PL-DEF 1PL-be\IPFV EPST

‘Perhaps we ourselves may be another reason for [his] revenge’

If verbs of inceptive and inherent state in the imperfective are accompanied by a temporal adverbial, as in sentences (29)–(30), they convey the future. In sentence (31) the temporal subordinate clause functions like a future time adverbial. It might be noted that the lexical aspect of these imperfective verbs is the same as in the gerund form: a state with an initial point.

(29) ማን ያውቃል፣ ከዘመናት በኋላ ከናንተ መሃል አንዱ የምናገረውን ያምን ይሆናል²²

man y-awq=all; kä-zämān-at bäh^wala kä-nnantä
who 3SM-know\IPFV=AUX.NPST.3SM ABL-year-PL after ABL-2PL
māhal and-u yāmm-ə-nnaggär-äw-ən y-ammən yəhonall
among one-DEF REL-1SG-speak\IPFV-DEF.ACC 3SM-believe\IPFV EPST

‘Who knows; after many years one of you may (come to) believe in what I am saying’

21 Taken from <http://www.assimba.org/Articles/Cherkos1.pdf> (10 July 2015).

22 Taken from http://www.addisadmassnews.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=15175 (10 July 2015).

- (30) ግን ያውቃል አዲስ አበባችን በዚህ የአስመራ ዝና አንድ ቀን ትቀና ይሆን ይሆናል²³

man y-awq=all addis_abäbaččən bā-zzih
 who 3SM-know\IPFV=AUX.NPST.3SM Addis_Ababa.POSS.1PL LOC-PRX.SM
yä-asmära zənnä and qän tə-qäna yəhon yəhonall
 GEN-Asmara fame one day 3SF-be_jealous\IPFV EPST EPST
 ‘Who knows, one day our Addis Ababa may become jealous of this, Asmara’s fame’

- (31) ምናልባት ሲደርስብህ ይገባህ ይሆናል²⁴

mənalbat s-i-därs-əbb-əh yə-gäba-h
 perhaps when-3SM-reach\IPFV-APL-OBJ.2SM 3SM-understand\IPFV-OBJ.2SM
yəhonall
 EPST

‘Perhaps you may understand (get to understand) when it happens to you’

Non-stative verbs in the imperfective indicate a state of affairs which will take place in the future. In sentence (32) the temporal subordinate clause reinforces the future location of the state of affairs contained in the main clause.

- (32) «ጥቁሩን [ክራቭት] እወዳለሁ» ይላል። ለብሶት አይቼው ግን አላውቅም። እኔ ስሞት ያደርገው ይሆናል^[GQ 18: 21-24]

«təqur-u-n [kravat] ə-wädd=allä-h» yə-l=all.
 black-DEF-ACC [necktie] 1SG-like\IPFV=AUX.NPST-1SG 3SM-say\IPFV=AUX.NPST.3SM
läbso-t ayəčč-e-w gən al-awq-əmm.
 wear\GER.3SM-OBJ.3SM see\GER.1SG-OBJ.3SM but NEG.1SG-know\IPFV-NEG
əne s-ə-mot y-adärg-äw yəhonall
 1SG when-1SG-die\IPFV 3SM-do\IPFV-OBJ.3SM EPST

‘I like the black one [necktie],²⁵ he says. But I have never seen him wear it. He may do it when I die’

23 Taken from <https://www.facebook.com/diretube/posts/10153484646084587?fref=nf> (10 July 2015).

24 Taken from http://dejebirhan.blogspot.de/2012/06/blog-post_193.html (10 July 2015).

25 ‘Necktie’ was mentioned in the previous sentence (but not in this sentence) and is implicitly referred to here.

(33) እስከዚያ የሚሆነው ምን ይታወቃል? ወይ ተጠርተው አዲሳባ ይሄዱልህ

ይሆናል_[DB 85: 6-8]

askä-zziya yämm-i-hon-äw mən yə-tawwäq=all

till-DST.SM REL-3SM-be\IPFV-OBJ.3SM what 3SM-be_known\IPFV=AUX.NPST.3SM

wäy täṭärtäw addisaba yə-hed-u-ll-əh

or be_called\GER.3POL Addis_Ababa 3POL-go\IPFV-3POL-APL-OBJ.2SM

yəhonall

EPST

‘What is known [i.e. who knows] what will happen until then? Or he may be called and may go for your benefit to Addis Ababa’

(34) ምናልባት ዛሬ የውብነት ታመጣው ይሆናል_[YWN 224: 5]

mənalbat zare yäwəbbənäš t-amäṭa-w yəhonall

perhaps today Yäwəbbənäš 3SF-bring\IPFV-OBJ.3SM EPST

‘Perhaps Yäwəbbənäš may bring him today’

Inceptive states and non-stative verbs in the progressive take the (relative) present meaning if the context allows for such a temporal interpretation.

(35) ምናልባት እንጂራ እናቱ በየመንደሩ እየዞረች እኔን እንደምትወደኝ በቅጠል አፍዋ

እየሰበከችው ይሆናል_[GQ 143: 10-12]

mənalbat ənṣära ənnat-e bā-yyä-mändär-u əyyä-zor-äčč

perhaps step_mother-POSS.1SG LOC-DSTR-village-DEF PRG-go_round\PFV-3SF

əne-n əndä-mm-əttə-wädd-äññ bā-qəṭäl af-wa

1SG-ACC COMP-REL-3SF-like\IPFV-OBJ.1SG LOC-leaf mouth-POSS.3SF

əyyä-säbbäk-äčč-äččäw yəhonall

PRG-preach\PFV-3SF-OBJ.3PL EPST

‘Perhaps my stepmother may be going round the neighborhood and she may be preaching mischievously that she loves me’

Inceptive states and states in the gerund contained in a (reduced) cleft sentence are interpreted as localized in the present.²⁶ In that case, the present state of affairs is understood as having been initiated in the past – having an initial point – and continuing to the present or having its results in the present.²⁷ A

26 I could not find a non-clefting example with an inceptive-state or state verb used in the gerund followed by the auxiliary *yəhonall*.

27 See Comrie (1976:19–20).

second reason for locating the state of affairs in the present, in addition to the moment of the epistemic assessment, may be provided by the context. For instance, in (36) the present time context is provided by the previous sentences:

- (36) «ይልቅ ደውይለትና አስተዋውቁን፤ ምን እንዳሰበ ከእሱ ልስማ ደግሞ» ሰምሃል ደወለች። ስልኩ አይነሳም። «ስለደከመው ሻወር እየወሰደ ወይም ተኝቶ ይሆናል»²⁸

«yäləq dəwwəyə-ll-ät-ənnä astäwawəq-i-n; mən
rather call\IMP.2SF-APL-OBJ.3SM-and introduce\IMP-2SF-OBJ.1PL what
əndä-assäb-ä kǎ-əssu lə-sma dägmo» Sämhal
COMP-think\PFV-3SM ABL-3SM 1SG-hear\JUUS also Sämhal
dəwwäl-äčč səlku a-yə-nnäsa-mm.
call\PFV-3SF phone NEG-3SM-pick_up\IPFV-NEG
«sälä-däkkäm-ä-w šawär əyyä-wässäd-ä
because-be_tired\PFV-3SM-OBJ.3SM shower PRG-take\PFV-3SM
wäyamm tǎññəto yəhonall»
or sleep\GER.3SM EPST.COP

“‘‘Rather, call him and introduce us [to each other]; let me hear also what he has thought.’’ Sämhal called. He does not pick up the phone. ‘‘It may be that he is taking a shower or he is sleeping’’”

Other examples:

- (37) ምናልባት እሱ ከደረሰበት ባለመድረሳችን ቀንተን ይሆናል^[KB 38: 13-15]
mənalbat əssu kǎ-dǎrräs-ä-bb-ät bǎ-alä-mädräs-aččən
perhaps 3SM ABL-reach\PFV-3SM-APL-OBJ.3SM LOC-NEG-attain\VN-POSS.1PL
qǎntǎn yəhonall
be_jealous\GER.1PL EPST

‘‘Perhaps we may be jealous (might have become jealous) of not attaining what he has attained’’

- (38) አንድዋ ኪክ አልቃለች። ኪኩን ወዳው ይሆናል። እኔን ወዳኝ ይሆናል^[GQ 322:4]
and-wa kek alqa=alläčč. kek-u-n
one-DEF.F cake finish\GER.3SF=AUX.NPST.3SF cake-DEF-ACC

28 Taken from http://www.addisadmassnews.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=17032 (10 July 2015).

wüdda-w yəhonall. əne-n wüdda-ññ yəhonall
 like\GER.3SF-OBJ.3SM EPST.COP.3SM 1SG-ACC like\GER.3SF-OBJ.1SG EPST.COP.3SM
 ‘One of the cakes is finished. She may like the cake. She may like me’

(39) መቼም ሻለቃ ዳመነ ወይ የወንጀለኞቹን ተባባሪ ሆኖ ይሆናል፤

ያለዚያም [...] [MAH 414: 22-23]
mäčemm šäläqa Dammänä wäy yä-wängäläññočč-u-n täbabari
 at_any_rate major Dammänä or GEN-criminal.PL-DEF-ACC accomplice
hono yəhonall; yaläzziyamm
 be\GER.3SM EPST.COP.3SM otherwise
 ‘At any rate, Major Dammänä might have become either an accomplice of the criminals or [...]’

4.3 Relative past tense

Inceptive states and states in the gerund (followed by the copula or by the auxiliary) are localized in the past if the context is localized in the past (40). There may occur a temporal adverbial which reinforces the past location (41):

(40) የሚናገሩት ፍልስፍና ስላልገባኝ ተበሳጭቼ አርዕስት ለመለወጥ ጥረት ያደረግሁ መስሎት ይሆናል፤

yämm-i-nnaggär-u-t fəlsəfənnä səlä-al-gäbba-ññ
 REL-3PL-talk\IPFV-3PL-DEF philosophy because-NEG-enter\PFV.3SM-OBJ.1SG
täbäsačəčče arə’st lä-mäläwwät tərät yä-addäräg-h^w
 be_annoyed\GER.1SG topic for-change\VN effort REL-make\PFV-1SG
mäslo-t yəhonall
 seem\GER.3SM-OBJ.3SM EPST.COP.3SM

‘It might have seemed to him (that) I made an attempt to change the topic because I didn’t understand the philosophy that they were talking about and so I got angry’

(41) ያን ዕለት ምናልባት ሁለቱም ተደናግጠው ይሆናል፤

ya-n əlät mənəlbət hulätt-u-mm tädänagtäw yəhonall
 DST-ACC day perhaps two-DEF-FOC be_astonished\GER.3PL EPST
 ‘On that day perhaps they might have become astonished’

Non-stative verbs in the gerund (followed by the copula or by the auxiliary) are by default localized in the past.

(42) ሜላት የት ቀረች? ዳቦ ልትገዛ ሄዳ ይሆናል_[YG 3/3]

melat yāt qärräčč? *dabbo la-ttə-gāza*
 Melat where remain_behind\PFV.3SF bread PURP-3SF-buy\IPFV
heda yəhonall
 go\GER.3SF EPST.COP.3SM

‘Where is Melat? She might have gone to buy some bread’

(43) ማታ ጨረቃ ስትወጣ ለመየት ስጠብቅ አመሸሁ። አልወጣችም።

mata čäräqa sə-ttə-wäṭa *lä-mayät s-ə-ṭäbbəqa*
 evening moon when-2SF-come_out\IPFV for-see\VN when-1SG-wait\IPFV
amäššä-h^w. *al-wäṭṭačč-əmm.* *kä-täñña-h^w*
 stay_up_late\PFV-1SG NEG-come_out\PRF.3SF-NEG ABL-sleep\PFV-1SG
bäh^w ala wäṭəta yəhonall
 after come_out\GER.3SF EPST

‘In the evening I stayed up late waiting to see when the moon would come out. It didn’t come out. It might have come out after I went to bed’

Inceptive states and non-action verbs in the progressive indicate past meaning if the context is itself localized in the past. In (44) the past location is provided by the preceding sentence:

(44) በኩረን በጣም የሚያበሽቀው ከምሠራው ድርጊት ይልቅ ዝምታዬ ነበር መሰለኝ። ምን

bäkurä-n bätam yämm-iy-abäšq-äw *kä-mm-ə-sära-w*
 Bäkürä-ACC very REL-3SM-make_annoyed\IPFV-DEF ABL-REL-1SG-do\IPFV-DEF
därgit yələq zəmməta-ye näbbär mässäl-ä-ññ mən
 deed rather silence-POSS.1SG AUX.PST seem\PFV-3SM-OBJ.1SG what
əndä-mm-ə-assəb bə-alä-mawäq-u
 COMP-REL-1SG-think\IPFV INST-NEG-know\VN-POSS.3SM
əyyä-ṭäbäsaččä yəhonall
 PRG-be_annoyed\PFV.3SM EPST

‘I think it was rather my silence than what I did that was annoying Bäkürä. He might have been annoyed by/because of not knowing what I thought/was thinking’

4.4 Other temporal and aspectual distinctions

Owing to the fact that both the Imperfective and the Perfective function as exponents of relative tense, one may conclude that some temporal distinctions, available in the indicative, are impossible to express in epistemically modalized sentences with *yəhonall* – for instance a general truth or habitual state of affairs in the past. Such limitations, however, can be circumvented by adding the past auxiliary *näbbär* after the imperfective (45) or the gerund (46) and before the modal *yəhonall*.

- (45) ኃይሉ ገብረዮሐንስ አረፈ። [...] ምናልባት ብዙዎች በአይወት መኖሩን አያውቁም ነበር ይሆናል²⁹

haylu_gäbräyohannäs arräf-ä mənalbat bəzu-^wočč bā-həywät
 Haylu_Gäbräyohannäs pass_away\PFV-3SM perhaps many-PL LOC-life
mānor-u-n a-y-awq-u-mm näbbär yəhonall
 exist\VN-POSS.3SM-ACC NEG-3PL-know\IPFV-3PL-NEG AUX.PST EPST

‘Haylu Gäbräyohannäs has passed away. [...] Perhaps many may not have known of his existence’

- (46) ስለኢኒያ ሲያነሱ «ኢኒያ ከደረሱ ወደ ኢትዮጵያም መዝለቃቸው አይቀርም» በግል ትንሽ እፎይታ ተሰምቷቸው ነበር ይሆናል³⁰

sälä-keniya si-y-anäs-u «keniya kä-därräs-u wädä
 about-Kenya when-3POL-mention\IPFV-3POL Kenya if-arrive\PFV-3POL to
ityopya mäläq-aččäw a-y-qärə-mm» bā-mm-i-l
 Ethiopia stop_by\VN-POSS.3POL NEG-3SM-fail\IPFV-NEG LOC-REL-3SM-say\IPFV
tənnəš əffoyta täsämtə-^waččäw näbbär yəhonall
 little relief feel\GER.3SM-OBJ.3POL AUX.PAST EPST

‘When she [Hilary Clinton] mentions Kenya they may have felt a certain relief by saying: “If she arrives in Kenya, for sure she will stop off in Ethiopia”’

It must be emphasized, however, that sentences similar to (45) and (46) are not frequent and that some native speakers judged the two as unacceptable.³¹ For them it is impossible to have the two auxiliaries *näbbär* and *yəhonall* stand-

29 Taken from <http://zabraham.blog.com/2014/11/11/701/> (10 July 2015).

30 Taken from <http://ethiopiazare.com/component/content/article?id=1788:hillary-clinton-in-addis-ababa> (10 July 2015).

31 Three informants found them acceptable, three unacceptable.

ing one after the other in the same sentence, because they are mutually exclusive (assertive *näbbär* vs. non-assertive *yəhonall*). Turning the imperfective into the gerund and removing the past auxiliary *näbbär* in (45) does not bring a solution because the perfective of the inceptive states has a present meaning. Hence, the meaning of (47) is not equivalent to the meaning of (48):

(47) አያውቁም ነበር ይሆናል

a-y-awq-u-mm *näbbär* *yəhonall*
 NEG-3PL-know\IPFV-3PL-NEG AUX.PST EPST
 ‘They might not have known’

(48) አላወቁ ይሆናል

al-awwäq-u *yəhonall*
 NEG-know\PFV-3PL EPST
 ‘They might have not got to know’

As the examples of the past auxiliary *näbbär* followed by *yəhonall*, which are in my corpus, contain only one type of verbs, the inceptive states, I do not know whether other types of verbs can occur in such a construction.

This section has been devoted to the question of the location in time of the state of affairs. It was shown that the main verb indicates a relative tense whose point of reference is the moment of the epistemic assessment. It turned out that the imperfective conveys by default the present tense for (inceptive) states and the future tense for non-stative verbs while the gerund indicates by default the past tense for non-stative verbs. In other cases the form of the verb is not sufficient for determining the tense. The temporality of the verbal state of affairs is then dependent on adverbials or on the context.

5 Conclusion

Epistemically modalized sentences involve two levels of language: the presentation of the state of affairs itself, and the speaker’s modal comment on that state of affairs. This results in a complex, two-level temporal structure of the sentences in question. The moment of the epistemic assessment (the speaker’s modal comment) can be anchored not only in the present *here and now* but also in the past and, at least theoretically, in the future. With the help of examples culled from Amharic novels I have shown that there is no formal difference between a present or future state of affairs when expressed from a temporal refe-

reference point localized NOW (deictic) vs. in the past (narrative). Thus, this information can only be inferred from the surrounding, relevant text.

The moment of the epistemic assessment provides a point of reference for the location in time of the state of affairs, with the main verb conveying relative tense vis-à-vis this reference point. In comparison to the indicative mood, in epistemically modalized sentences (excluding clefts) the context plays a more vital role in the temporal determination of the state of affairs. Also, if we take into account that some native speakers found the sentences with the imperfective/gerund followed by the past auxiliary *näbbär*+modal auxiliary *yəhonall* unacceptable, then the number of explicitly expressible variations in time for the epistemic sentences is lower. Perhaps, in that case the context can make up for existing semantic gaps.

The study of the interaction between the categories of tense and aspect on one hand and epistemic modality on the other provokes a vexed question: whether we should treat the imperfective/gerund/progressive+*yəhonall* as a single unit of language³² or as two or three distinct units of language. After separating out the cleft construction consisting of gerund+copular *yəhonall*, it might be argued that what remains belongs to one and the same unit, which may occur in three aspects and two relative tenses: non-past and past. To provide a full and definitive answer, it should be examined whether the progressive can be followed by copular *yəhonall* and/or auxiliary *yəhonall*.

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32 In the sense proposed by Bogusławski (1976), i.e. a unit of language should carry a separate meaning and occupy a place in the system of language.

List of Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	First, second, third person	NEG	Negative
ABL	Ablative	NPST	Non-past
ACC	Accusative	OBJ	Object
APL	Applicative	P	Proposition
ASS	Assertion	PFV	Perfective
AUX	Auxiliary	PL	Plural
COMP	Complementizer	POL	Polite
COP	Copula	POSS	Possessive
DEF	Definite	PRG	Progressive
DST	Distal demonstrative	PRX	Proximate
DSTR	Distributive		demonstrative
EPST	Epistemic modality	PST	Past
GER	Gerund	PRS	Present
IMP	Imperative	PURP	Purpose marker
INST	Instrumental	REL	Relative clause marker
IPFV	Imperfective	S	Verb form agreeing with clausal subject
IRR	Irrealis		
JUSS	Jussive	SF	Singular-feminine
F	Feminine	SG	Singular
FOC	Focus	SM	Singular-masculine
LOC	Locative	TOP	Topic
M	Masculine	VN	Verbal noun
MEE	Modal epistemic expression	Q	Question particle

Abbreviations for the Amharic sources

Unless indicated differently the year is given according to the Ethiopian Calendar.

AA 794 *Addis Admas*, Mäggabit 26, 2008.

AA 836 *Addis Admas*, Tər 14, 2008.

AA 848 *Addis Admas*, Miyazya 8, 2008.

BQ *Bämärfe qädada* [Through a keyhole] *Yäkkatit* 11–12, 1983. pp.18–19, 30.

DB Mängəstu Lämna. 1988. *Dāmamu bə’əräñña (jägəll tarik)* [The handsome writer (auto-biography)]. Addis Ababa: Mega Publishing Enterprise.

GQ Addam Rätta. 1997. *Gračča qačəločč* [Grey bells]. Addis Ababa: Shama Books.

KB Bā’alu Gərma. 1962. *Kadmas baššaggär* [Beyond the horizon]. Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Book Centre.

MAH Mamo Wəddənäh. 1982. *Mahəbärtäññočcu. Tarik qämmäsä ləbbwälläd* [The club members. A historical novel]. Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press.

MBL Bərhanu Zārihun. 1975. *Ma’əbäl: yä’abyot magəst* [The Wave: the wake of the revolution]. Addis Ababa: Ethiopia Book Centre.

TS 4 Talk show: *Radio Fana*, May 2, 2009 AD.

YG *Yegna* Radio Drama, series 3. Taken from: <http://yegnaplayer.com/> (10 July 2015)

YWN Haylä Mäläkot Mäwa’əl. 2002. *Yäwädiyanäs* [Yäwädiyanäs (female proper name)] 3rd ed. Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press.

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Metaphors of Time in Amharic

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1 Introduction

In layman language use, we know metaphor as a literary device to add beauty to language and to avoid monotony, which is just about vocabulary use and seems to have very little to do with our structure of thought. Metaphors have been associated with literary language, whereas everyday language has been thought of exhibiting less of it (Lakoff 1993). Lakoff (1993:204–205) provides the following *wrong* assumptions that led many of us believe that metaphors have very limited usage:

- (i) Everyday conventional language is literal, not metaphorical.
- (ii) All subject matters can be communicated literally, without metaphor.
- (iii) Only literal language can be contingently true or false.
- (iv) All definitions in the lexicon of a language are literal, not metaphorical.
- (v) The grammatical concepts of a language are all literal; none is metaphorical.

This is not the case according to the Contemporary Theory of Metaphor (Lakoff 1993), in which metaphor is conceptual, not linguistic, in nature. The metaphorical linguistic expressions are just surface representations of conceptual metaphors. The conceptual metaphors for abstract concepts are automatic, systematic, and based on experiences.

Time is an abstract concept, and thus has to be understood in terms of concrete experiences. There are several metaphors that conceptualize time (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:9), like TIME IS MONEY (e.g. *spend, invest, cost time*), TIME IS A RESOURCE (e.g. *use (up), have enough of, run out of time*), TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY (e.g. *have, give, lose, thank people for their time*), TIME IS A MOVING OBJECT (e.g. *look forward to the arrival of Christmas*), TIME IS STATIONARY AND WE MOVE THROUGH IT (e.g. *go to the late 1990s*), or TIME IS A CONTAINER (e.g. *complete the assignment in 5 minutes*).

Metaphors have universal and language specific characteristics. While representing concepts metaphorically is a phenomenon in any language of the

world (as far as it is spoken by humans), choosing certain conceptualizations among various options and making correspondences based on experience is language specific.

This paper attempts to answer two questions: How can time be understood metaphorically in Amharic? And what are the specific conceptual features of the Amharic TIME IS SPACE metaphor? These questions are dealt with in §2 and §3, respectively.

2 Time metaphors in Amharic

Amharic has various time metaphors. The most dominant are (i) TIME IS AN OPPONENT, (ii) TIME IS AN AUTHORITY, (iii) TIME IS A CONTAINER, (iv) TIME IS A GARMENT, (v) TIME IS A LOAD, (vi) TIME IS A WEALTHY PERSON, and (vii) TIME IS A RESOURCE.

The metaphor TIME IS AN OPPONENT implies that time can hold individuals, and restrain them from doing what they actually would like to do. The expression in (1), for instance, is common especially among older and rural speakers when talking about unfavorable time.¹

- (1) *k'ʒn* (/gizze) *t'al-ʒ-n*
 time/day² time throw_away\PFV-3SM-OBJ.1S
 'Time has downed me'

The metaphor in (1) uses FIGHT as source concept and TIME as target. The conceptual mapping from the source to the target can be understood as follows:

The opponent is TIME. The fight with the opponent represents daily hard work. Winning the fight implies to be financially well at the stated time, whereas losing it entails a failure in financial and economic matters.

In the second metaphor, TIME IS AN AUTHORITY, time is understood as a superior/boss that is able to prohibit or permit people to be engaged in activities they would like to do. Accordingly, the expression in (2) can be heard in situations, in which an individual would like to do a certain activity, but most probably will not have the time to be really engaged in it:

-
- 1 All Amharic consonants and vowels are transcribed according to IPA. In contrast to earlier transcription, the low-mid central vowel (or first order vowel) is given as *ɜ*, whereas *ɔ* represents the high-mid central vowel (or sixth order vowel).
 - 2 The noun *k'ʒn* has two meanings: Monolingual (rural) Amharic speakers generally use it in the sense 'time', whereas the sense 'day' is more common among bilingual (and better educated) speakers. Thus, in the first sense, *k'ʒn* is synonymous with *gizze* 'time'.

- (2) *k'ʒn* (/gizze) *s-i-fʒk'dʒ-ll-ʒn*
 time/day time when-3SM-allow\IPFV-APL.BEN-OBJ.1S
 'when time allows me'

In (2), the source of the metaphor is OBEDIENCE and the target is TIME are mapped in the following way:

The deciding superior is time. Individuals obey the order of their sovereign, i.e. they obey time. If time allows them to be off work, they may do what they like. Otherwise they have to continue working, which entails that they cannot engage in other activities.

TIME IS A CONTAINER is the third metaphor. In Amharic, the container enclosing time either is completely full with time (3a), or lacks some amount of it (3b). A container full with time refers to a situation in which an individual is in a good state without any problems, whereas a not completely filled time container entails some kind of deficiencies or problems:

- (3) a. *k'ʒn s-i-mola-ll-ʒn*
 time when-3SM-become_full\IPFV-APL.BEN-OBJ.1S
 'When time is full for me'
- b. *k'ʒn s-i-godlʒ-bb-ʒn*
 time when-3SM-be_deficient\IPFV-APL.MAL-OBJ.1S
 'When time is lacking (i.e. not full) to my detriment'

Thus, if one gets well financially or socially, then the time is full. But if one becomes bankrupt or has a hard time in life, time is not full. In any case, the time container cannot be empty.

The fourth metaphor, TIME IS A GARMENT, is very interesting. People like their garment to fit perfectly. If an item of clothing is too long, it needs to be shortened to fit. If it is too short, it should be made longer. This concept is mapped to time in Amharic, in which balanced time is a requirement to complete activities appropriately:

- (4) a. *j-allʒ-n* gizze attf'ʒr nʒw
 that-AUX.EXIST.3SM-OBJ.1PL time short COP.3SM
 'The time I have is short'

- b. *k'ʒn-u rʒzzʒm-ʒ-bb-ʒn*
 time-DEF become_long\PFV-3SM-APL.MAL-OBJ.1S
 'The time becomes long to my detriment'
- c. *k'ʒn-u-n asatt'ʒr-ʒ-ll-ʒn*
 time-DEF-ACC make_short\PFV-3SM-APL.BEN-OBJ.1S
 'He made (a long) time short (i.e. pleasant) for me'
- d. *rʒʒʒm gizze*
 long time
 'long time'
- e. *attf'ʒr gizze*
 short time
 'short time'

If time is short, i.e. not enough as in (4a), it has to be extended a little bit to finish an activity. The optimum time is an imagined perfect balance between a certain period of time and an activity that can be fulfilled within this period. If the activity takes more time, the result will be delayed, or the speaker remains longer in an unpleasant state, which should be shortened, as in (4b). These time metaphors are very productive as they can be expressed attributively (4d–e), or as a predicate (4a–c).

The metaphor TIME IS A LOAD refers to difficult times of mental distress in English. In Amharic, the metaphor is specifically understood as TIME IS A PHYSICAL LOAD, in which time is a heavy object:

- (5) *k'ʒn-u kʒbbʒd-ʒ-n*
 time-DEF become_heavy\PFV-3SM-OBJ.1S
 'The time is heavy on me'

The non-literal English translation of (5) means 'I am not enjoying life' – because the speaker is suffering from the load he is carrying.

In the sixth metaphor, TIME IS A WEALTHY PERSON, time may be generous or mean in relation to enabling enjoyment. When time is generous, it gives one joy. But when it is mean, it robs all joy and creates suffering. Thus, happy and unhappy times in life are understood as generous and mean TIME:

- (6) a. *k'ʒn s-i-t/ʒr-ʒn*
 day/time when-3SM-be_generous\IPFV-OBJ.1S
 'when time gives me (something)'
- b. *k'ʒn s-i-nʒf-g-ʒn*
 day/time when-3SM-be_greedy\IPFV-OBJ.1S
 'when time refuses to give me (something)'

The expression in (6a) refers to beneficial, worry-free and happy life spans, but (6b) to uncomfortable periods.

The last metaphor, TIME IS A RESOURCE, is a relatively new conceptualization that was introduced with a lifestyle change, or according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980:145) as a result of "Westernization". Most of these metaphors are direct translations from English:

- (7) a. *gizze wʒrk' nʒw*
 time gold COP.3SM
 'Time is gold'
- b. *gizze-h-ʒn att-at'f-a*
 time-POSS.2SM-ACC NEG-waste\IMP.2SM
 'Do not waste your time'
- c. *gizze jʒllʒ-n-ʒm*
 time AUX.NOT_EXIST.3SM-OBJ.1S-NEG
 'I do not have time'
- d. *gizze annʒs-ʒ-n*
 time be_too_small\PFV-3SM-OBJ.1S
 'Time was scarce for me'

The metaphors in (7) depict that individuals started to give more priority to resources and wealth than to other people in their vicinity. In the developed countries, this resulted in a more solitary life, in which most of the available time is given to work and recreation.

3 Time as space in Amharic

Time is usually conceptualized as space for which two explanations are provided. First, in the absence of a specific human organ to detect time, it is safe to assume that the understanding of TIME as SPACE is biologically determined

(Lakoff 1993:218). Radden (2003:226), however, argues that this is not convincing because “there is empirical evidence that humans directly perceive and ‘feel’ the passage of time.”³

The second explanation considers the human need for communication as main reason for time to be understood as space. Radden (2003:226) explicates the points that make space a suitable cognitive source for the conceptualization of time. Properties of space that are utilized in the conceptualization of time in the languages of the world include: (i) three dimensionality of space (i.e. space is mapped on three axes for reference), (ii) the shape of objects varies in space, (iii) there can be absolute or relative reference to objects in space, (iv) objects in space could be stationary or in motion, and (v) space is populated with a variety of objects. In the sections to follow, some of these properties are examined for the TIME IS SPACE metaphor in Amharic.

3.1 Spatial conceptualization of time

Time in Amharic can be understood as having two or three dimensions. In the two-dimensional conceptualization, the spatial front-back orientation captures the horizontal time axis. Though there are also languages that have a vertical timeline as well, Amharic commonly uses the horizontal dimension, as shown in the following examples:

- (8) a. *lɜ-fasika j9-mɜt'all*
 for-Easter 3SM-come\IPFV.AUX.NPST
 ‘He will come for Easter’
- b. *bɜ-sost sɜʔat j9-mɜt'all*
 at-three hour 3SM-come\IPFV.AUX.NPST
 ‘He will come at three o’clock’
- c. *lɜ-hulɜt wɜr j9-mɜt'all*
 for-two month 3SM-come\IPFV.AUX.NPST
 ‘He will come for two months’
- d. *sost sɜʔat laj j9-mɜt'all*
 three hour on 3SM-come\IPFV.AUX.NPST
 ‘He will arrive around nine o’clock’

3 Cf., e.g. Evans (2007) who shows that time is perceived in the brain, and that humans experience the passing of time. For the perception of duration, cf. also Flaherty (1999).

- e. *b3-mm-i-k'3tt'9l-3w* *sammənt*
 at-REL-3SM-continue\IPFV-DEF week
 'next week'
- f. *b3-t3k3ttaj-u* *k'3n*
 at-following-DEF time/day
 'at the following day'

In the examples in (8), time is taken as a certain point at the horizontal axis. The time expressions denote exactly that point, a period close to it, or in which it is contained.

The spatial prefixes⁴ *l3-* 'for', *b3-* 'at' and the postposition *laj* 'on' are grammatical elements employed in Amharic to express time dimensions, i.e. they refer to a certain time point. Originally, these elements, however, denote spatial relations, as in (9):

- (9) a. *l3-2addis ab3ba*
 for-Addis Ababa
 'for/to Addis Ababa'
- b. *b3-2addis ab3ba*
 at-Addis Ababa
 'in Addis Ababa'
- c. *addis ab3ba laj*
 Addis Ababa on
 'in Addis Ababa' (lit. on Addis Ababa)'

Time in Amharic can also be treated as container, i.e. with three dimensions, as in (10):

- (10) *b3-2and w3r gizze wəst'*
 at-one month time inside
 'in a month'

4 The elements that are attached to a noun to assign spatial or temporal relations to it cannot stand by themselves, i.e. they are not prepositions in the technical sense of the term, but rather case markers.

The two-dimensional front-back orientation is captured by the horizontal time axis in Amharic. With regard to deictic time relations on it, the present commonly refers to the moment of speaking, which is expressed by the concept ‘hold’ in Amharic, as in (11):

- (11) *b3-jaz-n-3w* *am3t*
 at-hold\PFV-1P-DEF year
 ‘the year we are holding (lit. that we seized)’

Future, i.e. the time following the moment of speaking, is in front of ego, which is expressed by motion verbs denoting concepts like ‘follow’ or ‘come’:

- (12) a. *b3-mm-i-k’3tt’9l-3w* *am3t*
 at-REL-3SM-follow\IPFV-DEF year
 ‘next year’
 b. *b3-mm-i-m3t’a-w* *sammsnt*
 at-REL-3SM-come\IPFV-DEF week
 ‘the coming week’

Past, which denotes the time preceding the moment of speaking, is conceptualized as lying behind ego. This is expressed by the relative form of the verb *all3f3* ‘pass’, or its causative *asall3f3* ‘make pass’:

- (13) a. *b-all3f-3-w* *am3t*
 at-pass\PFV-3SM-DEF year
 ‘last (literally past) year’
 b. *b-as-all3f-n-3w* *am3t*
 at-make_pass\PFV-1PL-DEF year
 ‘the year that we made pass’

3.2 Sequence of time units

In Amharic time units (i.e. minutes, hours, days, weeks, years, etc.) can be sequentially presented using the terms *fit* ‘face’ and *h^wala* ‘back’ together with grammatical elements that are prefixed to them. Both terms can refer to time unit sequences in the past or the future according to fixed meanings. Relative to a reference point in time, *fit* ‘face’ refers to an earlier time unit, whereas *h^wala*

‘back’ denotes a subsequent time unit, irrespective of whether the sequences of time are in the past or in the future:

- (14) a. *k3-hul3tt am3t b3-fit*
 from-two year at-face
 ‘before two years’
- b. *l9d3-u k3-m3hed-u b3-fit*
 child-DEF from go\VN-POSS.3SM at-face
 ‘before the child goes’
- c. *k3-hul3tt am3t b3-h^wala*
 from-two year at-back
 ‘after two years’
- d. *l9d3-u k3-hed-3 b3-h^wala*
 child-DEF from-go\PFV-3SM at-back
 ‘after the child went’

Literally, the phrase with the term *fit* in (14a) means ‘at the face of two years’, but *h^wala* in (14c) ‘at the back of two years’, with the time unit ‘two years’ as frame of reference. In (14b/d), the time unit is encoded in the expression ‘the time when the child goes/went’. These constructions are used for both, present and past events. Accordingly, any time before the child’s going is found at the face of the reference frame (14b), whereas any time following it is at its back (14d). Thus, if there are two time units that follow each other the earlier unit is referred to as being at the face of the later one, or – in the reverse – the later time unit is at the back of the earlier one.

The grammatical markers *b3-* ‘at’, *k3-* ‘from’ and *w3d3-* ‘towards’ are used with time units containing the terms *fit* ‘face’ and *h^wala* ‘back’ in the same way as they are used for spatial reference. However, the time expressions with *b3-* ‘at’ and *k3-* ‘from’ only denote an exocentric perspective, i.e. they represent the time sequences from the perspective of one of the two related time units, whereas *w3d3-* ‘towards’ can report the time sequence from an endocentric (i.e. the speaker’s) perspective or from an exocentric perspective, as in (15a) vs. (15b), respectively:

- (15) a. *w3d3-fit 9-m3t'all3-hu*
 towards-face 1S-come\IPFV.AUX.NPST-1S
 ‘I will come in the future’

- b. *wɜdɜ-hʷala ɔ-mɜtʹallɜ-hu*
 towards-back 1S-come\IPFV.AUX.NPST-1S
 ‘I will come later’

The two examples in (15) refer to a future event, but their perspectives are different. In (15a), the speaker is the deictic center, facing an unspecific time unit, i.e. the speaker looks at the time unit, which implies future. In (15b), however, the speaker takes an outsider perspective, from which the time sequences of the moment of speaking (as reference point) and the unspecific time unit are depicted relatively to each other. Accordingly, the unspecific time unit is at the back of the moment of speaking.

The schematic representations of ‘face’ and ‘back’ in Amharic in relation to the speaker’s perspective are as follows:

Figure 1 Schematic representation time sequences in Amharic

(a) EXOCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE

PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
[←X ₁] [←X ₂]	[Speaker →]	[←X ₁] [←X ₂]
‘face’ [] ‘back’		‘face’ [] ‘back’

(b) ENDOCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE

PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
[←X ₁]	[Speaker →]	[←X ₂]
‘back’ [] ‘face’		

As indicated by the arrows in Figure 1, the time is moving from right to left (or from the future to the past), while the speaker is normally looking at the future (to the right) from the present time. Thus, as shown in Figure 1a, while time is moving from right to left, any point of time (X₁) left to a reference unit (X₂), be it in the past or the future, is in front of or happening before (*fit* ‘face’) the reference unit. Accordingly, any point of time to the right of the reference unit is at its back (*hʷala* ‘back’). Thus, X₁ is at the face of X₂, while X₂ is at the back of X₁. This is true in the exocentric perspective, where time units are ordered relative to each other.

In the endocentric perspective, Figure 1b, *fit* ‘face’ refers to the face of the speaker as deictic center, i.e. it points at a future event that will come later in time. The term *hʷala* ‘back’, consequently, takes the back of the speaker as reference point, and refers to events at an earlier time in the past. Thus, the future

is at the face of the speaker and the past at his back, as the normal movement of the speaker is from left to right (from the present to the future).

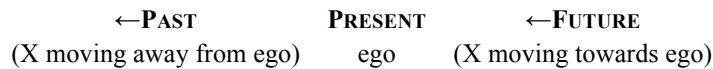
3.3 Time moving and ego moving metaphors

Both time and ego moving metaphors are common in Amharic though the former are more productive than the latter:

- (16) a. *fasika m3tt'a*
 Easter come\PFV.3SM
 'Easter has come'
- b. *fasika kob3ll3l-3*
 Easter run_away\PFV-3SM
 'Easter has run away'
- c. *k'3n j-alf-all*
 time 3SM-pass\IPFV-AUX.NPST
 'Time will pass'
- d. *l-all3f-3 k9r3mt bet aj9-ss3rra-ll3-t-9m*
 for-pass\PFV-3SM rainy_season house NEG.3SM-be_build\UOSS-APL.BEN-
 OBJ.3SM-NEG
 'A house will not be built for the past rainy season'

Specific instances of time, such as holidays in (16a–b) and generic time in (16c), are moving. The movement is expressed by motion verbs with ego as reference point, such as the coming or going of the Easter holiday in (16a–b). This can be schematically shown as follows:

Figure 2 Schematic representation of the movement of time in Amharic



The movement of time is always horizontal, from right to left or from the future to the past, and only through continuous movement on a surface, like 'going' or 'running':

- (17) a. *k'3n-u j9-rot'all*
 time-DEF 3SM-run\IPFV.AUX.NPST
 'The time runs'

- b. *k'ən-u jə-hedall*
 time-DEF 3SM-go\IPFV.AUX.NPST
 'The time goes'

The movement of time can occur in a reverse direction (left to right) in speaking about imagined events in the past in a kind of irrealis mood. In this case, remembering or recalling an instance from the past is presented as if the imagined past event is moving to the present, as in the example below:

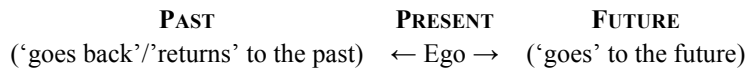
- (18) *səlb-əssə'a s-assəb jə-wətt'atənnət zəmən-e*
 about-her when.1S-think\IPFV of-youth time-POSS.1S
jə-mət'a-bb-ənn-all
 3SM-come-\IPFV-APL-1S- AUX.NPST
 'When I think about her, my time as a youngster comes to me'

In Amharic, ego can move both to the past and to the future. Ego's movement to the past is expressed by 'going back' or 'returning' as in (19b), since the normal movement of ego is from the present to the future, as in (19a).

- (19) a. *məknəjat-u-n wədə-fit jəmm-ən-dərs-əbb-ət jə-hon-all*
 reason-DEF-ACC towards-face REL-1PL-reach\IPFV-APL-OBJ.3SM 3SM-be(come)\
 IPFV-AUX.NPST
 'We will arrive at the reason in the future'
- b. *wədə-h'ala təməlləffe massəb al-fəlləg-əm*
 towards-back return\CNV.1S think\VN NEG.1S-want\IPFV-NEG
 'I do not want to return and think about the past'

Schematically, the movement of ego is presented in the following figure:

Figure 3 Schematic time movement of ego in Amharic



Unlike the time moving metaphors, the ego moving metaphors allow for a limited vertical movement, mainly expressed through 'jumping', as in (20), in which ego is jumping over a time unit in order to reach another unit lying next to it.

- (20) *mɔdhanit-u-n jɔmm-i-wɔsd-ɜw and k'ɜn ɔjjɜ-zɜllɜl-ɜ nɜw*
 medicine-DEF-ACC REL-3SM-take\IPFV-DEF one day PRG-jump\PFV-3SM COP.3SM
 'He takes his medicine every other day (lit. jumping one day)'

Simultaneous movement of time and ego is also found in Amharic time metaphors. As mentioned above, time moves from right to left (future to past), whereas the normal movement of ego is from left to right (present to future). When both time and ego move simultaneously, their movement converges at a certain point in the future. Thus, Amharic speakers talk about a 'race against time' – i.e. towards a time point in the future at which a given goal should be achieved, as in (21):

- (21) a. *kɜ-gizze gar abrɜh mɜrot' allɜ-bb-ɔh*
 with-time with together.2SM run\VN AUX.EXIST.3SM-APL.MAL-2SM
 'You have to run together with time'
- b. *addis amɜt kɜ-mɜmt'a-t-u bɜ-fit mɜtʃ'ɜrrɜs allɜ-bb-ɔh*
 new year from-come\VN-POSS.3SM at-face finish\VN AUX.EXIST.3SM-APL.MAL-2SM
 'You should finish before the coming of the new year'

In (21a), it is clear that both ego and time run, but the sense of running together is not like running alongside, but running simultaneously to reach a certain point in the future before time reaches there. In (21b), the movement of the ego against time is implied by the verb 'finish'.

4 Summary

This paper examined time metaphors in Amharic. It showed that TIME could be understood as OPPONENT, AUTHORITY, CONTAINER, GARMENT, LOAD, WEALTHY PERSON, and RESOURCE. TIME in Amharic is conceptualized through SPACE, as in the metaphor TIME IS SPACE. This metaphor is concerned with spatial orientations in terms of the dimensionality of time, the timeline, and the sequences of time units.

Regarding dimensionality, both two-dimensional and three-dimensional conceptualizations of time exist. In the two-dimensional conceptualization, the future is understood as front, but the past as back. Amharic refers to situations in time through the time moving and the ego moving metaphors, though time moving metaphors are more productive. There is no vertical movement of time

in Amharic, except for ego moving metaphors that allow ego to jump over time.

List of abbreviations

1, 2, 3	First, second, third person	NEG	Negative
APL	Applicative	NPST	Non-past
AUX	Auxiliary	OBJ	Object
BEN	Benefactive	POSS	Possessive
CNV	Converb	PFV	Perfective
COP	Copula	P	Plural
DEF	Definite	PL	Plural
F	Feminine	PRG	Progressive
IPFV	Imperfective	REL	Relativize
JUSS	Jussive	S	Singular
M	Masculine	V	Verbal noun
MAL	Malefactive		

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Aspect and Tense in Oromo

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1 Introduction

This paper examines the grammatical expressions of time vis-à-vis events, processes and states in Oromo¹ – one of the Cushitic languages spoken in a vast area in Ethiopia, from eastern Tigray in the north to Boorana in the south and from Wallagga in the west to Hararghe in the east, as well as in central and coastal regions of Kenya. The main focus of the paper is on the synchronic formal and semantic aspects of the temporal grammatical categories of the verb, viz. aspect and tense, in the eastern or Hararghe variety of Oromo. For comparative purposes, data from Wallagga (the western Oromo variety) and from Amharic will be considered.

Grammatical expressions of time in Oromo involve inflectional morphemes on verbs in synthetic structures, and combinations of a main verb with auxiliaries in periphrastic constructions. The diachronic emergence of grammatical aspect and tense, i.e. their grammaticalization, the inherent lexical aspectual nature of verbs (aktionsart) and the expression of time through adverbs will not be dealt with.

Various Oromo sketch grammars – including Viterbo (1887); Moreno (1939); Bender and Mulugeta (1976); Gragg (1976); Owens (1985); Griefenow-Mewis (2001); Banti (2010) – touch upon the temporal categories of the verb. However, except Bender and Mulugeta (1976), who attempt to distinguish between aspectual and tense categories, and Moreno (1939), who approaches the temporal features of verbs from an aspectual perspective, all other studies treat the temporal descriptions of verbs from the perspective of tense.

2 Time in the verb

The major lexical class that characteristically plays the syntactic role of the predicate denoting actions, processes and states is the verb, which is also asso-

¹ *Oromo* is the self-name of the Oromo people. They call their language *Afaan Oromoo* (lit. ‘mouth of Oromo’, that is the ‘Oromo language’). In this paper, Oromo applies to both, to the people and the language, as commonly done in the literature.

ciated with time. Temporal features of verbs may be expressed lexically, grammatically or through a combination of them. The lexical strategy involves adverbs, but the grammatical strategy involves inflection and periphrasis (including grammaticalized auxiliary verbs).

The grammatical temporal expressions of verbs are aspect and tense. They are closely related and sometimes intertwined. Adequate descriptions of the temporal grammatical features of verbs can only be obtained by dealing with both of them as each is concerned with time from a different perspective. ASPECT is concerned with ways of viewing the internal temporal structure of a situation, or in Comrie's (1985:6) words, it is the "grammaticalization of expression of internal temporal constituency" of a situation. Unlike tense, aspect does not relate the time of the situation to any other time point. The two basic aspect types in linguistic descriptions are perfective and imperfective. Perfectivity views a situation as a single whole or in its entirety, temporally bounded with an end as opposed to dividing the situation into its various phases, such as its beginning, middle and end. On the contrary, imperfectivity is concerned with the internal temporal structure of a situation thus paying attention to the phases within the situation that is stretched in time, ongoing or repeated.

TENSE is a way of relating the time of a situation to some other time. According to Comrie (1985:1), it is the "grammaticalization of location in time." In other words, tense is a grammatical category that indicates the time of a situation in relation to another (reference) time, which could be the moment of utterance or any other time implied in the utterance. Unlike aspect, tense is deictic.² It relates the time of the denoted situation to a deictic center. If, for instance, the present moment is considered the deictic center, the situation may be located at, before or after this moment (Comrie 1985:36). The tenses occurring relative to the established time point are past (prior to the deictic center), present (simultaneous with the deictic center) and future (subsequent to the deictic center). If the deictic center is another point in the discourse context, the tense relation is relative to that point. For example, in (1), the relative time reference for the non-finite verb *driving* is that of the finite verb *saw*, viz. past:

(1) *While driving in the Rift Valley, I saw a lion.*

The situation described by *driving* gets its past implication from *saw* which is overtly marked for past reference through its inflection. In fact, *saw* is the past-

2 DEIXIS is a Greek word that means 'pointing' or 'indicating' (Lyons 1969:275), i.e. locating an entity in place or time verbally.

marked suppletive form of *see*. Thus, (1) is understood as *When I drove in the Rift Valley, I saw a lion*.

In semantic terms, aspect expresses situation-internal time, whereas tense is concerned with situation-external time (Comrie 1976:3–5). It is assumed that all languages have temporal adverbs for time reference, but many languages lack grammaticalized time reference on verbs (Lyons 1969:304; Comrie 1985: 6; Binnick 1991:8).

Aspect is sometimes confused with AKTIONSART (or lexical aspect) which is functionally related to it. Aktionsart, a German term meaning ‘kind of action’, refers to lexicalized aspectual distinctions between verb classes depending on their inherent meaning, i.e. whether they denote an activity, a state, etc. (Comrie 1976:6). For example, the English verb *run* is dynamic while *love* is stative. Aktionsart may also be expressed morphologically involving derivation as, for example, in German *jagen* ‘hunt’ vs. *erjagen* ‘catch’ (Binnick 1991: 457). Unlike aspect, which is grammaticalized, obligatory and systematic, aktionsart is non-grammatical, optional and not systematic (Binnick 1991:170). In other words, aspect is an inflectional category while aktionsart is lexical, i.e. it is applicable to verbs that are distinct derivationally. Although aktionsart determines the aspectual character of verbs (based on their lexical nature), it will not be considered in this paper, which is only concerned with grammatical aspect involving inflection and/ or auxiliaries.

3 Aspect and tense in Oromo

Oromo is one of those languages which express aspect grammatically. Apart from using deictic adverbs and periphrastic expressions, Oromo usually conflates tense with aspectual categories. From the viewpoint of aspect, Oromo verbs generally occur in either of the two major aspectual categories, perfective or imperfective. As regards tense, there is a two-way division of past vs. non-past (present or future). In the following subsections, the Oromo perfective and imperfective aspect, as well as their various subdivisions along with past and non-past tense implications will be examined.

3.1 Perfective

3.1.1 General observations

The term PERFECTIVE is derived from the adjective *perfect* whose traditional meaning is ‘complete’, ‘whole’ or ‘entire’.³ Its counterpart is *imperfect* which simply means ‘not perfect’ or ‘incomplete’ situation (in the past). The perfective views a situation as a temporally bounded single whole without separating its internal phases (Comrie 1976:16). A perfective situation may have an inherent end-point or not, as shown in the following examples:

- (2) a. *k’ot-uu=titi jir-ø-a* HARARGHE
 plow-VN=LOC exist-3SM-IPFV
 ‘He is plowing (lit. He exists at plowing).’
- b. *?ooyruu k’ot-uu=titi jir-ø-a*
 plot plow-VN=LOC exist-3SM-IPFV
 ‘He is plowing (a/the) plot’ (lit. He exists at plowing (a/the) plot).’

In (2a), the verbal action may go on for an indefinite time, whereas in (2b) it implies that an end is in sight, i.e. the action will come to an end after plowing the plot is accomplished. The situation in (2b) is referred to as TELIC,⁴ but the one in (2a) as ATELIC. Comrie (1976:45) points out that verbs alone do not describe situations; arguments must be involved. Accordingly, the predicate in (2b) becomes telic through the addition of the object, which evokes an accomplishment reading, which implies an endpoint.

The perfective is usually associated with past tense. Unlike the perfective, which looks at an event as occurring at an undivided period of time, past tense relates the event time to another time, commonly the moment of speaking, i.e. it locates the event as having taken place prior to the moment of speaking. The perfective aspect in Oromo commonly conflates with past tense and thus reflects the temporal property of a situation that is completed in the past (cf. examples (4), (5), etc. below). As seen in (3a–b), the perfective in Oromo could also be interpreted as non-past situation in subordinate clauses.

3 Note that the term PERFECT, as a constituent of PRESENT PERFECT, refers to a past situation with present relevance. As a component of PAST PERFECT and FUTURE PERFECT, it refers to the prior situation in a sequence of two subsequent situations (cf. 3.1.5).

4 The term TELIC stems from ancient Greek *tēlos* ‘end’ (Comrie 1976:44).

- (3) a. *boru yoo diuf-t-e wal ark-in-a* HARARGHE
 tomorrow if come-2SG/3SF-DPT each_other see-1PL-IPFV
 ‘If you come tomorrow, we will see each other.’
- b. *boru yoo diuf-t-e wal arg-in-a* WALLAGGA
 tomorrow if come-2SG/3SF-DPT each_other see-1PL-IPFV
 ‘If you come tomorrow, we will see each other.’

Although the situations in (3) are in the future, the verb of the subordinate clause *diuf-t-e* is in the perfective form, possibly to signal the precedence of the action denoted by the verb.

The perfective in Oromo is marked by the vowel *-e* suffixed at the terminal position of a verb following the subject suffixes. It does not occur on verbs with 2/ 3PL plural subjects, which mark the perfective by a zero morpheme. Table 1 shows the perfective conjugation of the verb *deem-* ‘go’.

Table 1 Perfective conjugation (Hararghe)

SUBJECT	STEM	MARKER OF			GLOSS
		PERSON/ GENDER	NUMBER	PERFECTIVE	
1SG/3SM	<i>deem-</i>	<i>-ø-</i>		<i>-e</i>	‘I/He went’
2SG/3SF	<i>deem-</i>	<i>-t-</i>		<i>-e</i>	‘You/She went’
1PL	<i>deem-</i>	<i>-n-</i>		<i>-e</i>	‘We went’
2PL	<i>deem-</i>	<i>-t-</i>	<i>-an</i>	<i>-ø</i>	‘You went’
3PL	<i>deem-</i>	<i>-ø-</i>	<i>-an</i>	<i>-ø</i>	‘They went’

Note that the form for a 1SG subject is identical with a 3SM SUBJECT, and a 2SG subject with a 3SF subject. 2/3PL verbs are also used as honorific forms, especially in urban centers.

A perfective verb in affirmative main clauses may optionally be emphasized by the pre-verb focus marker *ni* (cf. 3.2.1):

- (4) *ni=deem-t-e* HARARGHE
 FOC=go-3SF-PFV
 ‘she went’

The perfective aspect may be either punctual (momentaneous) or non-punctual (durative) (Binnick 1991:142). Another subclass of the perfective, the re-

sultative, focuses on the boundary at which a perfective situation is completed with some sort of outcome. These aspectual subdivisions of a perfective verb in Oromo are described in the following subsections.

3.1.2 Punctual

The punctual perfective marks an action as occurring at a point in time that is indivisible and has no internal structure. It looks at the action from outside, as in the following example:

- (5) *muc'aa-n kuf-ø-e* HARARGHE
 child-NOM fall_down-3SM-PFV
 '(The) child fell down.'

The action happened just once and was completed at an indivisible point in time. Because the situation in (5) occurred before the moment of the utterance, it refers to the past, as a verb in the perfective aspect usually has a past interpretation. Note that besides the glossing of the verb in (5) as PFV (perfective), there is no special sign for the momentary occurrence of the event, i.e. the punctual is not marked morphologically in Oromo, but part of the semantics of the verb.

3.1.3 Durative perfective

According to Comrie (1976:41), perfective verbs may also describe durative situations, which, unlike the punctual perfective, involve continuation of time. A durative perfective event has a beginning and an end, whereas a punctual event has no distinguishable internal structure. The situations denoted by a punctual or durative perfective verb are telic. They are viewed in their entirety or as a single whole with no division into beginning, middle and end phases.

The durative perfective situation is perceived as a complete whole and thus the verb is structured like that of the punctual perfective in (5), as shown in (6):⁵

5 Oromo is a marked-nominative language. The subject is overtly marked for nominative case, whereas the object is in the unmarked accusative, which also functions as citation form.

- (6) *Tolaa-n kitaaba dubbis-ø-e* HARARGHE
 Tolaa-NOM book(ACC) read-3SM-PFV
 ‘Tolaa read (a/the) book.’

In (6) and also in (7), the terminal suffix *-e* indicates that the verbal situations are perfective, i.e. complete with the implication that the actions took place in the past.

A perfective iterative situation may also be considered a durative perfective. Although it involves repetitiveness of an action, it could have an end as in the following example:

- (7) *gurbaa-n daawwitii c’acc’ap’-s-ø-e* HARARGHE
 boy-NOM mirror break_into_pieces-CAUS-3SM-PFV
 ‘(The) boy broke (the) mirror into pieces.’

As in (2b), the inclusion of an object in (7) implies the telicity of the iterative action.

3.1.4 Resultative

The resultative signals a situation emerging from a past action that has happened to a patient. Usually, the patient assumes the position of the subject as in a passive construction. But unlike the passive, the resultative may also involve intransitive verbs (Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994:54). The examples in (8) demonstrate results – (8a) the burning of a house, and (8b) the loss of a ewe:

- (8) a. *man-ni keenya gub-at-ø-e* HARARGHE
 house-NOM POSS.1PL burn-MID-3SM-PFV
 ‘Our house burned.’
 b. *hoolaa-n ?isaa bad-t-e* [badde]
 sheep-NOM POSS.3SM lose-3SF-PFV
 ‘His ewe is lost.’

While (8a) is the resultative (perfective) aspect of a transitive verb assuming the structure of a middle voice construction, (8b) is a resultative of an intransitive verb. Both are complete actions in the past, and thus perfective of the sort that is evidential of the result of the verbal actions.

3.1.5 Perfect

Contrary to the other aspect types which focus on a single situation, the perfect takes two situations into consideration – a prior situation and a situation resulting from it. The present perfect signifies the present relevance of a past situation (9), while the past perfect puts a past situation in relation to another subsequent past situation (10a). Similarly, the future perfect (12) refers to a future situation in relation to a subsequent situation. Thus, the perfect adds a post-state to the situation denoted by a verb. It is considered the counterpart of the prospective aspect (Boland 2006:48) (see 3.2.2).

- (9) *ʔintal-ti bifaan fid-t-e* [fidde] HARARGHE
 girl-NOM water fetch-3SF-PFV
 i. ‘(The) girl has fetched water.’ (PRESENT PERFECT)
 ii. ‘(The) girl fetched water.’ (PAST PERFECTIVE)

In the Hararghe variety, example (9) can be interpreted either as (i) present perfect, or (ii) past perfective, depending on the context. There is no formal distinction between the two readings.

In (10), the occurrence of the two past actions invites the interpretation of one being subsequent to the other – i.e. when the first occurred the second had already taken place. Actually, (10a) has a past perfect interpretation, but (10b) represents a past perfective modified by a temporal adverbial clause. The two interpretations in (10) are distinguished by tone.⁶ The tone pattern on the matrix verb in (10a) is HH (HIGH-HIGH), but in (10b), it is unmarked, i.e. it has the tone pattern LL (LOW-LOW). Instead, the subordinated verb in (10b) received HH.

- (10) a. *hoggáa ʔati dúf-t-e ʔintal-tí déem-t-é* HARARGHE
 when 2SG come-2SG-PFV girl-NOM go-3SF-PFV
 ‘When you came, (the) girl had gone.’
 b. *hoggáa ʔati dúf-t-é ʔintal-tí deem-t-e*
 when 2SG come-2SG-PFV girl-NOM go-3SF-PFV
 ‘(It is) when you came (that the) girl left.’

6 For Oromo being a pitch-accent language, see Owens (1985:26–59, 244); Hayward and Gemetchu (1996:21–36); Shimelis (2015:41–52). Only high tone is marked by the acute accent (´), but low tone is unmarked. The tone indicated on the first of two consecutive vowels applies for the entire long vowel.

In contrast to the Hararghe variety (as in (9) and (10)), the Wallagga variety has distinct present perfect and past perfect forms, which differ from the basic perfective conjugation, as shown in (11a) for the present perfect and in (11b) for the past perfect.⁷

- (11) a. *ʔintalli bifaan fid-t-ee dʒir-t-i* [fiddeetti] WALLAGGA
 girl.NOM water fetch-3SF-CNV exist-3SF-IPFV
 ‘(The) girl has fetched water.’
- b. *yommuu ʔati duf-t-e ʔintalli ʔadeem-t-ee*
 when 2SG come-2SG-PFV girl.NOM go-3SF-CNV
dʒir-t-i [ʔadeemteetti]
 exist-3SF-IPFV
 ‘When you came, (the) girl had gone.’
- c. *yommuu ʔati duf-t-e ʔintalli ʔadeem-t-ee tur-t-e*
 when 2SG come-2SG-PFV girl.NOM go-3SF-CNV stay-3SF-PFV
 ‘When you came, (the) girl had gone.’

The perfect constructions in (11) represent a complex predicate consisting of a converb (based on the perfective aspect) followed by an auxiliary, which conjugates in the imperfective conjugation in (11a–b), but in the perfective in (11c).

What makes the constructions of the Wallagga variety in (11a–b) distinct from those of the Hararghe variety in (9) and (10) is the use of an auxiliary that is in the imperfective aspect, while the main verb is in the perfective converb form.⁸ In (11a), the imperfective verb *dʒir-ti* signifies the present relevance of the past action. In (11b), the use of the same auxiliary *dʒir-ti* for the past perfect seems strange, but the past perfect interpretation is enforced by the existence of two actions. Another option would have been employing the past auxiliary *tur-t-e*, as in (11c). Nonetheless, the speakers of the Wallagga variety are often heard using the present auxiliary in sentences with a past perfect reading.

The construction of the future perfect is no less anomalous than the past perfect, as shown for the Hararghe variety in (12a), and for Wallagga in (12b).

⁷ Note the assimilation: *ʔintal-ti* > *ʔintal-li*.

⁸ The action of the converb is completive and is, therefore, in the category perfective.

- (12) a. *hoggaa ?ati diuf-t-u⁹ ?intal-ti deem-t-e* HARARGHE
 when 2SG come-2SG-DPT girl-NOM go-3SF-PFV
 ‘When you come, (the) girl will have gone (lit. went).’
- b. *yommuu ?ati diuf-t-u ?intalli* WALLAGGA
 when 2SG come-2SG-DPT girl.NOM
?adeem-t-ee dʒir-t-i [*?adeemteetti*]
 go-3SF-CNV exist-3SF-IPFV
 ‘When you come, (the) girl has gone (will have gone).’

In both examples in (12), the first clause is headed by a subordinate imperfective verb with the implication of non-past, while the main clause contains a perfective verb in the Hararghe variety (12a), and a present perfect verb in the Wallagga variety (12b).

As examples (9), (10) and (12a) show, the Hararghe variety signals present, past and future perfect with a verb in the plain perfective conjugation, while the Wallagga variety marks the present perfect by an auxiliary with the perfective converb as coverb. The utilization of the perfective for the perfect in the Hararghe variety is also found, for instance, in Harari – an Ethio-Semitic language (cf. Beniam 2013:194).

3.2 Imperfective

3.2.1 General observations

The imperfective looks at a situation from within referring to its internal temporal structure. It is used “for setting up background situations” in discourse as opposed to the perfective which is employed “for narrating sequences of events” (Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994:126 citing Hopper 1979). The imperfective may imply present, past or future time reference. Apart from being used for ongoing situations at the time of speaking or habitual situations, the present imperfective is employed for generic situations that hold for all time (cf. Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994:126).

Oromo has two imperfective conjugations in complementary distribution. The independent imperfective (Table 2) is restricted to affirmative main clauses, whereas the dependent imperfective (Table 3) occurs in all other clause types (cf. Shimelis 2015:239).

9 The final vowel *-u* is the imperfective marker in subordinate clauses (see 3.2.1).

Table 2 Independent imperfective conjugation (Hararghe)

SUBJECT	PRE- VERB	PERSON/ NUMBER	STEM	MARKER FOR			GLOSS
				P / G	N	IPFV	
1SG	<i>ni</i>	= <i>n</i>	<i>deem-</i>			<i>-a</i>	'I (will) go'
3SM	<i>ni</i>		<i>deem-</i>	<i>-ø</i>		<i>-a</i>	'He (will) go(es)'
2SG	<i>ni</i>		<i>deem-</i>	<i>-t</i>		<i>-a</i>	'You (will) go'
3SF	<i>ni</i>		<i>deem-</i>	<i>-t</i>		<i>-i</i>	'She (will) go(es)'
1PL	<i>ni</i>		<i>deem-</i>	<i>-n</i>		<i>-a</i>	'We (will) go'
2PL	<i>ni</i>		<i>deem-</i>	<i>-t</i>	<i>-an</i>	<i>-ø</i>	'You (will) go'
3PL	<i>ni</i>		<i>deem-</i>	<i>-ø</i>	<i>-an</i>	<i>-ø</i>	'They (will) go'

The conjugation of the imperfective verb in the Hararghe variety includes an element *ni*, which Owens (1985:60) calls “pre-verb focus marker”. In (13a), *ni* is pro-cliticized to the verb. It could, however, be replaced by an adverb (13b), or co-occur with it retaining the position immediately before the verb (13c).

(13) a. *ni=deem-n-a*

HARARGHE

FOC=go-1PL-IPFV

‘We (will) go.’

b. *ʔol deem-n-a*

upwards go-1PL-IPFV

‘We (will) go up.’

c. *ʔol ni=deem-n-a*

upwards FOC=go-1PL-IPFV

‘Up, we (will) go.’

There are nuances of meaning differences between (13a) and (13b), although both refer to an imperfective event in the non-past. The construction without *ni* in (13b) emphasizes the adverb, while (13a) with *ni* highlights the verbal action through which it gets a strong future orientation. The pre-verb focus marker almost regularly occurs with imperfective verbs in affirmative main clauses, but it is optional with perfective verbs (see, e.g. example (4) in 3.1.1).

With regard to the subject markers of imperfective verbs in Table 2, the 1SG is indicated through an obligatory clitic =*n* preceding the verb. Consequently, the 1SG is not marked in the post-verb agreement slot. The 3SM and 3PL lack an overt person/gender affix, but an additional number suffix for the 3PL distin-

guishes it from the 3SM. The remaining persons are marked through specific suffixes.

The peculiar 1SG subject marking is also found with the dependent imperfective, which differs from the independent imperfective through the terminal vowel *u* (instead of *a*):

Table 3 Dependent imperfective conjugation (Hararghe)

SUBJECT	PERSON/ NUMBER	STEM	MARKER OF			GLOSS
			PERSON/ GENDER	NUMBER	IPFV	
1SG	(=n)	<i>deem-</i>			<i>-u</i>	‘I go’
3SM		<i>deem-</i>	<i>-ø</i>		<i>-u</i>	‘He goes’
2SG/3SF		<i>deem-</i>	<i>-t</i>		<i>-u</i>	‘You/She go(es)’
1PL		<i>deem-</i>	<i>-n</i>		<i>-u</i>	‘We go’
2PL		<i>deem-</i>	<i>-t</i>	<i>-an</i>	<i>-ø</i>	‘You go’
3PL		<i>deem-</i>	<i>-ø</i>	<i>-an</i>	<i>-ø</i>	‘They go’

In addition to affirmative subordinate clauses, the dependent imperfective is also utilized for a negated imperfective verb in main clauses (14a), and the affirmative jussive (14b):

- (14) a. *hin duf-t-u* HARARGHE
 NEG come-2SG/3SF-DPT
 ‘You/She will not come.’
- b. *haa duf-t-u*
 JUSS come-3SF-DPT
 ‘Let her come.’

In the sections that follow, certain sub-categories of the imperfective aspect in Oromo are discussed.

3.2.2 Prospective

The prospective is an aspectual category indicating that someone is about to do something, or something is about to happen. Semantically, it is the opposite of the perfect (cf. 3.1.5), which is a retrospective category, as it relates a state to an earlier situation (Comrie 1976:64).

Crass and Meyer (2008:242) identify two kinds of Oromo prospective expressions, which are based on a copula clause with a verbal noun marked for the dative case as copula complement. In one expression, the agent of the prospective action is the subject of the copula clause (15a). In the other expression, the subject is marked by a possessive pronoun¹⁰ at the verbal noun, but can also be additionally named in the sentence-initial subject position (15b):¹¹

- (15) a. *ani hoolaa bit-uu-f-i* HARARGHE/WALLAGGA
 1SG sheep buy-VN-DAT-COP
 ‘I am about to (going to) buy a sheep.’
- b. (*ani*) *hoolaa bit-uu koo-ti* HARARGHE/WALLAGGA
 (1SG) sheep buy-VN POSS.1SG-COP
 ‘I am about to buy a sheep.’
- c. (*ani*) *hoolaa bit-uu kiyya* HARARGHE
 (1SG) sheep buy-VN POSS.1SG
 ‘I am about to buy a sheep.’

In (15a), the verbal noun denotes a kind of purposive, while in (15b–c) it is presented as if ‘buying’ were possessed.

Oromo has more means of expressing the prospective, as shown in the following examples with a verbal predicate:

- (16) a. *hoolaa bit-uu-f deem-ø-a* HARARGHE
 sheep buy-VN-DAT go-3 SM-IPFV
 ‘He is about to buy a sheep.’
- b. *rakkoo keeysa seen-uu-f taa?-ø-a*
 trouble in enter-VN-DAT sit-3SM-IPFV
 ‘He is going to be in trouble.’
- c. *magaalaa deem-uu-f kaa-t-e*
 market go-VN-DAT rise-3SF-PFV
 ‘She is ready to go to (the) market.’

10 In Hararghe, the two 1SG possessive pronouns *koo* (15b) and *kiyya* (15c) are alternative forms.

11 The copula in Oromo is denoted by several allomorphs, including final *-i*, *-ti*, and the absence of an overt morpheme.

In (16a), the subject appears to be going to the goal ('buying'), whereas in (16b) the subject is presented as sitting and waiting to enter into trouble. Example (16c) indicates that the subject is prepared to go to the market. Thus, the prospective aspect is generally expressed by a grammaticalized periphrastic construction.

In addition, the prospective aspect may also be implied by metaphorical expressions, as in the following examples:

- (17) a. *rakkoo-tu si ʔeeg-ø-a* HARARGHE
trouble-FOC 2SG.ACC wait-3SM-IPFV
'Trouble awaits you.'
- b. *rakkoo-tu si k'unnam-ø-a*
trouble-FOC 2SG.ACC get-3SM-IPFV
'Trouble will await you.'
- c. *hiyyummaa-tu si ʔarkat-ø-a*
poverty-FOC 2SG.ACC find-3SM-IPFV
'Poverty will get you.'

Prospective constructions similar to those in (15), (16c) and (17a–c) are also encountered in Amharic, one of the Ethio-Semitic languages which is in close contact with Oromo. Both languages are also genetically related, as they belong to the Afroasiatic phylum. Below are the respective Amharic prospective constructions:

- (18) a. *bäg l-i-gäza nä-w* AMHARIC
sheep DAT/PURP-1SG-buy-IPFV COP-3SM
'I am about to (going to) buy a sheep.'
- b. *bäg mä-gzat-e nä-w*
sheep VN-buy-POSS.1SG COP-3SM
'I am about to buy a sheep.'
- c. *gäbäya lä-mä-hed tănässaff*
market DAT-VN-go rise.PFV.3SF
'She is ready to go to (the) market.'
- d. *ʔiggir yi-t'äbbik'-ih-all*
trouble 3SM-wait-IPFV-2SM.ACC-AUX.NPST
'Trouble is awaiting you.'

- e. *fīggir yi-gät'm-ih-all*
 trouble 3SM-get.IPFV-2SM.ACC-AUX.NPST
 'Trouble will get you.'
- f. *dihinnät y-agäñ-ih-all*
 poverty 3SM-get.IPFV-2SM.ACC-AUX.NPST
 'Poverty will get you.'

Of the six Amharic prospective constructions in (18), the structure in (18a) slightly differs from the Oromo example in (15a). While Amharic uses a subordinate imperfective verb, Oromo employs a verbal noun.

3.2.3 Habitual

The habitual describes a situation which is repeated over an extended period of time on different occasions (Comrie 1976:28; Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994:160). In Oromo, a plain imperfective verb can also have a habitual interpretation, referring either to present or past situations:

- (19) a. *(?isii-n) nu gaafat-t-i* HARARGHE
 (3SF-NOM) 1PL.ACC visit-3SF-IPFV
 'She visits (lit. asks) us.'
- b. *(?isii-n) dur nu gaafat-t-i*
 (3SF-NOM) in_the_past 1PL.ACC visit-3SF-IPFV
 'She used to visit us.'

The difference between (19a) and (19b) is the fact that the additional time adverb *dur* shifts the time reference of the imperfective verb to the past. Hence, the unmarked default non-past reference of the imperfective verb in (19a) was replaced by a time adverb in (19b). Such a combination of a past time adverb with an imperfective verb for denoting a habitual past situation is also encountered, for instance, in Arabic (cf. Comrie 1976:80) and Amharic:

- (20) *duro ti-t'äyyik'-än-alläff* AMHARIC
 in_the_past 3SF-ask.IPFV-1PL.ACC-AUX.NPST.3SF
 'She used to visit us.'

The Oromo construction in (21), although not common, has the same sense as that in (19b). It denotes a habitual situation in the past by combining an im-

(21) (*Pisii-n*) *nu* *gaafat-t-i* *tur-t-e* HARARGHE
 (3SF-NOM) 1PL.ACC ask-3SF-IPFV stay-3SF-PFV
 ‘She used to visit us.’

(22) *ti-t'äyyäk'-än nābbär* AMHARIC
 3SF-ask.IPFV-1PL.ACC AUX.PST
 'She used to visit us.'

(23) *gurbaa-n daawwitii c'acc'ap-s-ø-a* HARARGHE
 boy-NOM mirror break_into_pieces-CAUS-3SM-IPFV
 '(The) boy breaks/will break (the) mirror into pieces.'

Although a habitual situation may have a frequentative reading (Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994:127), Oromo does not seem to have grammatical means of marking this aspectual sub-class formally.

The progressive aspect describes an action as non-punctual, ongoing at the reference time without a fixed time limit. It is not concerned with the beginning and the end of an action, but rather with the phase between these two points. To be sustained, the progressive requires a constant supply of energy, which is not obligatory in the continuative (Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994:126). The following examples show the progressive in Oromo:

- (24) a. *haam-uu=ttii=n jir-ø-a* HARARGHE
 mow-VN=LOC=1SG exist-1SG-IPFV
 ‘I am mowing (lit. I exist at mowing).’
 b. *haammaa=r-raa=n tur-ø-e*
 mowing=on=1SG stay-1SG-PFV
 ‘I was mowing (lit. I stayed on mowing).’

The present and past progressive are denoted by periphrastic constructions, in which the progressive action is encoded in a nominalized verb followed by a locative postposition (or clitic), whereas the time reference is expressed through a stative auxiliary. The present auxiliary in (24a) is in the imperfective conjugation, while the past auxiliary in (24b) is in the perfective conjugation.

The continuative is usually considered an interchangeable category with the progressive, as both imply prolongation in time. But actually, the focus of the continuative is on maintaining uninterrupted dynamic situations (25a) or on continuance of stative situations (25b):

- (25) a. *k’onna itti ʔoof-ø-e*¹² HARARGHE
 plowing LOC drive-3SM-PFV
 ‘He continued (lit. drove at) plowing.’
 b. *hirriiba itti ʔoof-ø-e*
 sleep LOC drive-3SM-PFV
 ‘He continued sleeping (lit. drove at sleeping).’

The prolongation of dynamic and stative situations is grammaticalized by the dynamic verb *ʔoof*- ‘drive’ in combination with the locative *itti*. The perfective conjugation of *ʔoof*- ‘drive’ indicates that initiatives were taken to sustain the situation, which is still progressing.

Constructions similar to the Oromo continuative are also found in Amharic:

- (26) a. *m-aräs-u-n gäffa-bb-ät* AMHARIC
 VN-plow-POSS.3SM-ACC push.PFV.3SM-INST-3SM.ACC
 ‘He continued (lit. pushed at his) plowing.’

12 Note that Western Oromo uses the verb *fuf*- ‘continue’ in this construction.

- b. *ink'ilf-u-n* *gäffa-bb-ät*
 sleep-POSS.3SM-ACC push.PFV.3SM-INST-3SM.ACC
 'He continued sleeping (lit. pushed at his sleep).'

Oromo and Amharic have different auxiliary verbs for the representation of the continuative sense: Oromo uses *ʔoof-* 'drive' (or *fuf-* 'continue' – depending on the dialect), but Amharic has *gäffa* 'push'. Moreover, in Oromo, the nominal denoting the continuing situation is marked with a locative, whereas in Amharic, it is unmarked but cross-referred by the instrumental applicative suffix *-bb* on the verb.

The continuative auxiliary in Oromo may inflect for the perfective aspect, as in (25), or in the imperfective aspect, as in (27):

- (27) a. *k'onna* *itti* *ʔoof-ø-a* HARARGHE
 plowing LOC drive-3SM-IPFV
 'He continues/will continue plowing.'
- b. *hirriiba* *itti* *ʔoof-ø-a*
 sleep LOC drive-3SM-IPFV
 'He continues/will continue sleeping.'

While the continuative marked by a perfective auxiliary implies continuance up to the utterance time, the imperfective auxiliary expresses continuance as of the utterance time or later.

The durative denotes a situation that exists or lasts in time. It is similar in meaning to the progressive and continuative. However, the durative particularly highlights the time at which a situation (usually stative) is initiated and then continues. The progressive, in contrast, occurs with dynamic situations whose maintenance requires energy. Unlike the durative and the progressive, the continuative emphasizes the uninterruptedness of an initiated situation (whether stative or dynamic). Example (28) shows a durative situation in Oromo with the stative verb *laal-* 'see':

- (28) *Umar* *telebiyiina* *laal-ø-a* HARARGHE
 Umar television see-3SM-IPFV
 'Umar watches TV.'

Although (28) formally refers to a present situation, it is not limited to this time reading, but might also emphasize the sense of duration, as mentioned in Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca (1994:126). Example (28) could also have a habitual interpretation.

4 Conclusion

In Oromo, the category of aspect is expressed grammatically through verb inflection involving the suffixation of *-e* for the perfective and *-a* for the imperfective (with the allomorph *-u* in subordinate clauses or negative main clauses). Tense is commonly implied through the contextual use of the aspect-marked verbs. Occasionally, it is overtly indicated through auxiliaries or time adverbs. More specifically, past is not usually marked through an auxiliary in the Hararghe variety of Oromo, whereas the Wallagga variety may use the auxiliary *tur-* ‘stay’ in the perfective conjugation. This auxiliary simply follows the main verb in the imperfective aspect to denote the past habitual. Present and past perfect involve the auxiliary *ǵir-* ‘exist’ (and optionally *tur-* ‘stay’ for the past perfect) in the Wallagga variety.

Verbs inflected for the two primary aspects – perfective and imperfective – also convey various aspectual sub-readings. Sub-types of the perfective aspect include punctual, durative perfective, resultative and perfect; those of the imperfective are prospective, habitual, as well as progressive, durative and continuative. For a few specific aspectual readings, however, periphrastic constructions are employed, like a copula clause with a dative-marked verbal noun as copula complement for the prospective aspect.

Oromo usually conflates aspect and tense. Some of the aspect-tense mechanisms are shared with Amharic, which presumably result from prolonged and extensive contact within the Ethiopian linguistic area.

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Abbreviations

1	First person	LOC	Locative
2	Second person	M	Masculine
3	Third person	MID	Middle Voice
ACC	Accusative	NEG	Negative
AUX	Auxiliary	NOM	Nominative
CNV	Converb	NPST	Non-past
COP	Copula	PFV	Perfective
CAUS	Causative	PL	Plural
DAT	Dative	POSS	Possessor
DPT	Dependent-imperfective	PST	Past
F	Feminine	PURP	Purposive
FOC	Focus	S	Singular
INST	Instrumental	SG	Singular
IPFV	Imperfective	VN	Verbal noun
JUSS	Proclitic jussive marker		

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Experiencer Constructions and the Resultative Function of Impersonal Verbs in Ethio-Semitic

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1 Introduction

This paper attempts to tie in two seemingly unrelated issues, to wit experiencer constructions (verbal phrases involving a stimulus and an experiencer) on the one hand and the tense and aspect of impersonal verbs in Ethio-Semitic on the other hand, in both a Semitic and a typological perspective.

The circumstance that the perfective (formally: suffix conjugation) can express a resultative or performative function of the verb is a well-known fact in Semitic and beyond (cf., e.g., Andrason 2014 and Hasselbach-Andee 2015). What is more: scholars like Diakonoff (1988) have argued that the stative function of the suffix conjugation is primary, and the perfective function secondary in Semitic (or rather a West-Semitic innovation). (Of course, being stative is different from being resultative or performative.) The *be*-perfects in both Germanic and Romance languages (e.g., *ich bin gegangen*, *je suis allé*) are usually considered to have originated as resultative constructions. Verb forms like Greek *οἶδα* or Latin *novi* are lexicalized in the sense of ‘I know’, i.e. ‘I have acquired knowledge’:

(1) Resultative verb forms in Greek and Latin

οἶδα ‘I know’

novi ‘I know’, i.e. “I have acquired knowledge”

In Amharic, the suffix conjugation expresses the past for active verbs and either the past or the present for stative verbs (cf., e.g., Hudson 2008:111; Meyer 2016:204–206):

(2) Active vs. stative verbs in Amharic

a. ነገረ *näggärä* ‘he told’

b. ረገመ *räzzämä* ‘he was/became/is tall’

Many verb forms in this context can also be subsumed under the category “performative”. Examples from Gə‘əz are the following (cf. Hasselbach-Andee 2015:468):

(3) Resultative/performative constructions in Gə‘əz

- a. **ናሁ ረሰይኩ አምላክ ለፈርዖን**
nāhu rassayku ‘amlāka la-far’on
 behold place\PFV.1SG Lord.ACC to-Pharaoh
 ‘behold, I hereby make you (like) the Lord over Pharaoh’ (Ex 7:1)
- b. **እስመ ከመዝ አመርኩክ**
‘asma kama-zə ‘amarku-ka
 because like-DEM.SM advise\PFV.1SG-2SM
 ‘because of this I advise you...’ (2 Kings 17:11)
- c. **እስመ መሐልኩ በእግዚአብሔር**
‘asma mahalku ba-’əgzi’ab(ə)her
 for swear\PFV.1SG in-God
 ‘for I swear by the God’ (2 Kings 19:7)
- d. **ባረክናኩ በስመ እግዚአብሔር**
bāraknā-kəmmu ba-səma ‘əgzi’ab(ə)her
 bless\PFV.1SG-2MP by-name.CSTR God
 ‘we bless you in the name of God’ (Ps 128:8)
- e. **ናሁ ሂምኩክ ዮም ለአሕዛብ ወለነገሥት**
nāhu ṣemku-ka yom la-’ahzāb wa-la-nagašt
 behold appoint\PFV.1SG-2SM today to-nations and-to-kings
 ‘I appoint you today over nations and kings’ (Jer 1:10)

Resultative/performative constructions in Gə‘əz are not restricted to the suffix conjugation, however, but occur in the imperfect as well. Weninger (2000) shows that both suffix conjugation and prefix conjugation forms can be attested for one and the same verb.

In Amharic, the use of the perfective or imperfective for expressing performative actions appears to be more lexicalized. Demissie Manahlot (1988) even argues for a role of social status in this context. Still, ambiguity with respect to time reference, which is only resolved by the morpho-syntactic and semantic context, obtains in several cases (see below).

Independently of stative verbs, the resultative function of the verb in Amharic is typically reflected by the use of the compound gerund, in contrast to the use of the perfective, which expresses a completed action in the past (cf., e.g., Leslau 1995:389):

(4) Perfect vs. compound gerund in Amharic

- a. **ይህ በቅሎ እግሩ ተሰበረ**
yəh bāqlo əgr-u tāsābbārā
 DEM.SM mule foot-3SM break\PFV.3SM

‘The leg of this mule broke (either in the past or just now).’

- b. **ይህ በቅሎ እግሩ ተሰብሯል**
yəh bāqlo əgr-u tāsābr^{av}-all
 DEM.SM mule foot-3SM break\GER.3SM-NPST

‘The leg of this mule is broken.’

2 Impersonal verbs in Semitic

Cross-linguistically, impersonal verbs, or rather verbs with demoted subject, are quite widespread. However, there is considerable disagreement in the literature as to the precise definition of IMPERSONAL in this context. A working definition by the Summer Institute of Linguistics is the following:¹ “An impersonal verb is a verb that occurs only in third person (masculine) singular forms, has no specified agent, and has a dummy subject or no subject.”

Ronny Meyer (personal communication) points out that in a perspective encompassing the situation in Gurage, a more restricted use of the term impersonal might be preferable, a use which distinguishes such verbs from experiencer constructions, and verbs with expletive subjects.² In Gurage, the impersonal refers to a peculiar inflectional category of the verb, the so-called fourth person, marked by a *-j* ≈ *-i* suffix (glossed IP), which is morphologically different from experiencer constructions and verbs with a dummy subject (cf. Meyer 2011: 1238; also Goldenberg 2012:78f–79):

1 <http://www-01.sil.org/linguistics/glossaryoflinguisticterms/WhatIsAnImpersonalVerb.htm> (accessed on June 10, 2016).

2 Mohammad (2000:102) even proposes an “expletive hypothesis” in order to account for the fact that sentence-initial verbs in Classical and Modern Standard Arabic always appear in the singular, irrespective of the number of the subject.

(5) The impersonal fourth person in Wolane (Eastern Gurage)

ji- 'ätl-i nār
 3SM-kill\IPF-IP AUX
 'one used to kill'

It has to be kept in mind that impersonal verbs are language-specific. While it is grammatical in Latin to say *pluit* 'it rains' (as it is in English, German, and the Romance languages) with a dummy pronoun, Arabic requires the mentioning of an explicit subject 'rain' or 'sky', i.e. *maṭara l-maṭaru* 'it rained' ('the rain rained') or *maṭarati s-samā'u* 'it rained' ('the sky rained').

Girod (2007), among others, distinguishes between UNIPERSONAL and IMPERSONAL constructions in Arabic. In Arabic and Hebrew, the stimulus takes the (nominative marked) subject position in the expression 'to like', the experiencer being the direct object. In these two languages, such constructions appear in both perfect and imperfect, and resultativity does not play a role. Just as modal verbs, *yajūzu* 'it is permitted', *yajibu* 'it is necessary', *yanbagī* 'it behooves', etc., these verbs do not qualify as impersonal, as there is a clear subject, in the latter case the following subordinate *'an*-clause:

(6) "Reversed" subject and object in Arabic and Hebrew
 (no impersonal verbs according to mainstream Arab(ic) grammar)

- a. *'a 'ġaba-hū*
 please\ PST.SJ.3SM-3SM.ACC
 'he liked (lit. he/it pleased him)'
- b. *yusirru-hū*
 make_happy\ NPST.SJ.3SM-3SM.ACC
 'he is happy (lit. 'he/it makes him happy)'
- c. *māṣā(') ḥēn bə- 'ēn-āw*
 find\ PST.3SM mercy in-eye.P.CSTR-3SM
 'he liked (lit. he/it found mercy in his eyes)'

It appears that only some verbs in the passive qualify as genuine impersonal verbs in Arabic, e.g.:³

3 For a diachronic perspective on this issue with a lot of comparative data cf. Retsö (1982–1983).

(7) Impersonal verbs in Arabic

- a. *ḡušiya* *‘alay-hī*
 cover\PASS.PST.3SM upon-3SM
 ‘he fainted (lit. there was a covering thrown over him)’
- b. *ḡumiya* *‘alay-hī*
 put_a_roof\PASS.PST.3SM upon-3SM
 ‘he fainted (lit. there was a roof put over him)’

In modern Hebrew grammar,⁴ impersonal constructions are defined much more broadly. Melnik (2013) operates with the following eight categories, some of which also (can) include explicit subjects:

(8) Impersonal constructions in modern Hebrew

(8.1) *Environmentals*

qar *šam*
 cold.SM there
 ‘It is cold there.’

(8.2) *Experientials*

- a. *dina re‘eva*
 Dina hungry.SF
 ‘Dina is hungry.’
- b. *qar le-dina*
 cold.3SM to-Dina
 ‘Dina is (feels) cold.’
- c. *ko‘evet le-dan ha-beṭen*
 hurt\PTCP.SF to-Dan DEF-stomach.SF
 ‘Dan’s stomach hurts.’

(8.3) *Existentials*

- a. *hayta (le-dan) mesiba be-šabat*
 be\PST.3SF (to-Dan) party.SF on-Saturday
haya (le-dan) mesiba be-šabat
 be\PST.3SM (to-Dan) party.SF on-Saturday
 There was a party on Saturday.’ / (‘Dan had a party on Saturday.’)

4 For a historical perspective on Hebrew in this context cf. Mor and Pat-El (to appear) as well as Pat-El (to appear).

- b. *nišpax l-i mayim 'al ha-miqledet*
 be_spilled.PST.3SM to-1SG water.PM on DEF-keyboard
 'Water spilled on my keyboard.'

(8.4) *Modal expressions*

- a. *dina šrixa li-lmod 'anglit*
 Dina must.3SF to-learn.INF English
 'Dina must learn English.'
- b. *'asur (le-dina) li-lmod 'anglit*
 forbidden.SM (for-Dina) to-learn.INF English
 'It is forbidden (for Dina) to learn English.'

(8.5) *Impersonal passives*

- sukam ('al yad-am) še-dan yesaper l-ah*
 be_agreed.PST.3SM (by-hand-their) that-Dan tell\NPST.3SM to-3SF
 'It was agreed (by them) that Dan will/would tell her.'

(8.6) *Impersonal actives*

- šotim hamon miš ba-'areš*
 drink\PTCP.PM lots juice in.DEF-country
 'They/people drink a lot of juice in Israel.'

(8.7) *Generic 2nd person*

- ze nora taluy be-'ex še-'ata mityaxes*
 DEM.M awful(ly) dependent on-how that-you.2SM relate\PTCP.3SM
la-'inyan
 to.DEF-matter
 'It depends an awful lot on how you relate to the matter.'

(8.8) *Expletive subjects*

- ze kef (le-dina) li-lmod 'anglit*
 DEM.M fun (to-Dina) to-learn.INF English
 'It is fun (for Dina) to learn English.'

The examples in (8.2) and (8.3) show the transition to a genuine impersonal construction in that agreement between the initial verb and the subject is lost and the third person singular masculine prevails as default subject affix on the verb. For our purposes, only experiential constructions like Arabic *gušiya 'alay-hī* 'he fainted' (7) or Hebrew *qar le-dina* 'Dina is (feels) cold' (8.2b) play a role in the following.

Languages in other families, e.g. Russian, also assign the (nominative-marked) subject role to the stimulus in experiencer constructions:

(9) Impersonal verbs in Russian

menja trjaset (ot lixoradki)

1SG.ACC shake\PRS.3SG (from fever)

‘I am shaking (with fever) (lit. It shakes me (from fever)).’

Possessivity is often expressed by means of impersonal verbs (depending on the definition, see above), existence markers, or simply dative prepositions, e.g., in Hebrew and Arabic:

(10) Expression of possessivity in Hebrew and Arabic

- a. *yeš l-o* ... ‘he has (lit. there exists to him)’
- b. *’en l-o* ... ‘he has not (lit. there does not exist to him)’
- c. *la-hū* ... ‘he has ... (lit. to him ...)’
- d. *laysa la-hū* ... ‘he has not ... (lit. there is not to him)’

In (10d), there is agreement of the negative verb *laysa*, whose latter part is etymologically related to Akkadian *išû(m)* (existence) and Hebrew *yeš* (existence), with the possessed.

In many languages, impersonal experiencer verbs expressing bodily sensation occur next to intransitive verbs, e.g., in German, *mich friert* or *ich friere* ‘I am feeling cold’.⁵

Possessivity in Amharic and other Ethio-Semitic languages is regularly expressed by the existence verb *allä* (which agrees with the possessed) and the object suffix (referring to the possessor):

(11) Expression of possessivity in Amharic

አለው *allä-w* ‘he has (lit. it exists to him)’

Two more (arbitrary) verbs in Amharic, taken from various semantic classes, which illustrate the impersonal construction, are the following:

⁵ For a typological overview of the dative construction in several branches of Indo-European cf. Barðdal et al. (2012).

(12) Impersonal verbs in Amharic

- a. ገደለው *g^wäddälä-w* ‘he lacked/lacks (lit. it was deficient to him)’
 b. አጋጠመው *aggatṭämä-w* ‘he encountered / is confronted with
 (lit. it joined him)’

In (12), the use of tense is blurred. The expression *g^wäddälä-w* ‘he lacked’ in (12a) can also be understood in a resultative way (‘he is lacking’). To express the circumstance that something is missing right now (and has been missing for some while) the compound gerund is warranted (13b). In contrast, continuity, i.e. that something is missing all the time, would be expressed by the compound imperfective (13c). Lastly, the circumstance that something was missing in the past, but is no more, would be expressed by the simple gerund plus *näbbär* ‘was’ (AUX.PST) (13d). Here are the possibilities, with both *g^wäddälä-w* ‘he lacked’ and *aggatṭämä-w* ‘he encountered’:

(13) Tense and aspect in impersonal verbs

- a. ገደለው *g^wäddälä-w* ‘he lacked/lacks’
 lack\PFV-3SM.ACC
- b. ገድሎታል *g^wädlo-t-all* ‘he lacks right now (and has been
 lack\GER.3SM-3SM.ACC-NPST lacking for some time)/ he still lacks’
- c. ይገድለዋል *yəg^wädl-äw-all* ‘he constantly lacks’
 3SM.lack\IPFV-3SM.ACC-NPST
- d. ገድሎት ነበር *g^wädlo-t näbbär* ‘he lacked in the past
 ack\GER.3SM-3SM.ACC AUX.PST (but no longer)
- e. ችግር አጋጠመው *čəggər aggatṭämä-w* ‘he has/had a problem’
 problem encounter\PFV-3SM.ACC
- f. ችግር አጋጥሞታል *čəggər aggaṭmo-t-all* ‘he has a problem right now’/
 problem encounter\GER.3SM-3SM.ACC-NPST ‘he still has a problem’
- g. ችግር ያጋጥማል *čəggər yaggatṭəm-äw-all* ‘he constantly has/
 problem 3SM.encounter\IPFV-3SM.ACC-NPST will have a problem’
- h. ችግር አጋጥሞት ነበር *čəggər aggaṭmo-t näbbär* ‘he had a problem in the past’
 problem encounter\GER.3SM-3SM.ACC AUX.PST (but no longer)’

The use of the perfective (suffix conjugation), e.g. (13a, e), for expressing the resultative state is especially prevalent with impersonal verbs, as in the following two examples:

(14) Resultative function of the perfective in impersonal verbs

- a. በቃው *bäqqa-w* 'he had/has enough (lit. it was enough from him)'
- b. ቸገረው *čäggärä-w* 'he had/has (financial) problems'

3 Experiencer constructions in Amharic

Recent research on verb valency (e.g., Bickel 2011) has discussed the question of personal vs. impersonal verbs in languages across the world in connection with experiencer constructions. Mengistu Amberber (2005) constitutes an application of this line of research to Amharic. Kapeliuk (2010:213–215) gives a concise account of the issue under discussion under the heading “Unipersonal expressions of bodily ailments and sensations”.

The following collection of verbs is oriented at a list that was presented by Geoffrey Haig and Diana Forker in Bamberg on June 24, 2015. In this presentation, the (rhetorical) central question was whether the experiencer always stands in the nominative in Standard Average European, as generally assumed. This question was investigated by tracing verbs in the semantic classes SENSATION, EMOTION, COGNITION, VOLITION, and PERCEPTION. Data from Indo-European and various Caucasian languages appear to implicate a non-random distribution of personal and impersonal verbs in this context, as expressed by the respective roles of experiencer and stimulus.⁶ This will be explained below. Here are the relevant Amharic verb forms ((15), (20)–(23)). Where appropriate, corresponding German forms are juxtaposed, as they illustrate the tension between personal and impersonal verbs:

6 Indeed, Barðdal et al. (2012) attempt to reconstruct proto-Germanic “oblique subject predicates” such as “hunger”, “thirst”, and “lust” in this context. Cf. also Pat-El (to appear).

(15) Amharic experiencer constructions denoting bodily sensation

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| a. ራብው <i>rabä-w</i> | ‘he is hungry’ / | ‘er ist hungrig/ihn hungert
(lit. it hungered him)’ |
| b. ጠግው <i>ṭämma-w</i> | ‘he is thirsty’ / | ‘er ist durstig/ihn dürstet’ |
| c. በረደው <i>bärrädä-w</i> | ‘he feels cold/freezes’ / | ‘er friert/ihn friert’ |
| d. ቀዘቀዘው <i>qäzäqqäzä-w</i> | ‘he feels cold/freezes’ / | ‘ihm ist kalt’ |
| e. ሞቀው <i>moqä-w</i> | ‘he feels hot’ | / ‘ihm ist heiß’ |
| f. ደከመው <i>däkkämä-w</i> | ‘he is tired’ | |
| g. አመመው <i>ammämä-w</i> | ‘he is sick/in pain (lit. it made him sick)’ | |
| h. አላበው <i>alabä-w</i> | ‘he sweated (lit. it made him sweat)’ | |
| i. ነሰረው <i>nässärä-w</i> | ‘he had/has a nose bleeding’ | |
| j. ቆረጠመው <i>q^wärätṭämä-w</i> | ‘he had/has rheumatism (lit. it gnawed him)’ | |
| k. ዘጋው <i>zägga-w</i> | ‘he was/is short of breath (lit. it shut him)’ | |
| l. አስቀመጠው <i>asqämmätä-w</i> | ‘he had/has diarrhea (lit. it made him sit)’ | |
| m. አሳለው <i>asalä-w</i> | ‘he had/has cough
(lit. cough made him cough)’ | |
| n. አቅለሸለሸው <i>aqläšälläšä-w</i> | ‘he was/is (stomach-)sick
(lit. it made him nauseate)’ | |

While all of these verbs count as impersonal, it is not always ungrammatical to mention an explicit subject⁷ (cf. Goldenberg 2012:194ff.), e.g.:

(16) Impersonal verbs with an explicit subject

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. ራብ ራብኝ <i>rab rabä-ññ</i> | ‘I am hungry (lit. hunger hungered me)’ |
| b. ሆዴ ራብኝ <i>hod-e rabä-ññ</i> | ‘I am hungry (lit. my belly hungered me)’ |
| c. እንጆራ ራብኝ <i>ənǧära rabä-ññ</i> | ‘I am hungry for injera’
(lit. injera hungered me)’ |

Getatchew Haile (1971:104) provides comparable examples with an additional adverbial accusative:

⁷ For precisely this reason, Kapeliuk (2010:213) prefers the term “unipersonal”.

(17) Impersonal verbs with an explicit subject and an adverbial accusative

ጠጁ	አልማዝን	ራስዋን	አመማት
<i>ṭäǧǧ-u</i>	<i>almaz-ən</i>	<i>ras-wa-n</i>	<i>ammäm-at</i>
mead-DEF	Almaz-ACC	head-3SF-ACC	make_sick\PFV.3SM-3SF.ACC
‘The mead pained Almaz (on/in) her head.’			

As expected, the tense-aspect scenario sketched above in (13) also holds for this type of verbs. To take the first example, *rabä-w* ‘he is hungry’, one arrives at the following set of forms:

(18) Tense and aspect in impersonal verbs (experiencer constructions)

- a. ራብው *rabä-w* ‘he is/was hungry’
- b. ራቦታል *räbo-t-all* ‘he is hungry right now’
(and has been for some time)/ ‘he is still hungry’
- c. ራቦት ነበር *räbo-t näbbär* ‘he was hungry at some point in the past
(but no more)’

The compound imperfect form *yäräb-äw-all* ‘he is constantly hungry’, while grammatically correct, was disapproved by the consultants for this and most other experiencer verbs of this semantic category. This form can, however, have a habitual meaning: ‘whenever he gets up in the morning) he is hungry’. The preferred option to express continuity in this context is the use of an adjective as complement to the copula *näw* ‘he/it is’ (see below).

While perfective *bärrädä-w* (15c) regularly refers to animate experiencers, *qäzäqqäzä-w* (15d) typically refers to inanimate experiencers. The form *bärd yässämma-w-all* (chill 3SM.feel.IPFV-3SM.ACC-NPST) ‘he feels cold (lit. chill feels to him)’, however, was reported to occur, e.g., in doctors’ reports about the state of a patient.

Hudson (2008:118) reports a fledgling tendency to re-introduce finite verb forms alongside impersonal verbs, sometimes with a slightly different meaning, and adduces the following example (19):

(19) Opposition between impersonal verbs and finite verbs

- a. ደክመኝ *däkkämä-ññ* ‘I feel tired’
vs.
- b. ደክምኩ *däkkämkü* ‘I am (definitely) tired (lit. I toiled, worked hard)’

The consultants confirmed the existence of this semantic opposition. According to Ronny Meyer (personal communication), (19a) simply refers to the state of being tired (a kind of total stative verb, without a beginning). Here usually the cause of tiredness is not of importance. (19b), in contrast, is an inchoative verb with a left border. It is used in context in which the speaker is actively involved in some activity, which consequently results in tiredness.

(20) Amharic verb constructions denoting motion

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|--|
| a. | ደስ አለው <i>däss alä-w</i> | ‘he is happy’ |
| b. | ከፋው <i>käffa-w</i> | ‘he was sad’ |
| c. | አዘኝ <i>azzänä</i> | ‘he was sad’ |
| d. | ፈረ <i>färra</i> | ‘he feared’ |
| e. | ሰጋ <i>sägga</i> | ‘he feared’ |
| f. | ወደደ <i>wäddädä</i> | ‘he loved’ |
| g. | ፍቅር ያዘው <i>fəqər yazä-w</i> | ‘he fell/is in love’ |
| h. | አፈቀረ <i>afäqqärä</i> | ‘he adored, loved’ |
| i. | ጠላ <i>ṭälla</i> | ‘he hated’ |
| j. | አዘነለት <i>azzänä-ll-ät</i> | ‘he had pity with him
(lit. he was sad to the benefit of him)’ |
| k. | ቆጨው <i>qoçčä-w</i> | ‘it vexed/vexes him; he repented/repents’
‘er macht/e sich Vorwürfe; er bereut/e’ |
| l. | ጨነቀው <i>čännäqä-w</i> | ‘he was/is at a loss’ (lit. it embarrassed him)
‘es belastet/e ihn’ |

While *däss alä-w* ‘he is happy’ (20a) expresses more a punctual or momentary feeling (which has been going on for some time), continuity would be expressed by *dässätäñña näw* (happy_person he_is) ‘he is happy’. The COMPLETED feeling would be expressed by *däss bəlo-t näbbär* (IDPH.happy say\GER.3SM-3SM.ACC AUX.PST) ‘he was happy (but is no more)’. While *fəqər yazä-w* expresses the result ‘he fell/is in love’ (20g), *fəqər yəzo-t-all* (love seize\GER.3SM-3SM.ACC-NPST) expresses the idea that he is freshly in love (right now).

- Examples (22e) *asfällägä-w* ‘he needed’ does not function entirely like other impersonal verbs. Whereas *asfällägä-w* tends to refer to the past tense, and while the circumstance that someone needs something right now is expressed by the compound gerund *asfällago-t-all* (cause_to_want\GER.3SM-3SM.ACC-NPST) the imperfect form *yasfällög-äw-all* (3SM.cause_to_want\IPF-3SM.ACC-NPST) can also refer to the immediate present, next to its continuous-iterative function.

(23) Amharic verbs denoting perception

- a. አየ *ayyā* 'he saw'
- b. ሰማ *sämma* 'he heard'
- c. ተመለከተ *tämäläkkätä* 'he looked at'
- d. መረመረ *märämmärä* 'he examined'
- e. አዳመጠ *addammätä* 'he listened'

Looking at these five semantic classes in (15), (20) – (23), one can observe an increase in control from PERCEPTION > VOLITION > COGNITION > EMOTION > BODILY SENSATION, and at the same time a decrease in affectedness: PERCEPTION < VOLITION < COGNITION < EMOTION < BODILY SENSATION, i.e. the experiencer in the perception construction is less affected than that in the volition construction, etc. In the language survey performed by Bickel (2011), among others, the control and affectedness hierarchies are grammatically reflected insofar as a low grade of control viz. a high degree of affectedness tends to entail a switching between subject and object, in that the experiencer becomes the indirect or direct object of the stimulus. This circumstance is also nicely reflected in the Amharic data above.

Thus, in the bodily sensation class (15), the stimulus is always the subject. In the twelve examples for the emotion class (20), the stimulus is still five times the subject (viz. in a, b, g, k, l); in the nine examples for the cognition class (21), the stimulus is still three times the subject (viz. in b, d, h); but in the five examples for the volition class (22) only once, and in the five examples of the perception class (23) never. In other words, the statistics support the mentioned hierarchies, even though caution is due in the light of the relatively small database.

4 Verboids in Semitic and the reversed roles of object and subject

Verboids, a term for verb-like elements of nominal origin (cf. Rosén 1965 and Kuzar 2013), are functionally related to the constructions discussed here and constitute another case where an original subject synchronically is reanalyzed as an object. The following two cases, i.e. standard Arabic (24a) vs. dialectal Arabic (24b) and standard Arabic (24c) vs. dialectal Arabic (24d and e), are the most prominent ones in colloquial varieties of Arabic (cf. Shlonsky 1997:208):

(24) Verboids in Arabic dialects

- a. *'ind-ī* ...
 at-1SG.DEP
 'with me ...' ('chez moi ...') >
- b. *'and-i yyā-ha*
 at-1SG.DEP ACC-3SF.DEP
 'I have her/it (F)'
- c. *bi-wudd-ī* ...
 in-wish-1SG.DEP
 'in my wish ...' >
- d. *bidd-i yyā-ha*
 want-1SG.DEP ACC-3SF.DEP
 'I want her/it (F)'
- e. *'abū-k bidd-o yyā-k*
 father.CSTR-2SM.DEP want-3SM.DEP ACC-2SM.DEP
 'Your father requests you(r presence).' (cf. Elihay 2005:87)

Consequently, *'and-* and *bidd-* can be synchronically characterized as pseudo-verbs (verboids) that govern the dependent case (accusative).

In the context of impersonal verbs, Retsö (1982–1983) also points to the fact that the object in Arabic passive phrases can remain in the dependent case, e.g., *'uḥriḡa kitāban* (bring_out.PST.PASS.3SM book.ACC) 'a book was brought out'.

In modern Hebrew, and even older stages of that language, similar cases can be observed. The existence marker *yeš* 'there is', which has cognates in Akkadian *išū(m)* (existence) and Arabic *laysa* (negated existence), governs, at least in colloquial registers, the direct object marker *'et* (cf. Glinert 1989:149):

(25) Verboids in modern colloquial Hebrew

- a. *yeš ...* 'there is ...' > *yeš 'et ...* 'there is ...'
 EXIST > EXIST ACC
- b. *gam kan yeš 'et ha-be'ayot ha-'ele*
 also here EXIST ACC DEF-problem.PL DEF-DEM.PL
 'Here too there are these problems.'

Again, this construction is already attested in late Biblical Hebrew, albeit in the future tense, as the following example shows:

(26) Verboids in Biblical Hebrew

<i>'eṭ-šəṇē</i>	<i>hag-gōyīm</i>	<i>wə-'eṭ-šəṭē</i>	<i>hā-'ārāšōṭ</i>
ACC-two.M.CSTR	DEF-people.PL	CONJ-ACC-two.F.CSTR	DEF-land.PL
<i>l-ī</i>	<i>īhyenā</i>	<i>w-īrašnū-hā</i>	
for-1SG.DEP	be\NPST.3PF	CONJ-inherit\NPST_CONSEC.3PL-3SF.DEP	

'The two nations and the two lands shall be mine and we shall possess them.' (Ezek 35:10)

The concept of verboids can also be applied in a meaningful way to Ethio-Semitic, in which possession is expressed by either a preposition plus dependent pronoun (so in Gə'əz, cf. (27a)) or by an existential verb plus dependent pronoun (so in modern Amharic, cf. above (10) and (27b)):

(27) Verboids in Gə'əz and modern Amharic

- a. **ቦ / ቦቱ** *b-o / b-ottu* 'he has (lit. in him [is])'
in-3SM.ACC
- b. **አለው** *allä-w* 'he has (lit. there is for him)'
exist\3SM.PFV-3SM.ACC

Cases of syntactic reanalysis occur as well. While (28a) represents the expected stressed (topicalized) Amharic version of 'he is hungry', (28b) reflects the reanalysis of the topicalized object as a subject:

(28) Syntactic reanalysis in Amharic verboids I

- a. **እሱን** **ራብው**
əssu-n *rabä-w*
3SM-ACC be_hungry\PFV.3SM-3SM.ACC
'he is hungry (lit. him it hungers him)'
- b. **እሱ** **ራብው**
əssu *rabä-w*
3SM be_hungry\PFV.3SM.-3SM.ACC
'he is hungry (lit. he it hungers him)'

Example (28a), which was formed according to Leslau (1995:435), was met with skepticism by my consultants.

In the following example (29), one consultant rejects the object marking of the experiencer:

(29) Syntactic reanalysis in Amharic verboids II

እኔ (*እኔን)	ራሴን (*ራሴ)	አመመኝ
<i>əne (*əne-n)</i>	<i>ras-e-n (*ras-e)</i>	<i>ammäma-ññ</i>
1SG (1SG -ACC)	head-1SG-ACC (head-my)	make_sick\PFV.3SM-1SG.ACC
'I have/had a headache.'		

Based on verb agreement, the subject in (29) is third singular masculine and the object first singular. But on the co-referential overt NPs just the reverse marking occurs: 'I' – the verbal object – cannot take the accusative suffix *-n*, while 'my head' – an accusative-marked adverbial – is obligatorily marked by it.

5 Conclusion

The Ethio-Semitic (here: Amharic) scenario definitely supports the general typological observations on experiencer constructions, as far the hierarchies for control and affectedness and their grammatical encoding are concerned. In Amharic, impersonal constructions are found across the board (except for verbs of perception) but are most prominent in the realm of bodily sensation. Impersonal experiencer constructions also demonstrate the continued relevance of the concepts *STATIVE* and *RESULTATIVE* in Semitic.

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Abbreviations

ACC	Accusative	EXIST	Existence marker	P(L)	Plural
AUX	Auxiliary	F	Feminine	PASS	Passive
CONJ	Conjunction	GER	Gerund	PFV	Perfective
CONSEC	Consecutive	IDPH	Ideophone	PRS	Present
CSTR	Construct	IP	Impersonal	PST	Past
DEF	Definite	IPFV	Imperfective	PTCP	Participle
DEM	Demonstrative	M	Masculine	S(G)	Singular
DEP	Dependent	NPST	Non-past	SJ	Subject

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Contrastive Analysis of Some Occurrences in the Verbal Systems of Amharic and Tigrinya

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1 Introductory remarks

The Ethiopian community in Israel grew during the last thirty years to nearly 140,000 souls. At the highest point of the immigration between the middle of the 1980s and the 1990s most of the newcomers were native speakers of Amharic, while Tigrinya was the mother tongue of a minority of about 20%. Their relative number has decreased since then but for their benefit there still is a news summary in Tigrinya within the Amharic TV program on the State Television, and the bimonthly publication, *Yädiot Nəgat* 'Nəgat News', issued since 1999 under the auspices of the Hebrew daily *Yediot Aharonot*, contains, side-by-side, texts in Hebrew and Amharic with one of the Hebrew texts regularly translated into Amharic and Tigrinya.¹

The Amharic translation was done by the linguist Dr. Anbessa Teferra until recently while the Tigrinya version is prepared by Mr. Lă'akā-Bərhan Yəṣḥaq who is also the speaker on the Tigrinya news broadcast. Mr. Lă'akā-Bərhan, now 50 years old, comes from the Shire Zone in the Tigre Region in northern Ethiopia, particularly from the Seleklaka District in the vicinity of Axum. Although a native speaker of Tigrinya, he received all his schooling and higher education in Amharic. Consequently, his Tigrinya idiolect may include some peculiarities of Tigrinya as spoken in the Ethiopian Tigre Region, and not be entirely conforming to the written Eritrean standard, which is based on the dialect of Asmara in Eritrea.

A study of an idiolect, reduced as it may be, has the advantage of providing uniformity and consistence to the description of such a hypertrophic verbal system as the Tigrinya one, with its very high degree of variation and innumerable

1 In an effort to save from oblivion the knowledge of Amharic among young Ethiopians, especially those born in Israel, the optional study of the Amharic language (and the Ethiopian culture) was introduced into the high school curriculum as second foreign language, beside English, and as a subject for the High School Finishing Certificate. Several hundred students pass the Amharic test every year. As of August 2016 the publication of *Yädiot Nəgat* was discontinued.

possibilities of combination.² In what follows, I will deal with a few similar or divergent phenomena in the verbal systems of Amharic and Tigrinya.

Despite the same Hebrew source of the translations into the languages, identical Amharic and Tigrinya sentences are rare in the examined corpus of 35 articles, which does not make the contrastive analysis easier. The cause of this divergence mainly lies in the general nature of translation and interpretation from an SVO source language, such as Hebrew, to an SOV target language. In Amharic or Tigrinya, until the translator has read the sentence to its end or the interpreter has heard the speaker pronounce the main verb where the negation is placed, they do not know whether the action indicated by the sentence did take place or not. Therefore they have to wait and store the whole sentence in their memory until the main verb is revealed. Only then they can start translating. Given the intricacy of the Modern Ethio-Semitic syntax, the task of the translator and in particular of the interpreter demands an extraordinary memory, a difficulty which can be by-passed by resorting to a “sense for sense translation” closer to a free translation instead of a word-for-word translation (Hodges n.d.; Kapeliuk 2013).³ Consequently, despite the overall similarity in the Amharic and Tigrinya sentence structure, the result may vary considerably according to the individual style of each translator.

The Amharic texts in our corpus are more modern, fluent and follow closer the Hebrew source. The Tigrinya texts are usually more complex and use longer sentences, according to the best tradition of Ethiopian written prose. They also contain a few spelling peculiarities as compared with the Eritrean standard of Tigrinya on which W. Leslau’s (1941) *Documents tigrigna* and R. M. Voigt’s (1977) *Das tigrinische Verbalssystem* (1977) are based.

2 Spelling differences

There are a few minor peculiarities of phonetic nature in the spelling of Lă’akä-Bərhan’s Tigrinya translations as compared with the Eritrean standard, which

2 Cf. particularly R. M. Voigt’s (1977) encyclopedic work *Das tigrinische Verbalssystem* (reviewed in Kapeliuk 1980:16–23 [reprint in Kapeliuk 2009:443–479]), for instance the chapters on the combination of the copula with the relative verb in Voigt (1977:99–104, 170–175, 292–302).

3 Speaking about “Units of Translation”, Azadeh Esteki (n.d.) comments: “Translating from a S(ource)L(anguage) which is not that much related to T(arget)L(anguage) will result in choosing larger units, while closeness of SL and TL involves smaller units”, and “a free translation always chooses a sentence.”

probably are due to the fact that, not having been educated in a Tigrinya school, he sometimes reproduces his own or someone else's current speech.

The special cases concern mainly the fate of the glottal stop ʾ (*alif*) word-initially (as in examples (1a–c)), the laryngeal *h* (as in (1d) where it is completely dropped), and the vowel change in the relative marker *zə-* which receives the historical vowel *ä* of the first laryngeal root consonant,⁴ as in the examples (1e–f).⁵

- | | | |
|--------|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| (1) a. | ንኣባላት ታኮሚቴ (= ንኣባላት እታ ኮሚቴ) | TIGRINYA |
| | <i>nə-ʾabalat</i> [ʾə]ta komite | (63/B 44) |
| | to-members the committee | |
| | ‘to the members of the committee’ | |
| b. | ኣነተኹነ (= ኣነ እንተ ኹነ) | TIGRINYA |
| | ʾanä ʾəntä konä | (39/C 13) |
| | I if it_was | |
| | ‘as for me’ | |
| c. | ትኽእሉኹም (= ትኽእሉኡኹም) | TIGRINYA |
| | təkə ʾəlu-kum | (56/B 61) |
| | you.PL can-are | |
| | ‘you (PL) can’ | |

4 The behavior of the first order vowel *ä* together with the glottal stop ʾ, and with the laryngeals in general, constitutes one of the most interesting chapters of Tigrinya phonology. In isolation the glottal stop and the other laryngeals with the first order vowel are pronounced as ʾa, exactly as in Amharic. In our corpus and in present day Eritrean standard they are consistently written with the fourth order ኣ ʾa, e.g. ኣስበረ ʾasbärä ‘he caused to break’ (although historically *ኣስበረ *ʾasbärä) while the first order in the gerund of the 1SG is occasionally written as ኣ ʾä, e.g. መሊኣ mäli ʾä ‘I having filled’ (beside መሊኣ mäli ʾe with the fifth order). However, when the glottal stop ʾ of the syllable ʾa is replaced by another non-laryngeal consonant the original vowel *ä* reappears, e.g. yäsäbbər – instead of yasäbər as in Amharic, which preserves the vowel *a* of the laryngeal in all its combinations with another consonant. On the other hand the historical Tigrinya fourth order vowel ʾa is preserved even if the glottal stop is absorbed by another consonant, e.g. ን-ኣብ nə-ʾab results in ኖብ nab ‘to’. Perhaps it is not superfluous to add that in spoken Hebrew the laryngeal *h* is almost inexistent, the same applies to the glottal stop ʾ (cf. footnote 8).

5 The examples are quoted by number of the issue, column and line; round parentheses contain elements, which are in the text and should be omitted in the translation; square brackets contain elements to be added to the source. In the English translation of Amharic and Tigrinya tenses English grammatical rules are disregarded.

- d. 50 ሺቼል ክቡኒ (= ክ-ህቡኒ) ንወለደይ ሓቲቴ TIGRINYA
 50 sheqel kə-bu-ni nə-wäläddä-y ḥaṭṭe⁶ (43/A 19-20)
 50 shekel⁷ that-they_give-me to-parents-my I_having_asked
 ክቡኒ (=ክ-ህቡኒ) አይካሉን
 kə-bu-ni 'ay-ka 'alu-n
 that-they_give-me not-they_could-not
 'When I asked my parents to give me 50 shekel they couldn't give me'
- e. ዘአተው (=ዝ-አተው) TIGRINYA
 zä-atäwu (53/A 5)
 who-they_came
 'who came (PL)'
- f. ዘሃበቶ (=ዝ-ሀበቶ) TIGRINYA
 zä-habät-to (63/B14)
 which-she_gave-him
 'which she gave him'

Very common is the elision of the glottal stop ' at the onset of the copula 'əyyu which is almost always dropped in these texts and replaced by an apostrophe (or even without it), as shown in Table 1, especially when it serves as an auxiliary, which could point to a full grammaticalization of the compound tenses with the copula (1c).

Table 1 Amharic and Tigrinya present tense copula paradigms

	AMHARIC	TIGRINYA
3SM	ነው <i>näw</i>	እዩ/ጎዩ 'əyyu/-'yyu
3SF	ነች/ናት <i>näčč/nat</i>	እያ/ጎያ 'əyya/-'yya
2SM	ነህ <i>näh</i>	ኢኻ/ጎኻ 'ika/-'ka
2SF	ነሽ <i>näš</i>	ኢኸ/ጎኸ 'iki/-'ki
1S	ነኝ <i>näññ</i>	እየ/ጎየ 'əyyä/-'yyä
3PC/PM	ናቸው <i>naččäw</i>	እዮም/ጎዮም 'əyyom/-'yyom
3PF		እየን/ጎየን 'əyyän/-'yyän
2PC/PM	ናችሁ <i>naččəhu</i>	ኢኹም/ጎኹም 'ikum/-'kum
2PF		ኢኸን/ጎኸን 'ikən/-'kən
1PC	ነን <i>nän</i>	ኢና/ጎና 'ina/-'na

6 The form ḥaṭṭe for expected ḥaṭitā reflects the influence of Amharic orthography.

7 Israeli currency.

Table 2 Tigrinya plain and relative imperfective of the verb 'break'

PLAIN IMPERFECTIVE			RELATIVE IMPERFECTIVE			
Lä'kä-Bərhan			Eritrean			
3SM	ይሰብር	yəsäbbər	ዝሰብር	zəsäbbər	ዝሰብር	zəsäbbər
3SF	ትሰብር	təsäbbər	ትሰብር	təsäbbər	እትሰብር	'əttəsäbbər
2SM	ትሰብር	təsäbbər	ትሰብር	təsäbbər	እትሰብር	'əttəsäbbər
2SF	ትሰብሪ	təsäbri	ትሰብሪ	təsäbri	እትሰብሪ	'əttəsäbri
1S	ይሰብር	yəsäbbər	ዝሰብር	zəsäbbər	ዝሰብር	zəsäbbər
3PC/PM	ይሰብሩ	yəsäbru	ዝሰብሩ	zəsäbru	ዝሰብሩ	zəsäbru
3PF	ይሰብሩ	yəsäbra	ዝሰብሩ	zəsäbra	ዝሰብሩ	zəsäbra
2PC/PM	ትሰብሩ	təsäbru	ትሰብሩ	təsäbru	እትሰብሩ	'əttəsäbru
2PF	ትሰብሩ	təsäbra	ትሰብሩ	təsäbra	እትሰብሩ	'əttəsäbra
1PC	ነሰብር	nəsäbbər	ነሰብር	nəsäbbər	እነሰብር	'ənnəsäbbər

Another characteristic case is the preformative of the imperfective in which the *alif* of the 1SG is consistently replaced by *yə-*, exactly as in the third person;⁸ see Table 2 and example (2):

- (2) መሸላ ይዘርእ ነረ። አባይ ... ዝተበላሸው TIGRINYA
mäšəlla yə-zärrə' nerä. 'abbo-y zə-täbälašəwu (52/B 16-19)
 sorghum I-sow I_having_been father-my which-were_damaged
 ጠበናጁ ይፅግንን ይዕርን ነሩ
täbänaḡu yəṣəggən-ən yə'ərrəy-ən neru
 guns he_repairs-and he_fixes-and he_having_been
 'I was sowing sorghum. My father ... was repairing and fixing damaged guns'

But if the imperfective is preceded by a conjunction ending in a consonant or with the sixth order vowel *ə* or by the relative marker *zə-*, the prefix *yə-* dis-

8 This anomaly is not repeated in two other texts which I have consulted. They were written by Tigrinya speakers from the Tigre Region in Ethiopia and destined, among others, to schools in that region, namely ወፍሪ ምድሓን 'The Salvation Campaign' and ተጋድሎ – ሓቀኛ ታሪካት ቃልሲ 'The Struggle – True Stories of Fighting' (Addis Ababa, Mega Printing Enterprise, 1992 E.C.). It is interesting to point out that the same change occurs in sub-standard Israeli Hebrew in the language of children and in a lower register of adults. It is not impossible that Hebrew had some influence on the translator's pronunciation since he has been living in Israel for more than 25 years.

appears in all the third persons; this procedure, contrary to Amharic, is also current in the Eritrean standard (cf. Table 2 and example (3)).

- (3) a. እንታይ ከምዝስመዓና አይሓቱናን TIGRINYA
əntay käm-zə-səmmä 'a-nna 'a-yəḥattu-na-n (43/A 11-12)
 what how-that-it_is_felt-us not-they_ask-us-not
 'They don't ask us what we are feeling'
- b. ምን እንደሚሰማን ... አይጠይቁንም AMHARIC
mən əndä-mmi-ssämma-n a-yəṭäyyəqu-n-mm (43/A 8-10)
 what that-which-it_is_felt-us not-they_ask-us-not
 'They don't ask us what we are feeling'

The most significant peculiarity of Lă'kä-Bərhan's orthography concerns the relative verb. In those forms of the imperfective in which the Eritrean standard has 'ə (but not zə-) as the relative marker, namely before the consonantal person preformatives of the imperfective *n-* and *t-* and occasionally before the *tä-* prefix of the reflexive verb stem (Leslau 1941:61–63), the *alif* is not indicated in writing and we obtain what seems to be asyndetic relative forms, as in Table 2 and the following examples (4)–(6):

- (4) a. አብ ሚ/ር ገንዘብ ብናይቲ ቤት ፅሕፈት ዋና TIGRINYA
'ab mi/r gänzäb b-nay-ti bet şəḥfät wanna (63 A 28-30)
 in ministry money by-of-the house writing main
 አካያዲ ስራሕ ትምራሕ ኮሚቴ
'akkayadi sərəḥ təmərrah komite
 executive work she_is_led committee
 'the committee [which is] headed by the director of the main office at the ministry of finance'
- b. በገንዘብ ሚኒስቴር ሥራ አስኪያጅ የሚመራው AMHARIC
bä-gänzäb minister səra askiyyaḡ yämm-immärra-w (63/A 17-19)
 by-money ministry work executive which-they_are_led-the
 የተለያዩ መሥሪያ ቤቶች
yä-täläyayyu mäsriya bet-očč
 which-are_diverse tool house-PL
 'various offices at the ministry of finance which are headed by the director'

- (5) ንምንታይ ኢና ናይ ባዕልና ሂወት ዘይንመርሕ ? TIGRINYA
nəməntay 'ina nay ba 'lə-na hiwät z-ay-nəmürrah? (43/B 45)
 for_what_it_is we_are of self-our life that-not-we_lead
 ንምንታይዩ ብኻልኡት ንምራሕ?
nəməntay-'yyu bə-kal'ot nəmərrah?
 for_what-it_is by-others we_are_led
 ‘Why is it that we don’t lead ourselves our own lives? Why is it [that] we are led by others?’

- (6) ድሕሪ ተወሰኑ ደቃይቅ TIGRINYA
dəhri tāwässānu dāqayəq (52/21)
 after they_were_determined minutes
 ‘after determined (lit. were determined) minutes’

We know that an asyndetic relative verb in the imperfective exists in Gu-rage dialects (Leslau 1999:32–33), and in Old Amharic, beside relative imperfective verbs marked with *yä-mm-*, as is the norm in current Amharic, in which a few asyndetic relative imperfective verbs still persist in adverbs such as *yələq* ‘more’, *yəbält* ‘exceeding’ (simple imperfective of *laqä* ‘excel’ and *bällätä* ‘surpass’) and a few others (Goldenberg 1977:487–489; Kapeliuk 2011:86–87). However it seems that these Tigrinya constructions are not to be considered as a morphological or syntactic peculiarity of the kind of Tigrinya written by other native speakers from Ethiopia and may perhaps be classified as a colloquial form used by Lă’kä-Bərhan.

3 Verb and copula

Table 3 shows that the basic verb forms in Tigrinya and Amharic are formally almost completely similar:

Table 3 Comparison of basic verb forms in Tigrinya and Amharic

	CONJUGATION	TIGRINYA	AMHARIC	
	Common (written) verb forms			
a.	PERFECTIVE	ነገረ	<i>näggärä</i>	‘he told’
b.	IMPERFECT	ይነግር	<i>yənäggär</i>	‘he tells’
c.	JUSSIVE/	ይነገር	<i>yəngär</i>	‘he should tell’
	IMPERATIVE	ነገር	<i>nəgär</i>	‘tell (2SM)!’

CONJUGATION		TIGRINYA		AMHARIC	
Distinct verb forms					
d.	GERUND	ነገሩ	<i>nägiru</i>	ነግሮ	<i>nägro</i> ‘he telling’
e.	INFINITIVE	ምንጋር	<i>məngar</i>	መንገር	<i>mängär</i> ‘to tell’

However the divergence in the use of these forms both alone and in combination with auxiliaries is great, much more so than one would expect from two languages not so far apart. If we compare, for instance, the verb usage in Tigrinya and Amharic with German and English or with French and Italian (as sometimes done in the literature), we see that the difference between Amharic and Tigrinya is much greater than in these languages.

There are two main phenomena, which strike us at the first sight when we compare the verb occurrences in Amharic and Tigrinya texts. First, Tigrinya frequently uses simple verb forms as main verbs which in Amharic can only be used in subordination or in negation, but obligatorily co-occur with an auxiliary in main clauses. In Amharic only the perfective and the jussive/imperative may be used as main verbs. The imperfective and the gerund are restricted to subordinate clauses or demand an auxiliary to act as main verbs. In Tigrinya, however, the four basic verb forms (a)–(d) in Table 3 can act as main verbs in affirmative clauses. Perhaps the reason of this sharper distinction between subordinate and main verbs in Amharic lies in its being more influenced than Tigrinya by Cushitic languages, notably by Agäw, in which the distinction between main, negative and subordinate verb forms represents a very prominent feature of the verb systems (Hetzron 1969; 1976; Appleyard 1975; Kapeliuk 2002:33–40 [reprint in Kapeliuk 2009:408–429]).

In example (7) the simple Tigrinya imperfective corresponds to the Amharic imperfective with the existential auxiliary *allä*, while in (8) the simple gerund in Tigrinya is paralleled in Amharic either by the perfective⁹ or the gerund with the auxiliary *allä*.

- (7) a. ብሓይሊ ፍታሕ አይርከብን ዝብል TIGRINYA
bə-ḥayli fətaḥ ʾay-ərəkkäb-n zə-bəl (44/A 30–32)
 by-strength solution not-it_will_be_found-not which-it_says

⁹ According to oral information by the Amharic translator, he used the perfective in the first clause in (8b) because the action occurred some time ago.

- መንፈስን አመለካኸታን ክህልወና ይግባእ**
mānfäs-n 'ammäläkakta-n kə-həlləw-ännä yəgəbba'
 spirit-and manner_of_considering-and that-it_exists-us it_is_necessary
 'It is necessary for us to have a mentality and point of view that [it]
 won't find a solution by force'
- b. **በጠብ ችግሮችን መፍታት እንደማይቻል** AMHARIC
bä-ṭäb čəggər-očč-n mäftat əndä-mm-ay-əččal (44/ A 47-50)
 by-quarrel difficulty-PL-ACC to_solve that-which-not-is_possible
 'It is necessary for us to know that our problems can't be solved by violence'
- ማወቅ ያስፈልገናል**
mawäq yasfällägä-n-all
 to_know it_is_necessary-us-it_exists
 'It is necessary for us to know that our problems can't be solved by violence'
- (8) a. **ፈለማ ... ናይ ጸሎት ትምህርቲ ተኸታተሉ።** TIGRINYA
fäläma nay šälot təmhərti təkätatilu (69/B 13-21)
 first of prayer study he_having_followed
ብድሕሪኡ ... ቡራኪታት ተማሂሩ
bə-dəhri'u burake-tat tūmahiru
 in-after_its blessing-PL he_having_learned
 'First ... he followed the study of prayer. Later ... he learned the blessings'
- b. **በቅድሚያ ... የጸሎት ሥርዓቶችን ተማሩ።** AMHARIC
bä-qədmīya yä-šälot sər'at-očč-n tāmāru. (69/B 3-19)
 first of-prayer rule-PL-ACC he.POL_learned
በመቀጠል ... ቡራኪዎችን ተምረዋል
bä-mäqāṭṭäl burake-wočč-n tāmräw-all
 in-following blessing-PL-ACC having_learned-he_exists
 'First ... he studied the rules of the prayer. Following ... he has learned the blessings'

As shown in (8), the Tigrinya simple gerund *nägiru* in main clauses corresponds in our corpus both to the Amharic perfective *näggärä* and to the compound gerund *nägro-all*, which serves as a present perfect and is by far the dominant past tense in the Amharic press jargon (Kapeliuk 1974 [reprint in Kapeliuk 2009:287–298]; 1997:496–497 [reprint in 2009:129–130]). In our Tigrinya texts the simple gerund has completely ousted the perfective from affir-

mative main clauses; there is only a handful of cases of perfective conjugated *nägärä* verbs in affirmative main clauses in the whole corpus.¹⁰

The same applies to the past form of the copula and of the verb of existence (i.e. the perfective verb *näbbärä* in Amharic; *näbärä* in Tigrinya), which disappeared completely from the main clauses and as an auxiliary in our Tigrinya corpus and appears instead as a gerund either under its contracted form *neru* (from **näbiru* > *näyru* > *neru*) (9), or more often in the strange composed form *'äyyu neru* lit. 'is having been' (10) to which I will return at the end of the article.

- (9) a. ... **ዝብል መንፈስን አተሓሳስባን ኣብ ኢትዮጵያ ኔሩ** TIGRINYA
zə-bəl mənḥäs-n 'attäḥsasba-n 'ab 'ityop̣ya neru (44/C 23-25)
 which-says spirit-and manner_of_ in Ethiopia it_having_been
 thinking-and

'In Ethiopia there was a mentality and a way of thinking which says so and so'

- b. **በኢትዮጵያ ... የሚል አስተሳሰብ ነበር** AMHARIC
bä-ityop̣p̣əya yämm-il astäsasäb nābbär (44/A 42-44)
 in-Ethiopia which-it_says manner_of_thinking it_was
 'In Ethiopia there was a mentality and a way of thinking which says so and so'

- (10) a. **ሓያል ግድ ዝወቐሉዎን እዩ ኔሩ** TIGRINYA
 (= **ዝወቐሉ-እዎን**) (61/15)
ḥayyal may zə-wäqə 'a-llu 'wan 'äyyu neru
 strong water which-it_fell-in_it-time it_is it_having_been
 'It was a time in which an abundant rain fell'

- b. **አንድ በጣም ዝናብ የበዛበት ቀን ነበር** AMHARIC
and bätam zəṇab yä-bäzza-bbä t qän nābbär (61/15)
 a very rain which-was_much-in_it day it_was
 'It was a time in which there was an abundant rain'

The second striking phenomenon in Amharic and Tigrinya is that within the framework of the already relatively frequent appearances of the copula in

10 This is not the case in the other two Tigrinya sources cited in footnote 8 where the perfective **ነገ** *nägärä* is often used in narration while the simple gerund **ነገሩ** *nägiru* is almost restricted to dialogues.

Ethio-Semitic in general, Tigrinya has more occurrences of the copula than Amharic by about one third. One of the reasons is that where Amharic traditionally employs only the verb of existence *allä* as auxiliary to create the main verb forms *yänägr-all* (present/future) and *nägro-all* (present perfect), Tigrinya currently uses as main verbs, beside the bare forms *yänäggär* (which marks the general or the actual present) and *nägiru*, (for the past) as exemplified in (7) and (8), also compound forms (11) – both with the verb of existence *'allo* referring clearly the action to *hic et nunc* (12)–(13) and with the copula *'äyyu* (14)–(15).

(11) MAIN CLAUSE IMPERFECT

TIGRINYA			AMHARIC
ይነግር	ይነግር ኣሎ	ይነግር እዩ	ይነግራል
<i>yänäggär</i>	<i>yänäggär 'allo</i>	<i>yänäggär 'äyyu</i>	<i>yänägr-all</i>
he_speaks	he_is speaking	[certainly?]	he_speaks/he_is
	he_exists	he_speaks he_is	speaking-he_exists

MAIN CLAUSE GERUND

TIGRINYA			AMHARIC
ነገሩ	ነገሩ ኣሎ	ነገሩ እዩ	ነግሮአል
<i>nägiru</i>	<i>nägiru 'allo</i>	<i>nägiru 'äyyu</i>	<i>nägro-all</i>
he_having_	he_having_spoken	he_having_spoken	he_having_
spoken	he_exists	he_is	spoken-he_exists

- (12) a. ካብ ገዝኦም ወጺኦም ፈቆድኡ ዝኸዱ TIGRINYA
kab gäz-'om wäši-'om fäqod'u zə-kädu (54/6-8)
 from houses-their they_having_gone_out anywhere who-they_go

ዘለው መናእሰያት ተስተውዕልዎምዶ ኣለኹም?
z-älläwu mäna 'äsäy-at tästāw 'älə-wwom-do 'allakum
 who-they_exist youngster-PL you_pay_attention-them-Q you.PL_exist

‘Do you pay any attention to the youngsters who go out of the house and go anywhere they want?’

- b. **ልጆችን ... በመዝናኛ ቦታዎች ምን** AMHARIC
ləǧ-očč-aččən bā-mäznaña bota-wočč mən (54/A 5-10)
 child-PL-our in-[of]-pastime place-PL what

እያደረጉ እንደሆነ ታውቃላችሁ?

əyyadärrägu əndä-hon tawq-allačəhu

while_they_did that-it_is you.PL_know-you.PL_exist

‘Do you know what our children ... are doing in the places of leisure?’

[While celebrating the 30th anniversary of the recognition of *Betä Israel*¹¹ as Jews by the rabbi Ovadya Yossef:]

- (13) a. **ናይ ሱዳን መንገዱ ... አጃሪዎም ናብ እስራኤል** TIGRINYA
nay sudan mängäddi 'aqq'arišom nab 'əsra'el (53/A 4-6)

of Sudan way they_having_crossed to Israel

ዘአተው ቀደሞት ይሁደ-ኢትዮጵያ አስታት 30 ዓመት
zä-'atəwu qäddamot yəhudä-'ityopya 'astat 30 'amät
 who-they_came first Jews_Ethiopia¹² almost 30 year

ኮይንዎም አሎ
koyñə-wwom 'allo
 it_was-them he_exists

‘It has been (for them) [now] almost 30 years since the Ethiopian Jews have come to Israel ... having crossed by way of Sudan’

- b. **ከኢትዮጵያ በሱዳን በኩል ወደ እስራኤል ለመምጣት** AMHARIC
kä-ityoppəya bä-sudan bakkul wädä əsrael lä-mämṭat (53/A 1-2)

from-Ethiopia by-Sudan side to Israel for-to_come

የተደረጉ ጉዞች 30 ዓመት አስቆጥረዋል
yä-tädärrägu guzo-wočč 30 amät əsq'ätṭrəw-all
 which-they_were_done trip-PL 30 year it_having_made_count-
 it_exists

‘The trips made from Ethiopia via Sudan to arrive to Israel have [just] reached 30 years’

[Speaker A complains about the absence of interpreters from Amharic to Hebrew in health clinics, and speaker B argues:]

11 *Betä Israel* ‘the House of Israel’ is the self-defining term of the Ethiopian Jews in Israel; *bet*, literally ‘house’, has here the meaning ‘community’.

12 The Tigrinya term *yəhud-ä 'ityopya* is the construct-state form of Hebrew ‘the Jews of Ethiopia’ which has been adopted in *Yädiot Nəgat* for the Ethiopian Jews. Its Amharic equivalent in (15b) is *yəhudi-wočč* with the Hebrew form *yəhudi* ‘Jew’ and the Amharic plural suffix.

- (14) a. **ውድብና... ናይ ስልኪ ትርጉም ግልጋሎት ይህብ እዩ** TIGRINYA
wəddəb-na nay səlki tərgum gəlgalot yəhub 'əyyu (67/A 50-54)
 team-our of tele- translation service it_gives it_is
 phone
 'Our organization ... provides translation service by phone'
- b. **የአስተርጓሚው ቡድን ... ቴሌፍኖኒ የትርጉም** AMHARIC
yä-astärgwami-w budən telefonawi yä-tərgum (67/D 27-28)
 of-translator-the team telephonic of-translation
አገልግሎት ወዲያውኑ ይሰጣል
agälgəlot wädiyawnu yəsät-all
 service immediately it_gives-it_exists
 'The translating team ... provides immediately translation service by phone'

[The writer emphasizes that although all the formalities have been completed the persons concerned were not allowed to immigrate to Israel:]

- (15) a. **ይጽበዩ ካብ ዘለው 3000 ሰባት** TIGRINYA
yəṣəbbäyu kab z-älläwu 3000 sābat (63/B 15-16)
 they_wait from who-they_exist 3000 men
ናይ ምዕራይ ክይዲ ተፈጻሚ-ጎሣ
nay məṣṣəray käydi täfṣṣimu-'yyu
 of clearance procedure it_having_been_finished-it_is
 '[Definitely] the checking procedure of 3000 people who were waiting has been completed'
- b. **በመጠባበቅ ላይ ካሉ ይሁዲዎች** AMHARIC
bä-mättäbabäq lay k-allu yəhudi-wočč (63/B 9-11)
 in-to_wait upon from-[who]-they_exist Jew-PL
የ3 ሺህ ሰዎች ማንነት ፋይል ተጣርቶአል
yä-3 ših säwočč manənnät fayl tātarto-all
 of-3 thousand person-PL identity file has_been_cleared-it_exists
 'The identity file of 3000 Jews who are waiting has been cleared'

The copula as an auxiliary, as in (15a), adds a pragmatic nuance of assertion or insistence to the statement. It is used often in direct speech or in an argumentative context (Voigt 1977:170–173, 292–295; Polotsky 1985:289–290). The copula 'əyyu may even be added to the verb of existence 'allo itself:

- (16) ...በማለት ዝቃወሙ አለው እየም TIGRINYA
 ...*bə-malät zə-qqawwämu 'alläwu 'əyyom* (78/C 2-3)
 in-to_say who-they_oppose they_exist they_are
 'There are those who oppose [it] saying so and so'

It seems that the copula as an auxiliary has also been introduced in Amharic relatively recently¹³, sometimes around the middle of the 20th century, possibly under the influence of English, in two frequent constructions for the actual/continuous present. We witness in modern Semitic in general a real effort to overcome the vagueness as to tense, and the ambiguity between general and actual present reading inherent in the historical form of the Semitic imperfective (Kapeliuk 2010:129–120).

Tigrinya expresses the actual/continuous present by adding the existential auxiliary to a perfective verb preceded by the element *'anna*, as in (17a) or (18a). As for Amharic, the actual/continuous present can be denoted by an infinitive verb plus the locative circumposition *bä- ... lay* 'upon', which becomes a main verb form by combining with the copula *näw* (17b). In subordination, the locative-marked infinitive without copula and without the postposition *lay* acts as a gerund with present time reference denoting concomitance (Kapeliuk 1988:61–62). Amharic has another construction for the actual/continuous present based on a circumstantial subordinate clause marked by a perfective verb with the element *əyyä-* (18b) – which, by the way, is identical in its composition to Tigrinya *'anna* plus perfective verb in (18a):

- (17) a. ... ህጌ ንክፀድቅ እናፀናና ኢና TIGRINYA
həggi nə-kəṣäddəq 'anna-ṣä 'arna 'ina (67/C 14)
 law that-it_becomes_ratified while-we_toiled we_are
 'We are striving to have a law ratified ...'
- b. ... አገች እንዲጸድቁ AMHARIC
həgg-očč ənd-iṣädqu (67/F 13-14)
 law-PL in_order-that_they_are_ratified
 በመታገል ላይ ነው
bä-mättagäl lay näw
 at-struggling upon it_is [=we_are]
 'We are striving to have a law ratified ...'

13 Preferably frozen in the 3SM in contemporary texts, which is a sign of grammaticalization.

- (18) a. መሐዘትና እናተፀበይናኢና TIGRINYA
māḥazut-na 'anna-täṣäbüyna 'ina (54/19-20)
 boy_friends-our while-we_waited we_are
 'We are waiting for our friends'
- b. ጓደኞቻችን ሊወስዱን እየመጡ ነው AMHARIC
gʷaddäññočč-aččən l-iwäsdu-n äyyä-mäṭṭu näw (54/A 37)
 friends-our that-they_take-us while-they_came it_is
 'Our friends are coming to fetch us'

Moreover, a parallel use of the copula in Tigrinya and Amharic is often found in clauses in which the verb is deconstructed into its relative form plus the copula to render static predication as opposed to the dynamic predication of a common verb form (19). Such clauses are often found in both languages in introductory or descriptive passages of a text (Kapeliuk 1980:19–20 [reprint in Kapeliuk 2009:470–472]; 1988:146–157).

- (19) a. ንኣሊሙት ምክንያት ክኾኑ ዝክእሉ TIGRINYA
nə-ʾalimut¹⁴ məknəyat kə-konu zə-kə ʾəlu (44/D 1-3)
 to-violence cause that-they_become who-they_can
 ነገራት ብዙሓትን ዝተወሳሰቡንዮም
nägərat bəzuḥat-n zə-täwäsasäbu-n- 'yyom
 things many:PL-and which-they_are_complicated-and-they_are
 'The causes of violence can be many and (who are) complicated'
- b. የጠብ መነሻዎች የተወሳሰቡ ናቸው AMHARIC
yä-täb männäša-wočč yä-täwäsassäbu naččäw (44/A 60)
 of-quarrel means_of_rising-PL which-they_are_ they_are
 complicated
 'The motives of violence are (which are) complicated'

Similarly, in both languages, the relative copula verb (Amharic *yä-honä*; Tigrinya *zə-konä* – (20)) and the gerund of the copula verb (Amharic *hono*; Tigrinya *koynu* – (21)) are encountered respectively in determination/apposition and in verbs demanding a predicative complement, rendering on the surface the underlying syntactical relations (Kapeliuk 2005 [reprint in Kapeliuk 2009:173–184]):

14 Hebrew: 'violence'.

- (20) a. ናይ ደቂ ኣንስትዮ ፍሉይ ሓኪም ዝኾነ TIGRINYA
nay däqqi 'anəstiyo fəluɣ hakkim zə-konu (75/20-21)
 of children female special doctor who-he.POL_is
ፕሮፌሰር ር. ጋ.
profesär R. G.
 professor R. G.
 ‘Prof. R. G. (who is) a gynecologist’
- b. ዋና ሥራ ኣስኪያጅ የሆኑት ፕሮፌሰር ር. ጋ. AMHARIC
wanna səra askiyyağ yä-honu-t profesär R. G. (75/A 9-10)
 main work executive who-he.POL-is professor R. G.
 ‘Prof. R. G. (who is) the director’
- (21) a. ናይ ፈለጎታ ኢትዮጵያዊ ይሁዲ ቀሺ ኮይኑ TIGRINYA
nay fälämta 'ityopɣawi yəhudi qäšši koynu (69/ A 17-18)
 of beginning Ethiopian Jew priest he_having_been
ተሸይዎ አሎ
täšoymo 'allo
 he_having_been_ordained he_exists
 ‘He has been ordained (being) [as] the first Ethiopian Jewish minister [in Israel]’
- b. ቄስ ሆኖ ከተሾመ በኋላ AMHARIC
ges hono kä-täšomu bähwala (69/B 15)
 priest he_being from-was_ordained after
 ‘after he was ordained (being) [as] minister’

The similar use of the copula is especially prominent in cleft sentences, which are very frequent in any text in Amharic or Tigrinya. However, in our Tigrinya corpus they are considerably more frequent than in its Amharic counterpart, which contributes greatly to the larger number of copulas and of relative verbs in our Tigrinya version as compared with Amharic (Kapeliuk 1980 [reprint in Kapeliuk 2009:463–479]). It is partly due to the translator’s style and partly to the fact that Tigrinya tends to use compound tenses and to relativize both the verb and the auxiliary whereas Amharic limits relativization to the auxiliary (Polotsky 1985:287).

There are two interesting differences between cleft sentences in Amharic and in Tigrinya. The first, well-known difference consists basically in the attraction of the person and the number of the relative verb to the copula in all

Tigrinya cleft sentences, whereas in Amharic it happens only if the foregrounded element is the subject of the verb, otherwise the copula basically stands in the 3SM (22).

- (22) a. **ምስ ዝግበሩልኹ ባህሊ ዝተፈለዩ** TIGRINYA
məs zə-‘abäna-llu bahli zə-täfäläyu (56/A 3-6)
 with which-we_grew-up-in_it tradition which-they_differ
መነባብሮን ባህሊን ኣብ ዘለዎ
männäbabro-n bahli-n ‘ab z-ällwo
 manner_of_living-and culture-and in which-it_exists_it
ዓዲና ንብር¹⁵ ዘሎና
‘addi-‘na nənäbbər z-ällona
 country-we_are we_live that-we_exist
 ‘It is (lit. we are) that we live in a country which has a way of life and culture different from that in which we were raised’
- b. **እኛ እዚህ እስራኤል ባህሉ ልዩ** AMHARIC
əñña əzzih əsrael bahl-u läyyu (56/A 6-7)
 we here Israel culture-its different
በሆነበት ኣገር ነው የምንኖረው
bä-honä-bbät agär näw yämm-ənnənör-äw
 in-[which]-it_was-in_it country it_is that-we_live-the
 ‘It is in a country that we live, here in Israel, in which the culture is different’

However in our Tigrinya texts also the 3SM copula is sometimes used in such cases, probably under Amharic influence.¹⁶ The other peculiarity of the Tigrinya cleft sentence as compared with Amharic is the sporadic use of the gerund, without any outer sign of relativization, as the equivalent of the relative subject of the cleft sentence (Kapeliuk 1980:21–22 [reprint in Kapeliuk 2009: 474–476]; Polotsky 1985:290–295). The gerund, by its nature, does not admit the relative particle (except dialectally in Amharic of Gojjam). Consequently, it is used with a zero relative particle, which may seem strange to the speakers of Amharic, cf. (23)–(24). One might argue that it is another compound tense, in reverse order; however the two elements – the copula and the gerund – may

15 For the absence of the relative particle before the preformative *n-* in (22a) cf §1.

16 Cf. the use of the 3SM copula - *yyu* in example (5) above.

stand in this construction far apart which is impossible in a compound tense (25):

- (23) a. **ገና ወዲ 7ተ ዓመት እንተለኝ** TIGRINYA
gäna wäddi 7-tä 'amät 'ənt-älläku (52/B 10-12)

still child seven year when-I_exist

አቦይ ስለዝሞቱ አደይያ አዕቢያትና

'abbo-y sälä-zə-motu 'addä-y-yya 'a 'əbiyat-na

father-my because-that- mother-my-she_is she_having_raised-us
 he.POL-died

‘Because my father died when I still was a seven year old child, it was (lit. she is) my mother [who] **raised us** (lit. having raised us)’

- b. **አባታችን እኔ የ7 ዓመት ልጅ እያለሁ** AMHARIC
abbat-aččən əne yä-7 amät läğ əyyallähu (52/B 6-8)

father-our I of-7 year child while_I_exist

በመሞቱ ምክንያት እናታችን ነች ያላደገችን

bä-mämot-u məknəyat ənnat-aččən näčč y-asaddägäčč-n

in-to die-his cause mother-our she_is who-she_raised-us

‘Because my father died when I still was a seven year old child, it was (lit. she is) my mother [who] **raised us**’

- (24) **እነ እየ ፀሐፊዬ** TIGRINYA
'anä 'əyyä şäḥifä-yyo (56/ B 54)

I I_am I_having_written-it

‘It is (lit. I am) I who have written it’

- (25) **ብድሕሪኡየ ናይ ሙያ ምህሮ አድላይነቱ ተረዲኦ** TIGRINYA
bədəḥri-'u-'yyä nay muya məḥəro 'adlaynnät-u tärädi 'ä (52/D21-24)

after-it-I_am of profes- study necessity-its I_having_understood
 sion

ናይ ጣውላታት ሰራሕቲሙያ ተማሂረ በዚ

nay ṭawlatat säraḥtimuya tämahirä bä-zzi

of tables workersprofession I_having_learned in-this

ሙያዚ ሰረሐይ ቀኅለ

muya-zzi säräḥä-y qäṣilä

profession-this work-my I_having_followed

‘It was later, after having ascertained the necessity of learning a profession, [and] after having studied carpentry that I continued working in this profession’

Now we return to the peculiar Tigrinya past form of the copula *’ayyu neru*. As mentioned above, the perfective form *nābārā* ‘he was’, functioning as past form of the copula and of the verb of existence, disappeared completely from our Tigrinya main affirmative clauses, and was replaced either by its gerund form *neru* or, more often, by the strange form *’ayyu neru*, namely the copula followed by the gerund of *nābārā* meaning literally ‘he is having been’, cf. (9a) and (10a). The interesting behavior of the Tigrinya copula is that often it tends to be followed, for no clear reason, by the relative form either of the copula **ዝኾነ** *zə-konä* / **ዝኾነውን** *zə-käwwən* itself, or of the verb of existence **ዘለ** *z-ällo* in a construction, which apparently mimics the structure of a cleft sentence, probably for emphasis (26)–(27).

- (26) **ናይ ወለዱ ቋንቋ ኣፀቢቁ ዝፈልጥ** TIGRINYA
naŋ wälädd-u qʷanqʷa ’ašäbbiqu zə-fälləṭ (50/D 1-14)
 of parents-his language he_having_done_well who-he_knows
ቆልዓ ሓዱሽ ቋንቋ ንምሓዝ ዘለዎ ክእለት
qʷäl’a ḥadduš qʷanqʷa nə-məḥaz z-ällwo kə’älät
 child new language to-to_take which-it_exists_him capacity
ዘለዓለዎ፣ ... እቲ ቆልዓ ምስ ወለዱ ክዛራረብ
zə-lä ’alä-’yyu ’əti qʷäl’a məs wälädd-u kə-zzararräb
 which-it_is_high-it_is the child with parents-his that-he_speaks
ስለዝክእለውን ጠቐሜተኡ ዘለዓለዎ ዝኾነውን
sälä-zə-kə’äl-’əwən ṭäqämet-u zə-lä ’alä-’yyu zə-käwwən
 because-that-he_can-certainly benefit-his which-is_high-it_is which-it_is
 ‘The capacity of a child who knows very well his parents language to learn a new language is (which is) superior ... the benefit of this child, since he can talk with his parents, certainly is (which is/will be) superior’

- (27) **ካብ ንጉህ ጀሚሮም ክሳብ ምሽት ቢራ እናሰትዩ ...** TIGRINYA
kab nəgʷäh ġämmirom kəsab məšät bira ’anna-sätyu (44/E 26-30)
 from dawn they_having_ until evening beer while-they_drank
 started

ከወቅቱም እውን እናበላሸውጥም ዘለው
hiwāt-om- 'əwən 'ənnā-bālašāwu- 'yyom z-älläwu
 life-their.ACC-certainly while-they_spoiled-they_are who-they_exist
 ‘From morning till evening they are (who are) spoiling their lives ... drink-
 ing beer’

- (28) a. **ክላብ ሎጊ ... ዝተፈቀደሎም ማሸካንታ** TIGRINYA
*kəsab lomi zə-täfäqädä-llom maškanta*¹⁷ (72/A 35-38)
 until today which-it_was_allowed-to_them mortgage
260 ሺሕ ጥራይ እዩ ኔሩ
260 ših təräy 'əyyu neru
 260 thousand only it_is it_having-been
 ‘The mortgage granted to them until now was (having been) only 260
 thousand’

- b. **እስካሁን የብድሩ መጠን የነበረው** AMHARIC
əsk-ahun yä-bədr-u mätän yä-näbbärä-w (72/A 15-16)
 until-now of-loan-the amount which-it_was-the
260 ሺህ ሼቄል ነበረ
260 ših šeqel näbbärä
 260 thousand shekel it_was
 ‘Until now the amount of the loan was 260 thousand shekel’

Similarly, considering that the gerund *neru* stands in cleft sentences for a relativized verb form, it can also be used after the copula with a zero relative marker, as an equivalent of a relativized verb of being (28) producing some kind of an emphatic copula, with no parallel in Amharic (Kapeliuk 2013), as exemplified in Table 4.

Table 4 Contrastive comparison of Amharic and Tigrinya copula

	AMHARIC	TIGRINYA	
		PLAIN	EMPHATIC
PAST	<i>näbbärä</i>	<i>neru</i>	<i>'əyyu neru</i> <i>'əyyu zə-konä</i>
PRESENT	<i>näw</i> <i>allä</i>	<i>'əyyu</i> <i>'allo</i>	<i>'əyyu z-äлло</i> <i>'əyyu zə-käwwən</i>

17 Hebrew: ‘mortgage’.

Let us add that the construction *'əyyu neru* is used also in the two other Tigrinya texts from the Tigre Region mentioned in footnote 8 as replacement of the past form of the Tigrinya copula *nābārā*, hence we may surmise that it is a dialectal trait of this region.

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Emergence of Tense in Ethio-Semitic

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1 Introduction

Verbs in Ethio-Semitic (ES) languages primarily inflect for the imperative/jussive mood, and the perfective and imperfective viewpoint aspect (cf. Meyer 2016). The grammatical category tense, which is often marked through auxiliary verbs, represents a more recent secondary development. The present paper is concerned with the grammaticalization of the obligatory past vs. non-past distinction in main clauses of modern ES. For this purpose, the grammatical means to distinguish between past and non-past are contrastively compared in three ES languages, viz. Gə'əz (North ES), Amharic (Transversal South ES), and Muher (Outer South ES) – each of them representing one of the three major genetic branches of ES (cf. Figure 1).

The present description is based on the assumption that ES languages originate from a single ancestor whose main grammatical traits are best preserved in Gə'əz, whereas modern ES languages developed or borrowed innovative features (cf., e.g. Hudson 2013:1–2; Voigt 2004:35–36; Hetzron 1972:123). Tense markers and their functions are established by analyzing their obligatory syntactic occurrence in predicates, and semantic interferences, particularly with time adverbs. The data are analyzed in a descriptive framework, which relies on historical-comparative research in Semitic languages (particularly Lipiński 1997; Hetzron 1972; 1977; Leslau 1979; 1987), and well-established findings in linguistic typology regarding tense/aspect and grammaticalization (mainly Sasse 1991; Bybee 1985; Bybee and Dahl 1989; Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994; Comrie 1985; Heine 1993; Heine and Kuteva 2004).

The paper is organized as follows: §2 provides background information regarding the genetic classification, and the sociolinguistic status of Gə'əz, Amharic and Muher. Furthermore, it outlines the main typological features of ES, and the grammatical categories tense and aspect. The subsequent three sections deal with the emergence of tense in copula clauses (§3), on main-clause imperfective verbs (§4), and in periphrastic constructions (§5). In addition, §3 describes the grammaticalization of the formal distinction between equative and existential copula clauses. The generalization of the past marker to a com-

ponent of irrealis clauses and eventually to a marker of non-actuality is discussed in §6. This section also describes the development from an irrealis marker to a past tense marker in Muher. Possible sources for the tense-marked copulas and auxiliaries are presented in §7. Finally, §8 summarizes the main arguments.

2 Position of Gə'əz, Amharic and Muher in ES

2.1 Genetic classification and sociolinguistic status

ES consists of about a dozen languages that are natively spoken at the Horn of Africa (cf. Hudson 2013:§1). They are usually treated as descendants of a common West Semitic ancestor language, which belongs to the South Semitic sub-branch in traditional classifications (cf. Hetzron 1972:15–19; Huehnergard and Rubin 2011:260–267). Intense contact with speakers of Cushitic languages and various migrations caused linguistic variation within this ancestor language so that it split in various independent languages. Hetzron (1972:119; 1977:15–24) classifies them in three main genetic branches, as shown in Figure 1.¹

Figure 1 Main genetic sub-groups of Ethiosemitic

I. NORTH ETHIO-SEMITIC		
	†Gə'əz, Tigre, Tigrinya (and probably Dahalik)	
II. TRANSVERSAL SOUTH ETHIO-SEMITIC	III. OUTER SOUTH ETHIO-SEMITIC	
(a) Amharic, Argobba	(a) †Gafat	
(b) Harari, EASTERN GURAGE with Zay, Wolane, Silt'e	(b) GUNNĀN GURAGE consisting of	
	1. NORTHERN GURAGE with Muher, Kistane, Dobbi	
	2. Mesqan	
	3. Chaha and Inor dialect clusters	

Outer South ES languages except Gafat share various features so that they are grouped together as Gunnän Gurage (cf. Hetzron 1977:3), in which Northern Gurage forms a special unit (Hetzron 1977:23–24). Gunnän and Eastern Gurage are only remotely related (cf. Meyer 2011a:1221–1224). Gə'əz, Amharic, and Muher, which each belong to a different genetic branch in Figure , are the main concern of this paper.

Gə'əz is documented in a large corpus of literary works; the oldest are probably monumental inscriptions from the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. It ceased to be

¹ For criticism of this classification, cf. Goldenberg (1977), but also Bulakh and Kogan (2010); Voigt (2009); Faber (1997:12). Alternative classifications are discussed in Hudson (1977; 2000; 2013).

spoken as a native language around the 8th century, but has been retained as liturgical language in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church until today, and was the sole written language at the Ethiopian royal court until the 19th century. Accordingly, Gə'əz texts are composed by native speakers until the 7th century, whereas later texts are written by scribes who learnt it as a foreign language (cf., e.g. Weninger 2011a:1124–1126; 2005:465; Ullendorff 1955:4–16). The Gə'əz data for this paper are only taken from published grammatical descriptions, particularly Tropper (2002); Weninger (2001); Dillmann (1907); Praetorius (1886).

Amharic, specifically Old Amharic, was sporadically written since the 14th century, when it became the spoken *lingua franca* at the Ethiopian royal court. At the end of the 19th century, it was promoted as national language of Ethiopia, and became the dominating language in modern education and the print media. Today, Amharic is the *de facto* *lingua franca* in Ethiopia, and widely spoken as second language. Several reference grammars, the oldest going back to the 17th century, describe the linguistic structure of Amharic (cf., e.g. Meyer 2011b; Appleyard 2003; Ullendorff 1955:16–19). Most of the cited Amharic data stem from published studies, particularly Leslau (1995), but also include examples taken from day-to-day conversations.

Muher is exclusively used for oral communication; it has never been a literary language. Contrary to Hetzron (1972:3), it consists of two main dialects known as *anä-bet* and *ädi-bet* (cf. Kruczinsky 2007; Ahland 2010:51). A number of linguistic descriptions are available for the *anä-bet* dialect (e.g. Leslau 1981; 1982; Rose 1996). The Muher data in this paper, which solely result from own field research, represent the *ädi-bet* dialect, specifically the variety spoken in Tattessa (cf. Meyer 2010:161–162 for further details).

2.2 Main typological features

The phoneme inventories of Gə'əz, Amharic, and Muher overlap to a certain extent (cf. Ullendorff 1955; Podolsky 1991 for a general overview; and Weninger 2010 for the reconstruction of the phonetic values of the Gə'əz graphemes).² Many of the typological and syntactic features of Semitic languages out-

2 The representation of ES languages is according to the IPA conventions with the following exceptions: The Gə'əz graphemes **ሥ** and **ሐ** are transliterated by the symbols *ś* and *q̣*, which originally might have been the lateral fricatives *ʃ* or *ʈ*, respectively (cf., e.g. Tropper 2002:17–21). The symbols *ä* and *i* stand for the two central vowels close to IPA open-mid *ɘ* and close-mid *ɜ* (cf. Derib 2011). The symbol *ā* distinguishes original long

lined in Gensler (2011) and Waltisberg (2011) are preserved in Gə'əz, while Amharic and Muher are more innovative, probably due to prolonged contacts with Cushitic languages (cf. Leslau 1945a; 1952; 1959; but also Crass and Meyer 2011). For instance, Gə'əz has the common Semitic constituent order V(erb)–S(ubject)–O(bject), but modern ES changed it to SOV (cf. Tosco 1998: 355–356). Subsequently, Gə'əz exhibits most features of head-initial languages, i.e. complement nouns follow their case relators, and head nouns usually precede their modifiers, except demonstratives (Bulakh 2012a:171). In Muher and Amharic, in contrast, head nouns always follow their modifiers, but case relators may precede, follow or enclose their complement (cf. Lehmann 2011). All ES languages are nominative–accusative languages, in which only the accusative is marked on certain objects.

Case relators (traditionally called pre-, post-, or circum-positions) are typically bound elements, i.e. clitics or affixes. Many semantic case relators in Gə'əz (but not in Amharic and Muher) do not take personal pronouns as complement, but use the possessive suffixes instead.³ A single case relator may denote various semantic relations, e.g. *b(ä)-* marks locative, instrumental and malefactive relations, or *l(ä)-* allative, addressee, benefactive, and genitive/possessor relations. The accusative suffix *-ä* in Gə'əz also functions as (or is homonymous with) the linking vowel *-ä*, which connects a head noun with a modifying noun (*bet-ä nigus* 'house-LNK king', i.e. 'palace'), or a case relator with its complement, e.g. *b-ä-bet* 'in-LNK-house' or *l-ä-kä* 'to-LNK-you (SM)'. This linking vowel merged with various case relators in Amharic and Muher. It is lacking, however, if the relator functions as subordinating conjunction attached to imperfective (or jussive) verbs.

Verbs are formed through non-linear morphology, which is typical of Semitic in general. As shown in Figure 2 for Amharic, ES verbs inflect in three primary conjugations: perfective and imperfective viewpoint aspect, and the imperative/jussive mood. Gə'əz and Amharic have an additional conjugation for the converb. These conjugations consist of a template with a specific person affix set indexing the subject. The affix set for perfective verbs entirely consists of suffixes, but imperfective and jussive verbs inflect with pre- and suffixes;

**a*: from short *a* as an allophone of *ä* in the environment of *h*, *ḥ*, *x*, *ʔ*, *ʕ* in Gə'əz. Gemination is indicated by reduplicated consonants.

3 Gə'əz has two sets of almost identical person suffixes to cross-refer objects on verbs, or a possessor on nouns (Tropper 2002:43–45). As the case relators combine with the 1s possessive suffix *-jä* (instead of the object suffix *-ni*), it is assumed that they index their complement by the possessive suffixes.

converbs have a separate suffix set (cf. Meyer 2016:167–178; 2014: 228–235). Templates may alter their pattern depending on the number of root consonants, the (inflectional) verb type (cf. Meyer 2016:168), and partly on the transitivity and polarity of a verb.

Figure 2 Primary conjugations of Amharic Type A verbs

ROOT	TEMPLATES	INDEX	VERB BASE	
√ s-b-r 'break'	PERFECTIVE	-ä (3SM)	säbbärä	'he broke'
	C ₃ äCC ₂ äC ₁			
	*säbbär	-u (3P)	säbbäru	'they broke'
	IMPERFECTIVE	j- (3SM)	jisäbir	'he breaks' (dependent)
	C ₃ äC ₂ C ₁			
	*säbr	j-...-u (3P)	jisäbru	'they break' (dependent)
	JUSSIVE	j- (3SM)	jisbär	'he should break'
	C ₃ C ₂ äC ₁			
	*säbr	j-...-u (3P)	jisbäru	'they should break'
	CONVERB	-u (3SM)	säbro	'he breaking' (dependent)
	C ₃ äC ₂ C ₁ ä			
	*säbrä	-w (3P)	säbräw	'they breaking' (dependent)

Beside the obligatory subject index, objects can be optionally cross-referred by a special suffix set. Amharic and Muher, moreover, use the object index preceded by relator suffixes to cross-refer applied objects.

Except the converb, the primary conjugations for the perfective, imperfective and imperative/jussive result in independent verbs in Gə'əz. In Amharic and Muher, however, the imperfective is a dependent verb that needs additional modifications in main clauses (cf., e.g. Meyer 2014:240–246). Negation is commonly marked by a prefix attached to an inflected verb (cf. Bulakh 2012b; Meyer 2014:236–240).

A morphosyntactic peculiarity in Muher – or better Northern Gurage (Hetzron 1968) – is the so-called main verb marker (MVM), i.e. the suffix -u (with the

allomorphs *-i*, *-n*, *-tt*) attached to imperfective verbs⁴ and the past auxiliary in affirmative main clauses, and verbs in the prohibitive construction (cf. Meyer 2014:239, 242–243 for details).⁵ The suffix *-m* on perfective verbs is also often ascribed such a function although it actually is a converb marker – followed by a zero non-past morpheme in affirmative main clauses (cf. §5.1). Due to the almost complementary distribution of the MVM *-u* and *-m* in Muher, Rose (1996:219) analyzes them as tense markers: *-u* for non-past, and *-m* for past. This analysis is not convincing because the proposed non-past marker *-u* also attaches to the past auxiliary. Goldenberg (1999) considers the MVM *-u* to be a marker of the “Independent-Affirmative-Indicative” (Goldenberg 1999:216, in particular fn. 11). But the MVM *-u* is also part of the prohibitive (Meyer 2014: 239), and of main clauses with an irre-alis reading (cf. §6) in Muher, so that the traditional term MAIN VERB MARKER is retained.

2.3 *Tense and aspect from a typological point of view*

Tense and aspect are two separate grammatical categories for the temporal description of situations (cf. Lindstedt 2001:768), frequently marked through verb inflection (Dahl 1985:14; Bybee 1985:32, 155–156). According to Comrie (1985:6–9), tense is a deictic category that locates the communicated situation on a time axis, prototypically with the moment of speaking as reference point.⁶ Accordingly, there are three logical tense values: present (at the moment of speech), past (before the moment of speech), and future (after the moment of speech) (cf. Bybee 1985:155). Several languages, however, only have two values, e.g. they combine present and future to non-past (Comrie 1985:49–50).

Aspect deals with the internal temporal constituency of a situation (Comrie 1976:1–5), which is encoded by different means. The semantics of a verb defines the lexical aspect to distinguish, for instance, between stative and dynamic verbs. Specific temporal phases within the lexical aspect, like its beginning or continuity, can be emphasized by morphosyntactic constructions denoting a

4 The MVM *-u* also combines with perfective verbs in Kistane (cf. Goldenberg 1999:217).

5 The origin of the MVM *-u* is controversial. Leslau (1967) connects it with *-u* as marker of indicative imperfective verbs in Classical Arabic, and considers it a Proto-Semitic feature. Hetzron (1968:171) also suggests a Proto-Semitic origin, but from a copula **wt/*nt*. Goldenberg (1999:219), however, assumes that the MVM is a recent innovation through contact with non-Semitic languages.

6 Comrie’s (1985:Chap. 3) “relative tense” with a variable deictic center to distinguish between anteriority, simultaneity and posteriority is considered the taxis interpretation of the viewpoint aspect (Timberlake 2007:298; Lindstedt 2001:772; Sasse 1991: 23).

phasal aspect. Several types of lexical and phasal aspects are found in any language. Only in languages which grammaticalized viewpoint aspect, verbs regularly occur in two contrasting conjugations – perfective and imperfective – to describe the same situation from two different perspectives.

According to Sasse (1991:11), viewpoint aspect is concerned with the semantically inherent boundary component of a situation. The perfective aspect emphasizes the transitory phase that marks the end of dynamic verbs, or the beginning of inchoative-stative verbs. A situation expressed in the perfective aspect is often perceived as completed prior to the moment of speech, i.e. in the past (Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994:93; Dahl 1985:16). The imperfective aspect suppresses any boundary component so that the situation is perceived as prolonged activity or extended state, which can convey various readings, including progressive, continuous, durative, iterative, habitual, or a general present (Timberlake 2007:294; Bybee 1985:143). An imperfective main-clause verb is by default interpreted as being of relevance at the moment of speaking, i.e. with present or non-past time reference (Dahl 1985:16).

In contrast to past tense, which due to its deictic anchorage has a generalized past semantics with all verbs, the time interpretation of perfective verbs interferes with the lexical aspect (Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994:93–95; Bybee 1994:351; Sasse 1991). If the initial boundary of inchoative-stative verbs is emphasized in the perfective aspect, it is implicitly followed by a subsequent state, which by default is interpreted as relevant at the moment of utterance, i.e. with a present reading. In marked-contexts, however, inchoative-stative verbs can also convey a past reading in the perfective aspect. Dynamic verbs, in contrast, are always perceived as past situations in unmarked contexts. Commonly, languages with grammatical viewpoint aspect also mark tense on imperfective verbs yielding a tripartite opposition, in which the perfective lacks tense, but the imperfective is marked for either past or non-past reference (Dahl 1985:17).

There is often no clear distinction between aspect and tense as separate grammatical categories in descriptions of Semitic languages. From a diachronic perspective, viewpoint aspect is usually assumed a primary category in Proto-Semitic, which then changed into an aspect-tense, or a tense system in individual languages (cf., e.g. Lipiński 1997:345–346; Stempel 1999:34; Rubin 2010: 48–52). With regard to ES, Meyer (2016) argues that verbs obligatorily inflect for viewpoint aspect and mood, whereas tense is a secondary category.

In modern ES languages like Amharic and Muher, imperfective verbs are obligatorily marked for past or non-past in main clauses, but not in subordi-

nation. In Gəʿəz, however, even main-clause imperfective verbs are unmarked for tense, i.e. their time interpretation depends on the context (cf. §4). Similarly, Gəʿəz copula clauses typically lack overt time reference, whereas they are obligatorily marked for tense in modern ES. Thus, modern ES must have grammaticalized tense as an innovative feature of main clause predicates, as will be shown in the following sections.

3 Tense marking in copula clauses

A copula clause consists of a copula as predicate, the copula subject, and the copula complement (cf. Dixon 2010:159–161; or Goldenberg 2005:248 particularly for Semitic). The copula links subject and complement so that they form a clausal unit. The linker can express various semantic relations, which always include identity and attribution, but can also be extended to possession,⁷ benefaction, location, existence, etc. For convenience, the various semantic relations are amalgamated under the term LINKING RELATION marked by a linker or BE copula.

The existential relation can also be expressed through a separate predicate, which often originates from a locative copula clause, or a possessive construction (cf. Lyons 1967; Heine and Kuteva 2004:99, 203–204, 241–242). Such an existential predicate usually introduces entities in the discourse, or asserts their existence (McNally 2011:1832). It is typically monovalent, with the subject (or pivot noun) as only argument because the original locative or possessive complement was reanalyzed as part of the predicate. As regular intransitive verbs also may denote existence, it might be difficult to distinguish between copula and verbal predicates (cf. Dixon 2010:260).

There are two main sources for the grammaticalization of linker copulas, viz. regular verbs meaning ‘live, exist, be’, ‘go’, the stance verbs ‘sit, stand, lie’ (that lost their referential component), or deictic elements, such as demonstratives or anaphoric pronouns (cf. Dixon 2010:183; Lehmann 2015:29). Subject and complement can also be linked by juxtaposition. These empty predicates are treated here as zero copula (but cf. Dixon 2010:160–161). If languages have two copulas, one of them tends to express stative relations (BE copula), and the other a change of state (BECOME copula) that also may mark tense (Dixon 2010:175).

Proto-Semitic (as well as Proto-ES) apparently lack a verbal BE copula, but simply juxtapose subject and copula complement; pronoun copulas are later

7 The focus is only on predicative HAVE-possession (cf. Heine 1997:26–33).

innovations for emphasis (cf. Lipiński 1997:484–487; and also Rubin 2005:41; Zewi 1996:41–42; Klingenberg 1956:264). Despite the Proto-Semitic VSO constituent order, a pronoun copula either intervenes between S and O, or follows the complement (Lipiński 1997:485–486, 488). In S-O-COP clauses, the pronoun copula commonly agrees with the subject, but it could also be the invariable 3SM pronoun in S-COP-O clauses. Several Semitic languages grammaticalized a deictic element as copula, on which the subject is cross-referred by a person index (Lipiński 1997:487). These Proto- and early Semitic copula clauses are unmarked for aspect, tense, and mood (Lipiński 1997:485).⁸

3.1 Gə‘əz copula clauses

Copula clauses in Gə‘əz have either a zero copula or a personal pronoun as predicate. Zero copula clauses express several semantic relations, including identity (1), attribution (2), and location (3):

(1) IDENTITY

Gə‘əz

አንትሙ ዘክርስቶስ፣ ወክርስቶስኒ ዘእግዚአብሔር።

ʔantimu (ø) zä-kristos wä-kristosi-ni (ø) zä-ʔigziʔabher

2PM COP? POSS-Christ and-Christ-FOC COP? POSS-God

‘You are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.’ (1 Cor 3,23) (Dillmann 1907:469)

(2) ATTRIBUTION

Gə‘əz

a. ወምድሩ በረድ።

wä-midr-u (ø) bäräd

and-floor-POSS.3SM COP? crystal

‘And its floor was crystal.’ (Hen 14,10) (Dillmann 1907:496)

b. ገሊናክ እኩይ።

xillina-kä (ø) ʔikkuj

thought-POSS.2SM COP? evil

‘Your thought is evil.’ (Gen 46,15) (Praetorius 1886:160)

8 Cf. Zewi (2008) for a bibliography of copula clauses in Semitic, as well as Zewi (1996; 1999) and Goldenberg (2005; 2007) for comparative overviews.

(3) LOCATION

GǝʿǝZ

a. ወሰይፍ ምሉህ ውስተ እደሁ።

wä-säjjf milux (ø) wistä ʔid-e-hu
 and-sword drawn COP? inside hand-LNK-POSS.3SM

‘And a drawn sword was in his hand.’ (Josh 5,15) (Dillmann 1907:504)

b. እምነ ዐጽምየ ወእምነ ሥጋየ አንተ።

ʔim-innä ʕasʼimi-jä wä-ʔim-innä śiga-jä (ø) ʔantä
 ABL-AUG bone-POSS.1S and-ABL-AUG flesh-POSS.1S COP? 2SM

‘Of my bone and of my flesh art thou.’ (Gen 29,14) (Dillmann 1907:496)

The independent personal pronouns are used as another copula, probably to avoid syntactic ambiguity and for emphasis (Dillmann 1907:498–499; Tropper 2002:215). Syntactic ambiguity occurs in noun-adjective or noun-demonstrative sequences, in which the latter element could be interpreted as modifier in a noun phrase, or as independent nominal in a copula clause:

(4) a. ሞት እኩይ

GǝʿǝZ

mot ʔikkuj
 death evil

i. ‘an evil death’ (Dillmann 1907:424) / (but also: ii. ‘Death is evil.’)

b. ዝንቱ ውእቱ ንጉሥ።

zintu wiʔitu niguś
 PRX COP/3SM king

‘This is the king.’ (Tropper 2002:215)

Dillmann (1907:424) only provides translation (i) for (4a), but it could also be a copula clause (ii). As the 3SM personal pronoun *wiʔitu* intersects between demonstrative and noun, (4b) must represent a copula clause. Without the pronoun, it would be a noun phrase, i.e. *zintu niguś* ‘this king’.

In example (5), however, the sequence of the pronoun ‘I’ and the noun phrase ‘the God of Abraham’ can only be interpreted as copula clause, so that the function of the 3SM pronoun *wiʔitu* is probably to emphasize the subject, i.e. reading (i):

(5) አነ ውእቱ አምላክ አብርሃም።

Gəʿəz

ʔanä wiʔitu ʔamlak-ä ʔabrihām

1S 3SM/COP God-LNK Abraham

(i) 'It is me who is the God of Abraham.'

(ii) 'I am the God of Abraham.' (Gen 26,4) (Dillmann 1907:499)

According to Dillmann (1907:498), the pronoun copula became so dominant in Gəʿəz that its use in such unambiguous sequences of nominals need not be a sign of emphasis, i.e. it could also convey reading (ii). Thus, even if the pronoun copula in Gəʿəz might have initially expressed emphasis, it apparently started to develop into a regular predicate in identificational and attributive copula clauses, whereas copula clauses with a relator phrase as complement, as in (3), do not use it. Copula clauses with the locative relator *b(ä)*- (which could express possession, location, or existence) apparently never have a pronoun copula. Probably, they emphasize their subject by the suffixes *-tu/-ti* as augment to the 3SM or 3SF possessive suffixes, as in (6b):

(6) a. አበ ብነ።

Gəʿəz

ʔab-ä bi-nä (ø)

father-ACC LOC-POSS.1P COP?

'A father – we have.' (Dillmann 1907:407)

b. ወባቲ ለርብቃ እኅወ።

wä-b-a-tti (ø) lä-ribäk'a ʔixw-ä

and-LOC-POSS.3SF-AUG COP? ALL-Rebecca brother-ACC

'And she, Rebecca, had a brother.' (Gen 24,29) (Dillmann 1907:438)

c. ቦ ማይ/ማየ።

bä-u [bo] (ø) maj(ä)

LOC-POSS.3SM COP? water(-ACC)

'There is/was water.' (Tropper 2002:218; Lambdin 1978:123)

There are further peculiarities in Gəʿəz possessive/existential copula clauses: Their subject is typically lacking, or an opaque 3SM 'it'. A possessor is only cross-referred by possessive suffixes on the locative relator, i.e. the referent is salient in discourse, as in (6a). Only rarely a possessor is denoted by an overt noun, which is juxtaposed to the locative phrase – either as plain noun, or marked by the allative relator *l(ä)*- 'to, for' (6b). The noun denoting the possessed entity predominantly occurs in the accusative (6a–b). In existential clauses

(6c), the pivot noun tends to be unmarked (in the nominative), only sporadically it is in the accusative (which then also could represent a possessed entity, thus *bo majä* in (6c) could also mean ‘He has/had water’). These peculiarities might indicate that copula clauses with the locative relator *b(ä)*- first grammaticalized as predicative possessive construction, and then into existential clauses (but cf. also Rubin 2005:62).

Copula clauses are unmarked for tense (Tropper 2002:221; Dillmann 1907:500). Accordingly, the examples in (2), (3), and (6) have a present or past reading depending on the context.

In addition to the locative relator *b(ä)*- as complement to the linker copula, Ga‘az has another existential predicate, namely the verb *halläwä* ‘exist’ (but cf. §7.1) in the perfective conjugation with a dominating non-past reading (cf. Goldenberg 2013:216–217; but also Tropper 2002:183).⁹ In contrast to the existential *bo* clause in (6c), the pivot noun in (7) is obligatorily indexed as subject on *halläwä*:

- (7) a. **ህየ ሀሎኩ አነ ማእከሎሙ።** Ga‘EZ
hijjä hallo-ku ?anä ma?ikäl-omu
 DST exist\PFV-3SM 1S middle-POSS.3PM
 ‘There am I (present) in the midst of them.’ (Matt 18,20) (Dillmann 1907:499–500)
- b. **ሀለዉ ዕራቃኒሆሙ።**
halläw-u ?irak’ani-homu
 exist\PFV-3PM naked.P-POSS.3PM
 ‘They were naked.’ (Gen 2,25) (Dillmann 1907:361)
- c. **አምጣነ ሀሎ መርዓዊ ምስሌሆሙ።**
?amt’an-ä hallo mär?äwi misle-homu
 extent-ACC exist\PFV.3SM groom COM-3PM
 ‘As long as (lit. to the extent) the bridegroom is with them.’ (Mark 2,19) (Dillmann 1907:410)

9 The functional differences between *halläwä* and *bo* existential clauses need further research. Remarkably, verbal and non-verbal existential predicates also co-occur in Akkadian (cf. Bar-Asher Siegal 2011). Moreover, Rubin (2005:45) argues that the Akkadian existential verb originated from a non-verbal copula clause similar to the Ga‘az *bo* construction.

In addition to existence as such (7a), *halläwä* emphasizes continuity, as in (7b–c).

Furthermore, *halläwä* is said to function as past auxiliary in Gə‘əz (e.g. Tropper 2002:223), probably due to time contrasts, as in (8):

- (8) a. **ምስሉን እግዚአብሔር።** Gə‘əz
misle-nä *ʔigziʔabher*
 COM-POSS.1P God
 ‘God is with us.’ (Tropper 2002:223)
- b. **ወሀሎ እግዚአብሔር ምስል ዮሴፍ።**
wä-hallo *ʔigziʔabher* *mislä* *josef*
 and-exist\PFV.3SM God COM Joseph
 ‘And God was with Joseph.’ (Gen 39,2) (Tropper 2002:223)

Given the alternating time reference of *halläwä* in (7a–b), however, it is unlikely that it functions as past auxiliary.

Past time reference in copula clauses is infrequently marked by the verb *konä* ‘be(come)’ in the perfective conjugation (Dillmann 1907:499–500), as in (9).

- (9) a. **ወኩነ ድቀቱ ዐቢየ።** Gə‘əz
wä-kon-ä *dik’ät-u* *ʕabij-ä*
 and-be(come)\PFV-3SM ruin-POSS.3SM big.SM-ACC
 ‘And great was its destruction.’ (Matt 7,27) (Tropper 2002:224)
- b. **ወኩነ ሕግ ውስተ እስራኤል።**
wä-kon-ä *higg* *wist-ä* *ʔisraʔel*
 and-be(come)\PFV-3SM custom inside-LNK Israel
 ‘A custom arose/it became a custom in Israel.’ (Judges 11,39) (Dillmann 1907:442)
- c. **ኮኖ ለኖኅ**
kon-ä-u [kono] *lä-nox*
 be(come)\PFV-SBJ.3SM-OBJ.3SM ALL-Noah
 ‘There was to Noah ...’ (Gen 7,6) (Dillmann 1907:443)

According to Lambdin (1978:61) and Rubin (2005:60), *konä* even replaces the existential verb *halläwä* to overtly mark a past reading (cf. (58) in §7.1).

Remarkably, the affirmative perfective form of *konä* never has a present reading, although it is an inchoative-stative verb. Only in negation, as in (10), the perfective of *konä* commonly conveys a present reading:

- (10) እኩየ ጸጋር ውእቱ ወኣንሰ ኢኮንኩ ጸጋረ። ገጽ ፪፭
ʔixu-jä s'ägʷar wiʔitu wä-ani-ssä ʔi-kon-ku s'ägʷar-ä
 brother-POSS.1S hairy 3SM/COP and-1S-EMPH NEG-be(come)\PFV-1S hairy-ACC
 ‘My brother is hairy while I am not.’ (Gen 27,11) (Dillmann 1907:500)

The negated perfective of *konä* often substitutes the linker copula in negative clauses,¹⁰ while the existential verb *halläwä* is regularly negated by the prefix *ʔi-*:

- (11) ኢሀሉኩ በሥጋ ሀሉኩ በመንፈስ። ገጽ ፪፭
ʔi-hallo-ku bä-siga hallo-ku bä-mānfäs
 NEG-exist\PFV-1S LOC-flesh exist\PFV-1S LOC-soul
 ‘I am not physically present, (but) spiritually.’ (Praetorius 1886:58)

Another peculiar *Gəʾəz* feature is the use of the zero copula in subordinate clauses, cf. (12a) vis-à-vis the subordinated verb *halläwä* in (12b):

- (12) a. ዘይመውት እንዘ ጸድቅ ውኒር ገጽ ፪፭
zä-ji-mäwwit ʔinzä (ø) s'adik' wä-xer
 REL-3SM-die\IPFV SUB COP? righteous and-good
 ‘who dies while being righteous and good’ (Hen 81,4) (Dillmann 1907:483)
- b. እንዘ ሀሉኩ ውስተ ዓለም ሰማዕኩ ዜናሁ ለቅዱስ።
ʔinzä hallo-ku wist-ä ʃälām sämaʔ-ku zena-hu lä-k'iddus
 SUB exist\PFV-1S inside-LNK world hear\PFV-1S news-POSS.3SM ALL-holy
 ‘While I was in the world, I heard the news of the holy.’ (Praetorius 1886:149)

In most modern ES languages, the linker copula is restricted to main clauses. It is substituted by the regular verb for ‘be(come)’ (i.e. *honä* in Amharic

10 Other means of negating copula clauses are the negative particle *ʔakko*, the prefix *ʔi-* attached to the negated constituent, or the prefix *ʔal-*, which is restricted to the relator *b(ä)-*, e.g. *ʔal-bo* ‘there is/was no’ (cf. Tropper 2002:220–221).

and Muher) in subordination (cf., e.g. (18) in §3.2). In Gə‘əz, the affirmative perfective form of *konä* ‘be(come)’ is rare in subordinate clauses, in which it regularly functions as past auxiliary, but not as substitute for the linker copula:

- (13) ብዙኅ ዘእምተጽሕፈ. ዘኮነ ጸብእ ላዕለ ንጉሥ። Gə‘əz
bizux zä-ḡim-täs’ihif-ä zä-kon-ä s’äbi? lašil-ä nigus
 many REL-ABL-be_written\PFV-3SM REL-be(come)\PFV-3SM warfare top-LNK king
 ‘More than what has been written of (here), (was) the warfare that was
 (conducted) by the king.’ (Dillmann 1907:533)

The sketchy description of copula clauses in Gə‘əz shows that they are unmarked for tense. The use of *halläwä* and *konä* as linker copula is often optional, usually to emphasize a more specific reading, viz. past reference for *konä*, and (prolonged) duration for *halläwä*.

3.2 Copula clauses in Amharic and Muher

Amharic and Muher grammaticalized an obligatory linker copula based on the inflected element **n*, which originally had a deictic function (cf. §7.2). Like Gə‘əz, the linker copulas in Amharic and Muher express several semantic relations, cf. (14)–(17), which remarkably no longer include existence:

- (14) IDENTITY AMHARIC
 a. አልማዝ የገና እህት ናት/ነች።
ḡalmaz jä-hanna ḡihit nat / nätf
 Almaz.F GEN-Hanna.F sister COP.OJ.3SF COP.SJ.3SF
 ‘Almaz is Hanna’s sister.’
 b. *zi miss ḡaddis-we ḡastämari-n.* MUHER
 PRX man new-DEF teacher-COP.3SM
 ‘This man is the new teacher.’
 (15) ATTRIBUTION AMHARIC
 a. ልጆቹ ወፋፍራም ናቸው።
lidḡ-otf-u wäfafram natfäw
 child-P-DEF big.P COP.OJ.3P
 ‘The children are big.’

- (16) a. *bä-dähä bet j(ä)=annätt gäräd likk'e mälkamma-?e-ja.* MUHER
 LOC-2SM house REL=AUX.EXIST.girl very beautiful-thing-
 3SF (COP)OJ.3SF
 'The girl in your house is very beautiful.'
- b. *mam^w-ä-mmi-n-kä?* c. *rawda-m sittu-m gällif-k'e-n-äma.*
 good-FOC-COP-SJ.2SM Rawda.F-FOC Sitti.F-FOC tall-thing-COP-OJ.3PF
 'Are you well?' 'Rawda and Sitti are tall.'

- (17) LOCATION AMHARIC
- a. (ቁልፉ) በጠረጴዛ ላይ ነው።
(k'ulf-u) bä-t'äräp'eza laj näw
 (key-DEF) LOC-table top COP.OJ.3SM
 '(The key)/It is on (the) table.'
- b. (fästal-we) bä-sat'in ?anc'ät-in. MUHER
 plastic_bag-DEF LOC-box behind-COP.3SM
 '(The plastic bag)/It is behind the box.'

In Amharic, the linker copula is an independent word, which could represent a clause (cf. Goldenberg 1965:13), whereas it is a bound element suffixed to the copula complement in Muher. Salient subjects are not denoted by an overt noun, but simply indexed on the copula, as in (17).

The linker copula regularly inflects by object suffixes in Amharic; only the 3SF subject can alternatively be indexed by a verbal suffix, cf. (14a). In Muher, first and second person subjects are indexed by subject suffixes (16b), but the 3P by object suffixes (16c). The plain copula *-n* marks 3SM subjects (17b), and the object suffix *-ja* 3SF subjects (16a).

The linker copula in Amharic and Muher exclusively occurs in affirmative main clauses. In subordination, it is substituted by the inchoative-stative verb *honä* 'be(come)', which is cognate with Gə'əz *konä*, but does not function as past auxiliary (cf. §7.3):

- (18) a. አልማዝ እህቴ ስለሆነች አልመታትም። AMHARIC
?almaz ?ihit-e silä-hon-ätif ?al-mätat-im
 Almaz.F sister-POSS.1S because-be(come)\PFV-3SF NEG.SJ.1S-hit\IPFV.OJ.3SF-
 FOC
 'As Almaz is my sister, I don't hit her.'

- b. *begg jä-hon-ä-ät* [jähonät] *likk'e ji-zämb-u.* MUHER
 rainy_season REL-be(come)\PFV-3SM-ADE much 3SM-rain\IPFV-MVM
 'As it is the rainy season, it rains a lot.'

In main clauses, the negated perfective of *honä* regularly functions as copula in Muher (19), whereas Amharic has an additional negative copula *ʔajdällä* 'not be' (cf. §7.2), which inflects like a perfective verb (20a):

- (19) *ʔalmaz dängäppnä ʔan-xon-ätt.* MUHER
 Almaz.F rich NEG-be(come)\PFV-3SF
 i. 'Almaz is not rich.' (default)
 ii. '[Until now] Almaz did not become rich.'

- (20) a. **አልማዝ ሃብታም አይደለችም።** AMHARIC
ʔalmaz habtam ʔajdällättf-im
 Almaz.F rich COP.NEG.3SF-FOC
 i. 'Almaz is not rich.' / ii. *'Almaz did not become rich.'
- b. **አልማዝ ሃብታም አልሆነችም።**
ʔalmaz habtam ʔal-hon-ättf-im
 Almaz.F rich NEG-be(come)\PFV-3SF-FOC
 i. 'Almaz did not become rich.' / ii. *'Almaz is not rich.'

The time implication of the Amharic negated copula in (20a) is not identical with negated *honä* in (20b), which narrowed its semantics from an atelic inchoative-stative verb to a telic verb that emphasizes a definite change of state (cf. Filip 2012:732–733), with an obligatory past reading in the perfective. The related atelic situation with a present reading is expressed by the negated copula *ʔajdällä* (20a). In Muher, such a semantic shift does not occur with *honä* in negated copula clauses, as the two readings in (19) show. However, it is found in affirmative main clauses in Muher (and in Amharic as well):

- (21) a. *miss-we näggäde hon-ä-m.* MUHER
 man-DEF merchant be(come)\PFV-3SM-MVMP
 i. 'The man became a merchant.' / ii. *'The man is a merchant.'

b. ሰውየው ነጋዴ ሆነ።

AMHARIC

sāw-ijjä-w nāggade hon-ä
 person-SNG-DEF merchant be(come)\PFV-3SM

i. 'The man became a merchant.' / ii. *'The man is a merchant.'

For an atelic present reading, the verb *honä* must be substituted by the linker copula in (21).

The examples (19)–(21) indicate that the lexical aspect of *honä* is affected by semantic interference with the linker copula, which per se expresses a stative relation. If *honä* is competing with the linker copula as predicate, as in (20) and (21), its lexical aspect loses the atelic component and solely denotes a definite change of state. But its inchoative-stative semantics is not affected if it is the only possible predicate, as in (19). Thus, the lexical aspect of *honä* is not fixed, but depends on its interference with the linker copula. Consequently, the semantics and functional range of the original root $\sqrt{\text{k-w-n}}$ 'be(come)' is not uniform, but shaped through language-specific developments.

An existential relation is expressed by the existential auxiliary *ʔallä* in Amharic (which is cognate with Gə'əz *halläwä* 'exist'), and *jinä* in Muher. These auxiliaries only inflect for the affirmative perfective (cf. §7.1):

(22) a. ውሃ (እቤት) አለ።

AMHARIC

wiha (ʔi-bet) ʔallä
 water LOC-house AUX.EXIST(\PFV).3SM
 'There is water (in the house).'

b. (bahuyña ge) mango likk'e jinä-ä-u [jino].

MUHER

LOC.now time mango much AUX.EXIST(\PFV)-3SM-MVM
 'There are plenty of mangos (at this time).'

While Amharic *ʔallä* is also found in subordinate clauses, Muher *jinä* is restricted to main clauses, in which it regularly combines with the main verb marker. In subordination, *jinä* is substituted by the bound existential auxiliary =*annä*, cf. (16a), which is cognate with Gə'əz *halläwä* (cf. §7.1). In syntactic contexts requiring a jussive verb or a verbal noun, the existential auxiliaries are substituted by the respective verbs with the meaning 'live', viz. *norä* in Amharic and *näbärä* in Muher (cf. §7.3). These verbs may also substitute for the existential auxiliary in subordinate clauses, which require an imperfective verb:

- (23) a. **ዝናብ ሲኖር አየሩ ይቀዝቅዛል።** AMHARIC
zinab s-i-nor ʔajär-u ji-k'äzäkk'iz-all
 rain SUB-3SM-live\IPFV air-DEF 3SM-be(come)_cold\IPFV-AUX.EXIST/NPST
 'When there is rain, the air cools down.'
- b. *bijä t-i-näbir mikat jännä.* MUHER
 ensete_pith SUB-3SM-live\IPFV problem NEG.AUX.EXIT.3SM
 'When there is ensete pith, there is no hunger.'

The existential auxiliaries have suppletive forms in negation. Muher uniformly uses *jännä*, whereas Amharic has *jällä* in main clauses, but the bound =*lellä* in subordination. Like their affirmative counterparts, the negated existential auxiliaries inflect with the subject index of perfective verbs, but never convey a past reading:

- (24) a. **የሌለ ነገር የለም።** AMHARIC
jä=lellä nägär jällä-m
 REL=NEG.AUX.EXIST.3SM thing NEG.AUX.EXIST.3SM-FOC
 'There is nothing which is not there.'
- b. *sikk^war nägä jino – ʔäkk^wa jännä.* MUHER
 sugar tomorrow AUX.EXIST.3SM.MVM today NEG.AUX.EXIST.3SM
 'There will be sugar tomorrow, today it is out.'

The existential auxiliaries are the base for predicative possession, in which the possessed entity is indexed as subject, but the possessor as object (for Amharic, cf. in particular Ahland 2009):

- (25) a. **ማሞ ቤት አለው።** AMHARIC
mammo bet ʔallä-w
 Mammo.M_i house_j AUX.EXIST.SBJ.3SM_j-OBJ.3SM_i
 'Mammo has a house.'
- b. *ǧilalu bizä birr jinä-nn-itt.* MUHER
 Jilalu.M_i [many birr]_j AUX.EXIST.SBJ.3SM_j-OBJ.3SM_i-MVM
 'Jilalu has a lot of money.'

In contrast to Gə'əz, the linker copula and the existential auxiliary in Amharic and Muher exclusively refer to present or future situations. A future reading is also evoked by *honä* 'be(come)' or *näbbärä/norä* 'live' in the imperfective.

tive conjugation, but these predicates have a modal overtone of uncertainty, similar to the Muher example (26) vs. (24b):

- (26) *sikk^war* *nägä* *ji-näbr-u* MUHER
 sugar tomorrow 3SM-live\IPFV-MVM
 ‘There might be sugar tomorrow.’

Copula clauses reporting a past situation have an obligatory past auxiliary as predicate in affirmative main clauses, viz. Amharic *näbbär*, Muher *bannä* (cf. §7.3):

- (27) a. ትላንት ሐሙስ ነበር / አልነበረም / *ነው። AMHARIC
tilant hamus näbbär / *ʔal-näbbär-ä-m* / **näw*
 yesterday Thursday AUX.PST NEG-live\PFV-3SM-FOC COP.3SM
 ‘Yesterday was / was not / *is Thursday.’
- b. *tamiṇṇa sikk^war bannä-u* [banno] / *ʔan-näbär-ä* / MUHER
 yesterday sugar AUX.PST(3SM)-MVM NEG-live\PFV.NEG-3SM
**jino.*
 AUX.EXIST.3SM.MVM
 ‘Yesterday, there was / was no / *is sugar.’

In negated and subordinate clauses, Amharic also uses the past auxiliary *näbbär*, whereas Muher substitutes *bannä* by the regular verb *näbbärä* ‘live’ in the perfective conjugation (27b).

The Amharic and Muher linker copulas and the existential auxiliaries cannot occur as predicate in clauses expressing an overt past situation, as, e.g. established through the adverb ‘yesterday’ in (27). Thus, their semantics must be inherently specified for non-past, while the corresponding predicates in Gə‘əz are tenseless.

The emergence of non-past tense in Amharic and Muher copula clauses follows the general cross-linguistic grammaticalization path of zero morphemes outlined in Bybee (1994:348). Accordingly, the linker copulas and the existential auxiliaries in Amharic and Muher obtained non-past as an inherent part of their semantics through interferences with the past auxiliary, when the optional marking of past tense (as in Gə‘əz) became obligatory, i.e. the past auxiliary limits the use of the linker copulas and the existential auxiliaries to non-past situations. Eventually, the conceptual tense opposition past vs. non-past gram-

maticalized morphologically as opposition between an overt past auxiliary and a zero non-past morpheme in main clauses. Evidence for the subsequent merger of the zero non-past morpheme with the linker copula is found in Silt'e (Eastern Gurage), in which the linker copula co-occurs with the past auxiliary in a single predicate (cf. Gutt 1997:945).

4 Tense-marked imperfective verbs

Main-clause imperfective verbs in Gə'əz are unmarked for tense; they only encode aspect. Their time interpretation solely depends on the context. The imperfective verb *jik'ättil* in (28), for instance, is used for a general statement at the moment of speech in (a), and also to describe a past habitual situation in (b):

- (28) a. **ወውእቲ ይቀትል ወያሐዪ።** Gə'əz
wä-wiʔitu ji-k'ättil wä-j-aħajji
 and-3SM 3SM-kill\IPFV and-3SM-enliven\IPFV
 'He kills and makes alive.' (Weninger 2001:136)
- b. **ዘፈቀደ ይቀትል ወዘፈቀደ ይቀሥፍ ወዘፈቀደ ያከብር።**
zä-fäk'äd-ä ji-k'ättil wä-zä-fäk'ädä ji-k'äśśif
 REL-wish\PFV-3SM 3SM-kill\IPFV and-REL-wish\PFV-3SM 3SM-torture\PFV
wä-zä-fäk'ädä j-akäbbir
 and-REL-wish\PFV-3SM 3SM-honor\IPFV
 'He used to kill whom he liked, to torture whom he liked, and to honor whom he liked.' (Dan 5,19) (Tropper 2002:188)

As in copula predicates (cf. §3.1), Gə'əz optionally marks past on imperfective verbs by the perfective form of *konä* 'be(come)' as past auxiliary (Tropper 2002:108; Weninger 2001:287):

- (29) **ኮንኩ እባርኮ ለእግዚእ።** Gə'əz
kon-ku ʔi-barrik-o lä-ʔigziʔi
 AUX.PST-1S SBJ.1S-praise\IPFV-OBJ.3SM ALL-God
 'I was just praising God' (Hen 12,3) (Dillmann 1907:172)

Alternatively, a past reading is reported for combinations of an imperfective verb with the existential verb *halläwä* (30a), or the verb *näbärä* 'sit' (30b) (cf., e.g. Tropper 2002:197–198; Dillmann 1907:172):

- (30) a. **ወሎጥስ ሀሎ ይነበር ውስተ አንቀጽ።** Gə‘əz
wä-lot’i-ssä hallo ji-näbbir wist-ä ?ank’äs’
 and-Lot-EMPH AUX.EXIST.3SM 3SM-sit\IPFV inside-LNK gate
 ‘Just while Lot was sitting in the gate.’ (Gen 19,1) (Dillmann 1907:172)
- b. **ነበርኩ እጺሊ።**
näbbär-ku ?i-s’elli
 sit\PFV-1S 1S-pray\IPFV
 ‘I kept on praying.’ (Dillmann 1907:172)

As predicates consisting of an imperfective verb and the existential auxiliary may also refer to present or future situations (cf. particularly Weninger 2001:256–270), it is unlikely that *hallo* marks past tense in (30a). It rather emphasizes the continuous phasal aspect. Similar to the plain imperfective in (28), the past reading in (30a) seems to be implied by the context (cf. also §3.1 and §5.2). Regarding the use of the regular Gə‘əz verb *näbbärä* ‘sit’ as marker of the past imperfective, Weninger (2001:305) concludes that it represents a calque from Amharic because this relatively infrequent combination only appears in recent texts (cf. also §5.1, fn. 17). Thus, only *konä* functions as optional past auxiliary in Gə‘əz.

In Amharic and Muher, tense grammaticalized as an obligatory feature of main-clause imperfective verbs. Past tense is marked by the respective past auxiliary of copula clauses, viz. *näbbär* in Amharic and *bannä* in Muher:

- (31) a. **dirä-ge inninge bä-x^wett sä?at ti-dgädde banno.** MUHER
former-time always LOC-two hour 3SF-sleep\IPFV AUX.PST.MVM
 ‘In former times, she used to sleep at two o’clock [i.e. at 8 pm].’
- b. **ድሮ ሞት ሞት ቡና እጠጣ ነበር።** AMHARIC
duro t’^wat≈t’^wat bunna ?i-t’ätt’a näbbär
 formerly morning≈ITER coffee 1SG-drink\IPFV AUX.PST
 ‘In former times, I used to drink coffee every morning.’

The two past auxiliaries in (31) are phonetically independent words, but lack a subject index. This is obvious for the Amharic auxiliary *näbbär* in (31b). The Muher past auxiliary *bannä* in (31a) ends in *ä*, but this vowel does not cross-refer a 3SF subject. It is an inherent part of the auxiliary *bannä*, which is formally identical with the inflected form for a 3SM subject. The past auxiliary *bannä* also hosts the main verb marker (cf. §2.2 for details).

Non-past reference on imperfective verbs is variously marked in modern ES. Amharic indicates non-past through the existential auxiliary *ʔallä* in affirmative main clauses. In contrast to the past auxiliary *näbbär*, *ʔallä* still indexes the subject for most persons, but it cliticizes to the preceding imperfective verb (cf. Leslau 1995:341), as in (32):¹¹

- (32) ነገ መቶ ብር ትሰጥለህ። AMHARIC
nägä mätō bīrr ti-sāt'-äw=ällä-h.
 tomorrow hundred bīrr 2SM-give\IPFV-OBJ.3SM=AUX.EXIST/NPST-2SM
 'You will give him hundred bīrr tomorrow.'

Non-past is not marked by an auxiliary in Muher. As a result, an affirmative non-past imperfective verb in main clauses is formally similar to Gə'əz, cf. (28), except the additional main verb marker (cf. §2.2):

- (33) *inninge bā-x^wett≈bā-x^wett sāʔat ji-dgädde-ø-u* MUHER
 always LOC-two≈ITER hour 3SM-sleep\IPFV-NPST-MVM
 'He always sleeps at two o'clock [i.e. 8 pm].'

The main verb marker *-u* in (33) does not mark non-past, as it also combines with the past auxiliary *bannä*, cf. (31a). Nevertheless, the main-clause imperfective verb in (33) exclusively refers to a non-past situation. If such imperfective verbs co-occur with a past adverbial in Muher, they yield ungrammatical clauses, unless they are combined with the past auxiliary *bannä*:

- (34) a. **dirä f'at ji-ʔäm-ø-u.* MUHER
 former khat 3SM-chew\IPFV-NPST-MVM
 Intended: 'In former times, he was chewing khat.'
 b. *dirä f'at jiʔäm banno.*
 former khat 3SM-chew\IPFV AUX.PST.3SM.MVM
 'In former times, he was chewing/used to chew khat.'

11 Only for 3SM subjects, the auxiliary *ʔallä* has a reduced form, namely *=all* without the final vowel *ä*. This form also attaches to 3P imperfective verbs with an object index, and to converbs in the present perfect construction, except those with 1S and 3SF subjects (cf. §5.1). For details, cf. particularly Bulakh (2014), but also Hetzron (1972:39) and Goldenberg (1977:494).

In subordination, however, imperfective verbs are unmarked for tense because they can refer to past situations as well. Thus, the Gə'əz-type imperfective verbs, which are always unmarked for tense, are restricted to subordinate clauses in Muher (35), and in Amharic as well, as shown in (36a) vs. (36c).

- (35) *jiftät y'at t-i-ḡām ḡazzä-hu-nni-m.* MUHER
 previously khat SUB-3SM-chew\IPFV see\PFV-SBJ.1S-OBJ.3SM-MVMP
 'Previously, I saw him chewing khat.'

The ungrammaticality of the Muher imperfective verb in (34a) vis-à-vis its appropriate use in (35) clearly demonstrates that their tense values differ. Similar to copula clauses (cf. §3.2), the obligatory marking of the past imperfective in main clauses limits plain imperfective verbs to non-past situations. In other words, main-clause imperfective verbs in Muher are marked for non-past through a zero morpheme.

Such a zero non-past morpheme is also part of negated main-clause imperfective verbs in Amharic, as can be deduced from the ungrammaticality of (36a) vs. (36b):

- (36) a. **ድሮ ቡና አይጠጣም።* AMHARIC
**duro bunna ḡa-j-t'ätt'a-mm-ø*
 former coffee NEG-1SG-drink\IPFV-FOC-NPST
 Intended: 'In former times, he was not drinking coffee.'
- b. *ድሮ ቡና አይጠጣም ነበር።*
duro bunna ḡa-j-t'ätt'a-mm näbbär
 former coffee NEG-1SG-drink\IPFV-FOC AUX.PST
 'In former times, he was not drinking coffee.'
- c. *ድሮ ቡና ሳይጠጣ አጠና።*
duro bunna s-a-j-t'ätt'a ḡat'änna
 former coffee SUB-NEG-1SG-drink\IPFV-FOC study\PFV.3SM
 'In former times, he studied without drinking coffee.'

Thus, Amharic marks the non-past imperfective by two morphemes, viz. the existential auxiliary *ḡallä* in affirmative clauses, and a zero morpheme in negation. Compared to the uniform zero non-past morpheme in Muher, the additional non-past auxiliary *ḡallä* in Amharic is certainly a recent innovation, which is also indicated in the available diachronic data. In the Old Amharic

panegyrics from the 14th century, *ʔallä* basically functions as existential auxiliary. Its use as non-past marker in complex predicates is not obligatory (Goldenberg 1977:494; Richter 1997:549–550; Bulakh and Kogan 2014:605). In a text from the 17th century, however, *ʔallä* almost regularly functions as non-past auxiliary with main-clause imperfective verbs (Getatchew 1983:163–165; cf. also Appleyard 2003:234). Ludolf (1698:12, 15, 16, 21, etc.) assumes that complex predicates with an imperfective co-verb and the existential auxiliary in Amharic emphasize continuity (with present time reference), while plain imperfective verbs only denote future situations (cf. also Klingenhoben 1956:276). Until the 19th century, the existential auxiliary was written as separate word in complex predicates, and preserved its full form *ʔallä* for 3SM subjects (cf. Praetorius 1879:252–253; and fn. 11). Since then, it started to cliticize with the imperfective co-verb yielding a single phonetic word, which undergoes phonetic reduction. Thus, most probably complex predicates with an imperfective co-verb and the auxiliary *ʔallä* originally emphasized the continuous phasal aspect in Amharic,¹² from where it further grammaticalized into an overt non-past marker (cf. Hetzron 1972:39; Goldenberg 1977:494; Bulakh and Kogan 2014:605). Cross-linguistically, a present tense marker frequently grammaticalizes from a progressive construction based on a locative verb (cf. Bybee 1994:244; Heine and Kuteva 2004:93–94).

5 Tense in periphrastic phasal aspect constructions

5.1 Perfect

The perfect is an aspectual category. It simultaneously emphasizes the rightmost boundary of a situation and the subsequent stative phase, which is of some relevance for another situation (cf. Sasse 1991:27; Timberlake 2007:289–291). In ES, the perfect is an innovative category. It is expressed through a complex predicate consisting of a converb (or a converb equivalent in the perfective form) followed by a tense marker. The perfect is often restricted to affirmative main clauses.

Amharic and Muher formally distinguish between present and past perfect. The present perfect denotes anterior situations which are relevant at the moment of speaking, whereas they are disconnected from it in the past perfect.

12 This is still the case in Tigrinya (Voigt 1977:337), and probably also in Gə'əz.

In Amharic, the combination of converb and existential auxiliary constitutes the present perfect, but converb plus past auxiliary the past perfect:¹³

- (37) a. **ይህ በጎሎ እግሩ ተሰብሯል።** AMHARIC
jih bāk'lo igr-u täsäbr^w=all.
 PRX mule leg-POSS.3SM be_broken\CNV.3SM=AUX.EXIST/NPST
 'The leg of this mule is broken [now].' (Leslau 1995:389)
- b. **ደብዳቤውን ልኩት ነበር፤ አልደረሰም።**
däbdäbbe-wi-n liko-t näbbär – al-därräs-ä-mm
 letter-DEF-ACC send\CNV.SBJ.3SM-OBJ.3SM AUX.PST NEG-arrive\PFV-
 3SM-FOC
 'He had sent the letter, but it didn't get there.' (Leslau 1995:375)

In Old Amharic, the present perfect was probably expressed through a plain converb as main-clause predicate (cf. Getatchew 1983:165–166), which still prevails in Gojjam Amharic (cf. Meyer 2012:171 fn. 9). In this construction, the converb is conceivably marked by a zero morpheme for non-past,¹⁴ which then was (partly) replaced by the existential auxiliary as overt tense marker, similar to main-clause imperfective verbs (cf. §4).

Muher does not have a separate converb conjugation, but employs a converb equivalent consisting of a perfective verb marked by the (multi-functional) suffix *-m*, (cf. Meyer 2016:187–188):

- (38) *kubra tikä-ça ?enk'äf-ätt-im tǝannatt-im* MUHER
 Kubra.F child-POSS.3SF embrace\PFV-3SF-CNV sit\PFV.3SF-MVMP
 'Kubra is seated holding her child in her arms.'

As with imperfective verbs, Muher marks non-past by a zero morpheme in the present perfect (39i), but by the auxiliary *bannä* in the past perfect (40):

13 For the diachronic development of the perfect in Amharic, cf. Ullendorff (1970); for its functional analysis vis-à-vis the perfective, cf. particularly Kapeliuk (1971; 1997), but also Poláček (1972).

14 This construction differs pragmatically from plain converbs in insubordination (for which cf. Azeb and Dimmendaal 2006:431–432).

(39) *kubra tamijna bässatti-m-ø.* MUHER

Kubra yesterday come\PFV.3SF-CNV-NPST¹⁵

(i) ‘Kubra has come yesterday [and is still here].’ (> PRESENT PERFECT)

(ii) ‘Kubra came yesterday.’ (PERFECTIVE)

(40) *kubra tamijna bässatti-m banno* MUHER

Kubra yesterday come\PFV.3SF-CNV AUX.PST.3SM.DCM

‘Kubra had come yesterday.’ (> PAST PERFECT)

Clauses like (39) are ambiguous in Muher. They typically have a present perfect reading (39i), but may also denote the perfective aspect (39ii). The ambiguity results from a diachronic process through which the present perfect replaced the older perfective in affirmative main clauses in Gunnän Gurage.¹⁶ Only two Gunnän Gurage languages, Mesqan and Kistane, still formally distinguish the present perfect from the perfective in main clauses (cf. Meyer 2016: 222). Pragmatically, the present perfect is often perceived as more emphatic (cf. Kapeliuk 1971:88), which could have initiated the successive replacement of the perfective in main clauses.

According to Weninger (2001:307), the Gə‘əz perfect, which is actually only a past perfect, is a contact-induced category, which appears after Gə‘əz ceased to be spoken as a native language. It is encoded through the combination of a perfective verb with the past auxiliary *konä* (41a), or a converb plus the existential verb *hälläwä* (41b) (cf. Weninger 2001:279–286, 306–307).¹⁷

(41) a. እስመ ኮንኩ ኢነበብኩ ቃለ ጽድቅ በሕይወቴ ... Gə‘əz

ʔismä kon-ku ʔi-näbäb-ku k'al-ä s'idk' bä-hijwäti-jä

because.be(come)\PFV-1S NEG-speak\PFV-1S word-ACC justice LOC-life-POSS.1S

‘As I had not spoken a word of justice in my life ...’ (Praetorius 1886: 47)

15 The sequence CNV-NPST is combined to the gloss MVMP elsewhere.

16 Such a process is also found in Tigrinya (Rubin 2010:50; 2005:33). Moreover, Kapeliuk (1971:80–81) assumes a similar tendency for Amharic, where the present perfect dominates in direct speech, confining affirmative main-clause perfective verbs to writing. But even here, the present perfect starts to outnumber the perfective (Kapeliuk 1997:497).

17 Rarely, the perfect also contains *näbärä* ‘sit’ as past auxiliary, which is clearly a calque from another ES language, probably Amharic (Weninger 2001:334–335; Tropper 2002: 200, 208).

b. ወመትሕተ ውእቱ ደበር ሀለዉ ሕዝብ ከሎሙ ተገቢአሙ።

wä-mätiht-ä wiʔitu däbir halläw-u
 and-base-ACC 3SM mountain (AUX).exist\PFV-3PM
 ħəzb kʷəllomu tägābiʔomu
 people all.POSS.3PM be_gathered\CNV.3PM

‘And at the base of that mountain all people had gathered.’ (Weninger 2001:279)

Contrary to Muher, in which the innovative present perfect assumes the reading of the perfective, Gə‘əz seems to subsume the present perfect in the semantics of the perfective (Weninger 2001:309–312).¹⁸ Although the Gə‘əz perfect is contact-induced, it shows that this category evolved in the past, probably to clearly mark an anterior situation as temporally separated from the moment of speaking. This is of particular importance for inchoative-stative verbs, whose perfective form can have a present or past reading, as Bulakh (2016) (in this volume) clearly demonstrates. The present perfect, accordingly, clearly indicates that the situation denoted by inchoative-stative (and all other types of) verbs is of relevance at the moment of speaking (cf. Kapeliuk 1997:496–497).

5.2 Proximate and progressive phasal aspects

ES languages frequently grammaticalized constructions for the proximate and the progressive phasal aspects in main clauses. The proximate (also called intentional, ingressive or prospective) emphasizes the time period immediately preceding the initial boundary of a situation (Heine 1994:36), while the progressive denotes an uninterrupted activity (Comrie 1976:12).

The proximate is expressed through a copula clause whose complement is an imperfective verb marked by the allative relator *l(ä)-* ‘for, to’ in Amharic (cf. Baye 2006:198), but by the adessive suffix *-ät* ‘nearby’ in Muher:

(42) a. ነገ መገናኛ ልሂኛ ነው።

AMHARIC

nägä mǝngäd l-i-hed näw
 tomorrow way ALL-1S-go\IPFV COP.3SM

‘Tomorrow, I am about to make a journey (lit. to go a way).’

18 This is also the case in Harari (Beniam 2013:194–197), and partly in Tigre (Raz 1983: 73–75; cf. also Meyer 2016:218–224).

b. አብራህ ሊሄድ ነበር። ግን ጥለኸኝ ሄድክ።

ʔabirre-h *l-i-hed* *näbbär – gin*
 be_together\CNV.SJ.1S-OJ.2SM ALL-3SM-go\IPFV AUX.PST but
t'ilä-h-äññ *hed-k*
 throw_away\CNV-SJ.2SM-OJ.1S go\PFV-2SM

‘I was about to go with you. But you left without me.’

- (43) *wälliso alläf-nä-m goru ni-säla-nä-ät-in.* MUHER
 Wolliso pass\PFV-1PL-CNV Goru 1PL-arrive\IPFV-1PL-ADE-COP.3SM
 ‘We passed Wolliso and are about to arrive at Goru.’

The Amharic proximative distinguishes between present and past, as shown in (42), whereas the Muher proximative is restricted to the present (43) (because the same construction with the past auxiliary *bannä* conveys an irrealis reading, cf. (53)).

Amharic, but not Muher, grammaticalized a periphrastic construction for the progressive. It is also based on a copula clause, but with a perfective verb marked with the distributive prefix *ʔijjä-* as complement (cf. Baye 2006:199). Like the proximative, the progressive in Amharic distinguishes between past and present:

- (44) a. ምን ትሠራለህ ? – እየበላሁ ነው። AMHARIC
min ti-sära=allä-h? – ijjä-bälla-h^w näw.
 what 2SM-work\IPFV=AUX.EXIST/NPST-2SM DSTR-eat\PFV-1SG COP.3SM
 ‘What are you doing? – I am eating.’ (Leslau 1995:664)

b. ለሰው ሁሉ [...] እውነተኛው ብርሃን ወደ ዓለም እየመጣ ነበር።

lä-säw hullu ... ʔiwnätäñña-w birhan wädä ʔaläm
 ALL-man all righteous-DEF light towards world
ʔijjä-mätt'a näbbär
 DSTR-come\PFV.3SM AUX.PST

‘The righteous light was coming to the world for all mankind.’ (John 1: 9)

In Muher, the progressive reading is part of the semantics of an imperfective verb (cf. Meyer 2016:213–214), which also is the case in Amharic (Demisie 1988:623).

Gə'əz seems to be developing periphrastic constructions for the proximative and progressive, but they are not clearly distinguished from each other. Accordingly, the combination of an imperfective verb with the existential verb *halläwä* may denote the progressive/continuous or the proximative (Praetorius 1886:56; Dillmann 1907:170–171; Tropper 2002:197–200), as shown in (45a–b):

- (45) a. **ይጸሐፍ ሀሎ።** Gə'əz
ji-ss 'āḥaf hallo
 3SM-be_written\IPFV AUX.EXIST.3SM
 'There will continue to be recording.' (Hen 98,7) (Dillmann 1907:170)
- b. **ይመጽእ ሀሎ።**
ji-mäss 'i? hallo
 3SM-come\IPFV AUX.EXIST.3SM
 'He is about to come.' (Hen 10,2) (Dillmann 1907:170)
- c. **ሀለዎ ይመጽእ።**
halläw-ä-u [halläwo] ji-ms 'i?
 AUX.EXIST-SJ.3SM-OJ.3SM 3SM-come\JUSS
 i. 'He is about to come.' (Hen 10, 2) (Praetorius 1886:56)
 (ii. 'He is obliged to come.')

Alternatively, the imperfective verb in the proximative construction (45b) can be replaced by a jussive verb, as in (45c). In this case, *hallo* inflects with an invariable 3SM subject followed by an object suffix, which is co-referential with the subject of the jussive verb. Depending on the context, this construction can also express obligation (Dillmann 1907:170–171), as indicated in translation (ii) of (45c). It remains unclear whether the proximative and the progressive in Gə'əz are limited to present situations – similar to the proximative in Muher – or unmarked for tense.

The constructions in (45a–b) – in contrast to (45c) and to clauses like (30a), which probably also mark the continuous phasal aspect – are peculiar from a typological point of view because the auxiliary follows the co-verb. Such a sequence was never reported for a VSO (or SVO) language (cf. Heine 1993:23) to which Gə'əz belongs. Thus, (45a–b) are most likely contact-induced phenomena through bilingual scribes whose mother tongue was a verb-final ES language.

6 Past-tense and irrealis modality

The pragmatic interpretation of past imperfective verbs in main clauses is ambiguous in current Amharic. In an indicative reading, they refer to continuous or habitual situations in the past, as mentioned in §4. But, they can also convey an irrealis reading in an epistemic modality for hypothetical or counterfactual situations. The actual interpretation of the past imperfective verb in (46a), for instance, depends on the context. In the indicative, it denotes a continuous activity in the past (46b), but a counterfactual situation in the irrealis (46c):

- (46) a. **ልጆቹ በመናፈሻው ለረጅም ሰዓት ይጨውቱ ነበር፡ ...** AMHARIC
liḍ-otf-u bä-mānafäṣa-w lä-räḍim säʔat ji-tf'äwwät-u näbbär ...
 child-P-DEF LOC-park-DEF ALL-long hour 3P-play\IPFV-P AUX.PST
 i. 'The children were playing for hours in the park.' <(b)
 ii. 'The children would have played for hours in the park.' <(c)
- b. ... **አሁን ተኝተዋል።**
 ... *ahun täjnitäw=all.*
 now sleep\CNV.3P=AUX.EXIST/NPST
 [The children were playing for hours in the park ...]
 'Now they are sleeping.'
- c. ... **ግን መሸ።**
 ... *gin mǎffä.*
 but be(come)_evening\PFV.3SM
 [The children would have played for hours in the park ...]
 'But it got dark.' (adapted from Leslau 1995:316)

The irrealis reading is certainly related to irreal conditional clauses, in which the apodosis typically contains a past imperfective verb as predicate. Thus, the past auxiliary *näbbär* in the irreal apodosis may refer to a past/counterfactual situation (47ii), or to a hypothetical (present)-future situation (47i) in Amharic:

- (47) **ሥራ ብትሠራ ሕይወትህ ይለወጥ ነበር።** AMHARIC
sira bi-tti-sära hijwät-ih ji-lläwwät' näbbär.
 work LOC/IRR-2SM-work\IPFV life-POSS.2SM 3SM-be_changed\IPFV AUX.PST
 i. 'If you worked your life would be changed.'
 ii. 'If you had worked your life would have been changed.' (Abdu 2011:39)

Apparently, Amharic expanded the irrealis reading as an optional variant to all main clauses whose predicate contains the past auxiliary *näbbär*. The past perfect, for instance, frequently expresses very polite requests:

- (48) ይቅርታ፣ ዶክተር ኢማናን ፈልጌ ነበር። AMHARIC
jik'irta doktor ṣimana-n fälligge näbbär
 INTJ.excuse doctor Imana.F-ACC want\CNV.1S AUX.PST
 'Excuse me please, I would like (to speak to) Dr. Imana.'

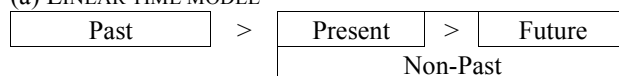
Even copula clauses with the past auxiliary convey an irrealis reading, as in (49):

- (49) ሐሳብህ ጥሩ ነበር፣ ብቻ ከሥራ ላይ ለማዋል ዐቅም የለኝም። AMHARIC
hasab-ih t'iru näbbär– bitfa kā-sra laj
 idea-POSS.2SM good AUX.PST only ABL-work upside
lä-mä-wal ṣak'im jällä-ṣṣn-imm
 ALL-VN-realize\JUS potential NEG.COP.SBJ.3SM-OBJ.1S-FOC
 'Your idea is (lit. was) good, but I don't have the means to put it into practice.' (Leslau 1995:276)

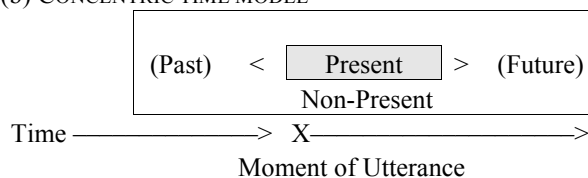
Cross-linguistically, the conflation of past and irrealis is not infrequent. Pettersson (1994) resolves the contradiction that the same auxiliary may refer to past and future situations by reorganizing the linear time model (Figure a) through a concentric time model (3b). In the concentric model, past and future are equal exponents of non-present, which contrasts with present. Consequently, non-present can now be marked by a single element.

Figure 3 Conceptual reorganization of time

(a) LINEAR TIME MODEL



(b) CONCENTRIC TIME MODEL



As a non-present marker, the semantics of the Amharic past auxiliary *näbbär* must have been generalized to refer to any type of past or imagined situation that is not pertinent or directly experienceable at the moment of speaking, i.e. it grammaticalized to a marker of non-actuality (cf. Windfuhr 1985: 448).¹⁹

The semantic generalization of *näbbär* to a marker of non-actuality could have been facilitated through irreal conditional sentences, like (47). This type of conditional sentences, however, represents an innovation, which is based on a grammaticalized past auxiliary. In contrast, Gəʿəz irreal conditional clauses are coded through a morphosyntactic construction without a past auxiliary, like (50):

- (50) ሶበ ነገርከኒ እምፈነውኩከ። ገፍ፣፻፳
sobä nägär-k-ä-nni ʔim-fännäw-ku-kä
 after tell\PFV-SBJ.2SM-LNK-OBJ.1S IRR-send\PFV-SBJ.1S-OBJ.2SM
 ‘If you had told me I would have sent you.’ (Gen 31,27) (Tropper 2002: 246)

In Gəʿəz, the predicate of the irreal apodosis consists of a perfective verb marked by *ʔim(mä)-*, which is probably related to the ablative relator *ʔim(ä)-* (cf. Tropper 2002:140). The predicate of the irreal protasis is also a perfective verb, but it is marked by the temporal conjunction *sobä* ‘after’ (cf. Tropper 2002:245–246; Praetorius 1886:149–150). Irreal protasis and apodosis can occur independently (Tropper 2002:247).

In Amharic, a formally similar archaic irrealis construction exists, which is based on a perfective verb preceded by the locative relator *bä-* (cf. Abdu 2011: 49, 63):

- (51) a. ምነው እስኖን በሆንኩ። AMHARIC
min-näw ʔiswa-n bä-hon-ku
 what-COP.3SM 3SF-ACC LOC/IRR-be(come)\PFV-1S
 ‘I wish I were her!’ (Goldenberg 1965:14)

19 Interestingly, Karawani and Zeijlstra (2013) describe the same development for the past auxiliary in Palestinian Arabic.

b. ሥራ በኖረኝ እንዲህ ባልተቸገርኩ (ነበር)።

sira *bä-nor-ä-ṗṗ* *?ind-ihb-al-täfäggär-ku (näbbär)*
 work LOC/IRR-live\PFV-SBJ.3SM-OBJ.1S SIM-PRXLOC/IRR-NEG- AUX.PST
 be_bothered\PFV-1S

‘If I had a job, I would not have been bothered like this.’ (Abdu 2011: 66)

Archaic irreal clauses like (51) optionally contain the past auxiliary *näbbär*, especially for counterfactual situations (Abdu 2011:64–66).

In Muher, the irrealis is coded through another construction. Similar to Amharic, the auxiliary *bannä* marks past and irrealis in Muher, which, however, are formally distinguished through the conjugation of the co-verb. Main clause predicates with an imperfective co-verb and the past auxiliary predominantly refer to a durative or habitual past situation (52i), but almost never to an irreal situation (52ii):

- (52) *bit’ir* *ä-srä* *banno.* MUHER
 clay_plate 1S-buy\IPFV AUX.PST.3SM.DCM
 i. ‘I was buying/used to buy clay plates.’ [default reading]
 ii. ?‘I would buy clay plates.’ [marked reading]

The unexpected irrealis reading (52ii) is difficult to explain; it probably results from language contact with Amharic. Canonical irrealis predicates in Muher contain an imperfective co-verb marked by the adessive suffix *-ät* ‘nearby’ and the past auxiliary *bannä* in affirmative main clauses.²⁰

- (53) *bit’ir* *ä-srä-ät* *banno.* MUHER
 clay_plate 1S-buy\IPFV-ADE AUX.PST.3SM.DCM
 ‘I would have bought clay plates.’

In irreal conditional sentences with an overt protasis, the predicate of the apodosis consists of a co-verb in the jussive conjugation followed by the past auxiliary. The irreal protasis contains a perfective verb marked by the ablative prefix *tä-*:

²⁰ This construction with the non-past copula marks the proximative, cf. example (47) in §5.2.

- (54) *t'ibä* *ʔozat* *tä-näbbär-ä*²¹ *ä-bja* *ba(nno)*. MUHER
 morning porridge ABL/IRR-live\PFV-3SM 1s-eat\JUUS AUX.PST(.DCM)
 'If there were porridge in the morning, I would have eaten it.'

In Muher, the main clause predicates of the irrealis and the indicative past imperfective formally merge in negation, i.e. they are coded by an imperfective verb marked by the prefix *b-* (55).²² This prefix is probably related to the locative relator *bä-*, which also occurs in the archaic Amharic irrealis (51), but attached to a perfective verb.

- (55) a. *dirä* *ʔat* *ʔatʔäm* *b-anniʔ-äm(-u)*. MUHER
 former-time khat absolutely LOC/PST-NEG-1s-chew\IPFV(-DCM)
 'In former times, I never used to chew khat.' (past habitual)
- b. *jiftät* *ʔiga* *tä-sätʔä* *ʔahuṇṇa*
 previously water ABL/IRR-drink\PFV.3SM now
b-e-t'äma-nn(-itt).
 LOC/IRR-NEG.SI.3SM-make_thirsty\IPFV-OJ.3SM(-DCM)
 'If he drunk water previously, he would not be thirsty now.' (irrealis)

Although the conflation of negated irrealis and past imperfective in Muher resembles the Amharic situation, its opaque morphosyntax is closer to Gə'əz. In the affirmative, the transparent past auxiliary *bannä* parallels Amharic, but the formal distinction between indicative past imperfective and irrealis again corresponds to Gə'əz. In other words, it seems that Muher ascribes new meanings to an old form in negation, but innovates new forms in affirmative clauses.

As a result, Muher does not uniformly mark past by an auxiliary, but also by a synthetic past/irreal construction (55), i.e. the so-called *b-imperfective*.²³

21 The existential auxiliary =*annä* is always substituted by *näbbärä* 'live' in the irreal protasis.

22 Hever (2010:127, 132) describes the same situation for Chaha, another Gunnän Gurage language.

23 According to Retsö (2014); Eades (2012); Rubin (2005:142–152); Lipiński (1997:347–348) among others, the *b-imperfective* expresses various meanings (volitive, progressive, habitual, future, irrealis) in Arabic dialects, and in Qatabanic (Ancient South Arabian). The prefix *b-* has probably two sources, viz. the locative prefix *b-*, or the verb 'want'. The prefix *b-* in Muher seems to originate from the locative prefix, which Retsö (2014:69–70) and Klingenhoben (1956:272) assume for the Arabic dialects of Egypt and the Levantine.

Originally, this synthetic construction probably marked the irrealis. Later, the functional range of the *b*-imperfective was extended to past imperfective verbs in the indicative. Endegagn, another Gunnän Gurage language, provides comparative evidence for such a grammaticalization. The *b*-imperfective in Endegagn is the regular construction for indicative past imperfective verbs in affirmative main clauses, as in (56a):

- (56) a. *jä?ä b-i-säwir-kä.* ENDEGAGN
 wood PST-3SM-break.IPFV-MVM
 ‘He used to break wood/was breaking wood.’ (Yohannes 2015:185)
- b. *bäkkälä jä?ä jisäwir ban-də.*
 Bekele wood 3SM-break\IPFV AUX.PST-MVM
 i. ‘Bekele would have broken wood.’
 ii. ‘Bekele would break wood.’ (Yohannes Adigeh, p.c.)

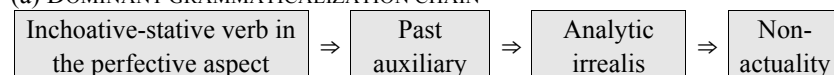
Contrary to Muher (but similar to Amharic), Endegagn expresses the irrealis by an analytic construction consisting of an imperfective verb and the past auxiliary (56b).

The assumed grammaticalization from irrealis to past could explain the form of the enigmatic past auxiliary *bannä* in Muher and other Gunnän Gurage languages. It most probably is a fossilized complex predicate consisting of the prefix *b*- and the existential auxiliary =*annä*.

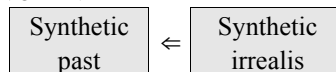
The Muher and Endegagn data suggest two sources for the grammatical marking of past (cf. Figure 4).

Figure 4 Grammaticalization of past markers

(a) DOMINANT GRAMMATICALIZATION CHAIN



(b) RARE GRAMMATICALIZATION CHAIN



The grammaticalization of a past auxiliary, viz. *bannä* (Muher), *näbbär* (Amharic), and *konä* (Gə‘əz), dominates in all three languages, and is also common cross-linguistically (cf. Heine 1993:67–69). The past auxiliary extended its use to irrealis constructions, probably first only in counterfactual clauses, from which it spread to hypothetical clauses, and eventually became a

marker of non-actuality. The grammaticalization (b) in Figure 4 is rare, and restricted to Gunnän Gurage. An irrealis construction, most probably a counterfactual apodosis marked by the locative relator *b(ä)-*, developed to an opaque past marker for imperfective verbs (cf., e.g. Haspelmath 1997:87–92 for such a grammaticalization).

Irrealis and past are semantically connected, but occur in two different conceptual domains (cf., e.g. Botne and Kershner 2008:158–160). On the linear time axis, the past auxiliary in Muher and Amharic locates a situation prior to the moment of speech. Consequently, the past situation is perceived as an event that is not contemporaneous with the moment of utterance. This results in the semantic generalization of the past marker into an irrealis marker, which eventually is reinterpreted as a marker of non-actuality.

7 On the origin of copulas and auxiliaries

This section is primarily concerned with the possible origin of the copulas and auxiliaries discussed in §§3–6.

7.1 Existential auxiliaries

Table 1 provides an overview about the existential (auxiliary) verbs in Gə‘əz, Amharic and Muher:

Table 1 Existential (auxiliary) verbs

	Gə‘əz	AMHARIC	MUHER
MAIN CLAUSE			
AFFIRMATIVE	<i>halläwä</i>	<i>ʔallä</i>	<i>jinä</i>
NEGATIVE	<i>ʔihalläwä</i>	<i>jällä</i>	<i>jännä</i>
DIFFERENT FORM FOR SUBORDINATE CLAUSES			
AFFIRMATIVE			<i>=annä</i>
NEGATIVE		<i>=lellä</i>	

Except Muher *jinä* and probably Amharic *=lellä*, the existential auxiliary verbs are cognate with the root $\sqrt{\text{h-l-w}}$, which is an ES innovation (Weninger 2011b:1115; cf. also Meyer 2016:197–199). The existential (auxiliary) verb has two peculiar features in all languages, viz. its almost exclusive inflection in the perfective conjugation (in which it always has a non-past reading in modern ES), and its combinability with subordinating conjunctions that otherwise are restricted to imperfective verbs (Hetzron 1972:18), as, e.g. *ʔinzä* ‘while’ in (12b).

In Gə‘əz, the root $\sqrt{h-l-w}$ inflects as Type B verb, i.e. it has a geminated second root consonant *ll*, and the template vowel *e* following initial *h* in the imperfective:

- | | | |
|--|---|-------|
| (57) a. ሀለወ ~ ሀለኤ
<i>halläw-ä~hallo</i>
exist\PFV-3SM
‘he exists/existed;
there is/was’ | b. ኢሀለወ
<i>ʔi-halläw-ä</i>
NEG-exist\PFV-3SM
‘he does not exist;
there is no’ | Gə‘əz |
| c. ይሄለኤ
<i>ji-hellu</i>
3SM-exist\IPFV
‘he will exist;
there will be’ | d. የሀለኤ
<i>jä-hallu</i>
3SM-exist\JUSS
‘he should exist;
there should be’ (cf. Tropper 2002:120) | |

Moreover, Gə‘əz, but no other ES language, derives various nominals from $\sqrt{h-l-w}$, e.g. *hallawi* ‘existent, substantial’, *mihilläw* ‘dwelling place, domicile’ (cf. Tropper 2002:59–62; Leslau 1987:218). The conjugation of $\sqrt{h-l-w}$ has only one irregular morphophonological feature in Gə‘əz, namely the optional 3SM perfective form *hallo* for regular *halläwä*. Other triliteral verbs ending with the approximant *w* do not merge the word-final sequence *äwä* to *o* (Dillmann 1907:175 fn. 2).²⁴

While the imperfective form of $\sqrt{h-l-w}$ in (57c) occasionally occurs in Tigre and Tigrinya (Raz 1983:49; Praetorius 1871:327; cf. also Voigt 1977:115), the jussive form seems to be limited to Gə‘əz. In all South ES languages, $\sqrt{h-l-w}$ is an irregular verb, which only inflects in the perfective conjugation. It always lacks final *w*, and changes the root-initial *h* to the glottal stop *ʔ*, or the vowel *a* (cf., e.g. Podolsky 1991:26–28). Hence, it appears as *ʔallä* in Amharic, and enclitic =*annä* in Muher.²⁵

In negated main clauses, the affirmative existential auxiliary is substituted by an inherently negated auxiliary ‘not exist; there is no’ in modern ES, viz. *jällä* in Amharic, and *jännä* in Muher. According to Bulakh and Kogan (2014:601), the negated auxiliaries originate from the negated Gə‘əz existential verb

²⁴ Word-medially, however, *äw(ä)* is often contracted to *o* (cf. Dillmann 1907:78, 96).

²⁵ The change from original **ll* to **nn* is common in Muher and other Gunnän Gurage languages (Fekede and Meyer 2015:544–545; cf. also Hetzron 1977:40; Leslau 1979:xlvi–lv).

(57b). The fricative *h* of *?ihallāwā* first turns into the glottal stop *ʔ*, which then changes to the glide *j*. The weakening of **ʔ>j* is triggered by the negative prefix *?i-*; this process even occurs in Gə‘əz (cf. Tropper 2002:33; Dillmann 1907:92). Hence, Gə‘əz *?ihallāwā* probably first lost the final *w* yielding **?ihallā*, and then changed to **?iʔallā>*(ʔ)ijällā*, which finally became Amharic *jällä* and Muher *jännä* ‘not exist’. As the negative prefix *?i-* is unproductive in Amharic and Muher, the negated existential auxiliaries represent archaic forms (cf. Bulakh and Kogan 2010:280). The Amharic subordinate negated existential *jä=lellä* (REL=NEG.AUX.EXIST.3SM) ‘who/which does not exist’ has an additional initial *l*.

In order to refer to past existential situation, $\sqrt{\text{h-l-w}}$ is substituted by the respective past auxiliary in Amharic and Muher (cf. §7.3), and even partly in Gə‘əz (cf. Dillmann 1907:171), as shown in the obligation constructions (58a) vs. (58b):

- (58) a. ሀለወክሙ ትርአይዎ። Gə‘əz
hallāw-ä-kkimu ti-rʔaji-w-wo
 AUX.EXIST-SJ.3SM-OJ.2PM SJ.2PM-see\JUSS-SJ.PM-OJ.3SM
 ‘You must (then) see him.’ (Hen 55,4) (Dillmann 1907:171)
- b. ኮኑ ... ይሰግዱ።
kon-u ... ji-sgid-u
 AUX.PST/be(come)\PFV-3PM 3PM-worship\JUSS-PM
 ‘They had to worship.’ (Dillmann 1907:171)

Given its almost regular verbal behavior in Gə‘əz, $\sqrt{\text{h-l-w}}$ seems to represent a verb with an atelic stative semantics. As total-stative verbs in ES do not inflect in the perfective conjugation (cf. Meyer 2016:205–207, fn. 63), $\sqrt{\text{h-l-w}}$ is probably an inchoative-stative verb ‘come in existence and remain in this state’. On the other hand, the time interference of its perfective form excludes a past reading, which is strange.

The existential $\sqrt{\text{h-l-w}}$ could also have developed from a zero copula clause, in which person suffixes were attached to a deictic copula complement, which were reanalyzed as a single predicate denoting existence. The person suffixes of the original deictic complement were either identical with the subject suffixes of perfective verbs, or leveled accordingly, which could have been facilitated through the second person suffixes, which are almost identical for subjects, objects, and possessors. The new existential predicate was retained as such in South ES, i.e. Amharic and Muher, but reanalyzed as verbal root

√ h-l-w in North ES, particularly in Gə'əz, and then inflected in other conjugations. This would explain the verb type B, which is preferred for loan verbs and verbalized nominals in modern ES. The archaic negated existential auxiliaries in Amharic and Muher do not necessarily contradict such a development because the prefix *ʔi-* also negates non-verbal elements in Gə'əz (cf. Tropper 2002:148), and probably in Proto-ES. The origin of the existential auxiliary from a complex non-verbal copula predicate could account for the peculiar total-stative semantics, as copulas per default express a stative relation.

According to Lipiński (1997:315–316, 477), the deictic element that possibly developed into the existential root √ h-l-w is the common Semitic demonstrative element **hanni~*hanna* (with the variants **halli~*halla* and **ʔulli*), whose specific function remains unclear. The combination of **halla* and the 3SM possessive pronoun **(h)u* initially formed a locative copula clause, viz. **halla hu* 'Here he/it is!', which then developed into the existential verb **halläwä* in Gə'əz, whereas the plain demonstrative **halla* became Amharic *ʔallä*, and Muher =*annä* (which also could represent the allomorph **hanna*).²⁶ According to Heine and Kuteva (2004:108–109), the grammaticalization from a demonstrative to an existential copula is frequent cross-linguistically.

Thus, the ES existential √ h-l-w has two possible diachronic sources. The perfective form of the regular inchoative-stative verb √ h-l-w, which is almost unique to ES and particularly productive in North ES,²⁷ could have been grammaticalized as existential auxiliary. The grammaticalization narrowed its semantics to a total-stative verb, which is enigmatic and still needs further explanation. The other possible source of √ h-l-w could be a non-verbal predicate, which was reanalyzed as inflected existential auxiliary in South ES, but further generalized to a regular verb in North ES. If such a non-verbal origin is assumed, the existential auxiliary was originally unmarked for tense (and aspect), and obtained its inherent non-past value through interferences with the past auxiliary.

26 In Eastern Gurage, the existence of the two allomorphs **halla* and **hanna* could be reflected in the independent existential auxiliary *ʔalä* and its bound counterpart =*an*, functioning as non-past marker in Wolane and Silt'e (cf. Meyer 2006:94, 96; Gutt 1997: 17, 933).

27 Cf. Leslau (1987:218) for proposed etymologies and their evaluation. Kogan (2005:388) proposes an Afroasiatic origin by associating √ h-l-w with the copula **ʔal-/i-* 'be' in Orel and Stolbova (1995:8 item 28), which, however, has no cognates in Semitic. Outside ES, the existential verb *hallo* is only reported for an Arabic dialect in southern Yemen (Müller 1981:399), for which early contacts with ES cannot be excluded.

In Table 1, Muher has another existential auxiliary for affirmative main clauses, viz. *jinä*.²⁸ Lipiński (1997:477–478) relates *jinä* to Agaw **wän-* ‘be’ and Egyptian *wn(-n)* ‘be’ assuming that the initial labial glide *w* changed to *j* due to an adjacent front vowel (cf. also §7.2 for a Proto-Semitic or Afroasiatic copula **wn*). Leslau (1944:62; 1945b:61), in contrast, connects *jinä* to the Proto-Semitic demonstrative **hinna~?inna*, which is cognate with the above-mentioned **hanna* (cf. Lipiński 1997:321). ES retained **hinna~?inna* as *?in(nä)-* or *nä* in various discourse-deictic constructions, which are often limited to a referent in the second person (cf. Lipiński 1997:316; Leslau 1987:380):²⁹

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---------|
| (59) <i>nä-hä</i> | ‘Come to me (2SM)!’ | (only 2 nd person) | MUHER |
| (60) a. <i>?innäho</i> | ‘Here it is!’ | (invariable) | AMHARIC |
| b. <i>?in-ka</i> | ‘Here you are (2SM)!’ | (only 2 nd person) | |
| c. <i>na</i> | ‘Come to me (2SM)!’ | (only 2 nd person) | |
| | | (Leslau 1995:900, 903) | |
| (61) a. <i>näʕä</i> | ‘Come (2SM)!’ | (only 2 nd person) | GǼʕEZ |
| b. <i>nä-hu</i> | ‘(T)here he is; behold!’ | (no 2 nd person) | |
| <i>nä-jä</i> | ‘(T)here I am!’ | | |
| c. <i>?in-kimu</i> | ‘Here you are (2PM)!’ | (only 2 nd person?) | |
| | (cf. Praetorius 1886:87; Dillmann 1907:375–376; Leslau 1987:380) | | |

Outside ES, particles originating from **hinna~?inna* usually have a presentative function, like Ugaritic *hn* and Hebrew *hinnē* ‘behold’ (Moscatti et al. 1980:121), or *?ino(h)* ‘there is’ in Soqotri (Leslau 1938:66).

A demonstrative element similar to Soqotri *?ino(h)* apparently developed into the inflected existential auxiliary *?inno* ‘exist, there is’ in the Rayya variety of Tigrinya, which indexes 3S subjects by the object suffixes, but the subject suffixes of perfective verbs in all other persons, e.g. *?inhä-hu* (AUX.EXIST-SBJ.1S) ‘I am here’ vs. *?inha* (AUX.EXIST-OBJ.3SF) ‘she is here’ (p.c. Dagnew Machew, April 2016). It is very likely that the Muher existential auxiliary *jinä*

28 The existential auxiliary *jinä* also occurs in Kistane and in Gafat, while other Gunnän Gurage languages have *närä* or *nänä* (cf. Leslau 1979:457 for further details), which, like *jinä*, only occur in affirmative main clauses.

29 Cf. also Girma (2012:147–148) for a locative element *inna* in Old Amharic copula clauses.

has a similar origin, but leveled its subject index according to the subject suffixes of perfective verbs.

7.2 Linker copulas

The linker copulas include the zero and pronoun copulas in Gə‘əz, and the inflected *n*-copulas in Amharic and Muher, which index the subject by the subject suffixes of perfective verbs, object suffixes, or a combination of them.³⁰ Linker copulas only index the subject (never the complement), and are typically restricted to main affirmative clauses.

Zaborski (2005:12, 22) assumes **(V)nV* ‘be’ and **ta* ‘be(come)’ to be Proto-Afroasiatic copulas, which subsequently became an inherent part of certain verb paradigms. Similarly, Hetzron (1977:92) proposes a Proto-Semitic or Afroasiatic copula **wn*, while Orel and Stolbova (1995:240) reconstruct **ʕan-/ʕin-* ‘exist’ beside various other elements with the meaning ‘be(come), exist’. Be that as it may, it is unlikely that the *n*-copula in ES derives from a Proto-Afroasiatic copula – if there was any – as copula clauses in Proto-Semitic and Gə‘əz did not contain an overt copula (cf. also Goldenberg 1999:119).

Lipiński (1997:299–301, 476–477) assumes that the *n*-copula grammaticalized from Proto-Semitic or Afroasiatic personal pronouns based on the element **na* (with the variants **ʔan/*n*) followed by person suffixes, as in (62). As pronoun copulas often follow the copula complement, they could have been reanalyzed as copula predicate:

- (62) PROTO-COPULA > AMHARIC
- | | | | |
|----|---------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| a. | <i>*na-ni</i> | <i>näṇṇ</i> | ‘I am’ |
| b. | <i>*na-ka</i> | <i>näh</i> | ‘you are (2SM)’ |
| c. | <i>*na-hu</i> | <i>näw</i> | ‘he is’ (Lipiński 1997:477) |

According to Lipiński (1997:477), the pronominal origin of the *n*-copula prohibits its negation. Therefore, it is substituted by either the negated copula verb $\sqrt{\text{k-w-n}}$ ‘be(come)’, or an additional negative linker copula, as *ʔajdällä* in Amharic.³¹ Note, however, that Gə‘əz can negate nominal constituents by the prefix *ʔi-*, or clauses by the particle *ʔakko* (Tropper 2002:148, 221).

30 For an overview about linker copulas in ES, cf. Meyer (2016:191–197), Girma (2013), and Hever (2010).

31 Cf. Getatchew (1970:75) for its origin.

The element **n*, and its augment **(?i)nt-* (Lipiński 1997:299) probably had a deictic function, as they are part of demonstrative pronouns in various Semitic languages (cf. also Rubin 2005:27–28; 2010:42). However, this **n* seems to be unrelated to the Proto-Semitic demonstrative **hanni* or its variant **hinna* mentioned in §7.1 (cf. Lipiński 1997:321, 323). Leslau (1987:380; 1945a:74) and Dillmann (1907:117, 376 fn. 1), in contrast, are of the opinion that the Amharic copula base **nä-* is also part of emphatic presentative expressions in Gə‘əz, as in (61b), and, thus, related to Proto-Semitic **hinna*. Anyway, most scholars assume that the (South) ES *n*-copula grammaticalized from older demonstrative or presentative particles (cf., e.g. Bulakh and Kogan 2014:602–604; Rubin 2005:42; 2010:68; Goldenberg 1977:479–480; Hetzron 1972:79–85).

Meyer (2007:191–192) observes that the element **n(ä)* has various functions in ES that are conceptually related. Most frequently, it is used as linker copula, but also as inflected focus marker in Zay (cf. Meyer 2005:291–294),³² direct object marker in Amharic, Zay and Silt’e,³³ and the 3SM object suffix in Gunnän Gurage (cf. Hetzron 1977:65, 67).³⁴

Although the diachronic details regarding the origin of the *n*-copula remain vague, it possibly represents a merged paradigm combining inflected **nä* and **n* as bases with originally different functions. In Gə‘əz, the base **nä* is found in the emphatic deictic element *nä-/nä-* in (61b). In contrast to purely consonantal relator prefixes, the vowel *ä* must be inherent part of the emphatic deictic element, as it appears in all inflected forms, while consonantal relator prefixes regularly lack it with 1s complements: *nä-jä* (DEM-POSS.1s) ‘(T)here I am!’ vs. *bi-jä* (LOC-POSS.1s) ‘upon me’ (Tropper 2002:144). The emphatic deictic *nä-~nä-* is not used with 2nd person referents in Gə‘əz. The vowelless base **n*, in contrast, occurs with the presentative prefix *?in-* in (61c), which is restricted to 2nd person referents. Thus, there seems to be an opposition between 2nd person **n-* vs. 1/3 person **nä-*.

In Muher, the allomorph *-nn* of the 3SM object pronoun could stem from the plain base **n*. If inflected with the subject suffixes of perfective verbs, the base *n* also functions as linker copula for first and second person subjects. Most pro-

32 Note that the focus marker did not grammaticalize from a former copula (Meyer 2007: 184–185).

33 Appleyard (2004), in contrast, suggests that the accusative affixes *-n* in Amharic, and *n(i)-* in Tigrinya are related to the allative/dative relator *l(ä)-*.

34 For the various functions of the suffix *-n* in Amharic, cf. particularly Girma (2012:127–132).

bably, only the object suffixes initially functioned as linker copula for third person subjects, which are derived from the 3SM suffix *-nn* or *-u* (cf. Meyer 2007: 186 for the paradigm). Similarly, presentative clauses with a demonstrative pronoun as copula complement in Amharic also lack the *n*-copula. They directly attach the object suffixes to the demonstrative (cf. Girma 2012:107–108):

(63) a. **ሳባ ያችት!**

AMHARIC

saba ja-tf-at

Saba.F DST-F-OBJ.3SF

‘Saba is (over) there!’ (Girma 2012:108)

b. **ይኸው!**

jih-äw

PRX-OBJ.3SM

‘Here it is!’ (Girma 2012:108)

The 3SM object suffix *-nn* in Muher could have been reanalyzed as copula due to its phonetic similarity with the inflected base *n* for second person presentative clauses. Subsequently, it was extended to the entire 3rd person, in which it inflects with the original object suffixes. This leveling process is still ongoing with 3S subjects, as the copula for the 3SF is the plain object suffix *-ja* in Muher. In Wolane (Eastern Gurage), however, it is completed so that a single copula *n* inflects with the subject suffixes of perfective verbs in all persons (Meyer 2007:181).

Contrary to Muher and Wolane, the linker copula in Dobbi (Northern Gurage) and the focus marker in Zay (Eastern Gurage) have *-nä* as base for first and second person subjects, but *-n* for the third person. In Dobbi, *-nä* inflects with the subject suffixes, but *-n* (which as such represents the 3SM copula as in Muher) with the object suffixes (Meyer 2007:186). This is also the case for the focus marker in Zay, except that the 3SF is marked by the subject suffix (Meyer 2007:186; 2005:293–294).

The Amharic linker copula uniformly uses the object suffixes to index the subject; only the 3SF may optionally be marked by the verbal subject suffix (Leslau 1995:271; Girma 2013:299–301), as shown in (14a). As the change from object to subject suffix is recorded for the negated copula in Amharic (cf. Goldenberg 1977:480; and particularly Getatchew 1970:75), it is assumed that originally the object suffixes indexed the subject on the copula. Consequently, the subject suffixes of perfective verbs on the Muher copula (and that of other Gunnän Gurage languages) are more recent innovation (Hetzron 1972:85).

Although **nā* is commonly reconstructed as base for the Amharic copula, as in (62) (cf. Klingenberg 1956:275–276; Dillmann 1907:376 fn. 1; Leslau 1987:380), it could also be **n* to which the archaic accusative/linker suffix *-ä* (cf. §2.2) was attached. In Amharic, the vowel *ä* regularly precedes the first and third person primary object suffixes, cf., e.g. (64b), but is replaced by the applicative suffixes *-bb* and *-ll* for applied objects, as in (64c):

- (64) a. **ይውሰድ** AMHARIC
jī-wsäd ‘he should take’
 3SM-take\JUUS
- b. **ይውሰድኝ**
jī-wsäd-ä-jjñ ‘he should take me’
 SBJ.3SM-take\JUUS-ACC/LNK-OBJ.1S
- c. **ይውሰድብኝ**
jī-wsäd-ibb-ijjñ ‘let him take (it) to my detriment’
 SBJ.3SM-take\JUUS-APL.MAL-OBJ.1S

Accordingly, the Amharic copula *näjjñ* ‘I am’ in (62a) could be *n-ä-jjñ* COP-ACC/LNK-OBJ.1S or *nä-(ä)jjñ* COP-(ACC)OBJ.1S. The connection of the vowel *ä* to the 3SM subject suffix of perfective verbs, as suggested in Getatchew (1974), and then followed by others, e.g. Mulusew (2014), is not convincing (cf. Girma 2012:115–126 for details).

To conclude, it seems that ES originally had a zero linker copula,³⁵ which was substituted by overt pronoun copulas. Initially, they had an emphatic or disambiguating function, but then grammaticalized as copula predicate. While Gə‘əz uses the personal pronouns as copula, Muher and Amharic grammaticalized a separate copula whose diachronic origin is not entirely clear, but certainly related to archaic pronominal or demonstrative elements.

Cross-linguistically, the grammaticalization chain *demonstrative* > *personal pronoun* > *copula* is well documented (Heine and Kuteva 2004:108–109). In principle, it is possible that a demonstrative develops into an existential copula (as is often the case in pidgin and creole languages), and then into a linker copula (cf. Heine and Kuteva 2004:109). Accordingly, the linker copula in South

35 For assumed zero copula constructions in Old Amharic, cf. Girma (2012:109–111). Note that Old Amharic also had an invariable *tt* copula, which is retained as obligatory suffix on personal pronouns as copula complement in Muher (cf. Meyer 2007:190–191 for details).

ES and the existential auxiliary could originate from the same diachronic source, i.e. the Proto-Semitic demonstrative **hanni* (or one of its allomorphs).

Similar to the zero or personal pronoun copula in Gə'əz, the *n*-copulas in Amharic and Muher were certainly unmarked for tense originally. They acquired non-past as inherent part of their semantics through interference with the past auxiliary. Generally, the existence of two copula predicates, viz. $\sqrt{\text{h-l-w}}$ 'exist' and the linker copula 'be', is a peculiar feature of ES – and probably Akkadian (cf. fn. 9) – for which Leslau (1952:72–73) assumes Cushitic influence.

7.3 Past auxiliaries

The past auxiliaries in Gə'əz, Amharic and Muher are shown in Table 2 (cf. Meyer (2016:194–196) for a general overview on ES):

Table 2 Past auxiliary verbs

	GƏ'ƏZ	AMHARIC	MUHER
	MAIN CLAUSE		
AFFIRMATIVE	<i>konä</i>	<i>näbbär</i>	<i>bannä</i>
NEGATIVE	<i>(?i-konä)</i>	<i>?al-näbbärä</i>	<i>?an-näbärä</i>
	ADDITIONAL FORM IN SUBORDINATE CLAUSES		
		<i>norä</i>	<i>näbbärä</i>

Most past auxiliaries grammaticalized according to the Overlap Model described in Heine (1993:43–53) from regular verbal roots with an inchoative-stative semantics, viz. Gə'əz $\sqrt{\text{k-w-n}}$ 'be(come), come into existence, occur' (cf. Leslau 1987:299–300; Tropper 2002:294), Amharic and Muher $\sqrt{\text{n-b-r}}$ 'sit, dwell, live' (cf. Leslau 1987:383–384). In all ES languages, the past auxiliary is regularly negated.

The grammaticalization of the perfective form of these verbs as past auxiliaries is facilitated through syntactic and semantic interference, which also affects the original lexical aspect of the verbs. The perfective aspect of inchoative-stative verbs has a non-past reading by default, or may refer to past situations in specific contexts (cf. Meyer 2016:204–205).

In Gə'əz, these two readings probably occur with *konä* in negation (cf. Tropper 2002:149). In affirmative clauses, however, the perfective form of *konä* has exclusively a past reading. If *konä* occurs as an additional element in a predicate, it competes with the respective plain predicates, which are unmarked for tense. This results in semantic interferences through which *konä*

loses its stative component, which is expressed by the linker copulas. The remaining telic component emphasizes the transition into a new state (without the following state itself), which induces a past reading. Similar interferences, which affect the semantics of the perfective form of $\sqrt{k-w-n}$, can still be observed in Muher and Amharic, cf. particularly (20) and (21) in §3.2. Although a cognate verb from the root $\sqrt{k-w-n}$ also functions as past auxiliary in Arabic (cf. Bubenik, Hewson and Omari 2013; Michalski 2012; Stempel 1999:38; Lipiński 1997:479), Gə'əz is the only ES language that conventionalized *konā* as past auxiliary.

In Amharic and Muher, the perfective conjugation of the root $\sqrt{n-b-r}$ 'live, sit' grammaticalized as past auxiliary. The regular lexical root $\sqrt{n-b-r}$ also exists in Gə'əz, in which it appears as *nābārā* in the perfective conjugation with the predominant meaning 'sit, dwell', as in (30a), whereas the meaning 'live, be alive' is characteristic for modern ES.³⁶ In Gə'əz, this concept is denoted by *hājwā* 'live, be alive' (< Proto-Semitic $\sqrt{h-w-j}$ 'be, become'), which is unproductive in modern ES (cf. Rubin 2005:41 fn. 137; Leslau 1987:252).³⁷ Apparently, $\sqrt{n-b-r}$ changed its meaning from Gə'əz 'sit' to Amharic/Muher 'live', but it remains unclear why it grammaticalized as past auxiliary in most modern ES languages. Probably, it is an areal feature that spread through language contact after it was established in one ES language.

The Muher past auxiliary *nābbārā*, which is restricted to negated and subordinated clauses (cf. (27b)), is formally identical with the regular perfective verb *nābbārā* 'live'. In Amharic, in contrast, the past auxiliary *nābbār* differs from the regular lexical verb *norā* 'live'. First, the past auxiliary tends to omit the subject index (cf. Podolsky 1991:75), which is obligatory with the regular verb. Second, *norā* 'live' diachronically weakened the second root consonant **b* to a labial element that assimilates with the adjacent vowel *ā* to *o* (or is realized as *u*), whereas the past auxiliary retained original **b*.³⁸ This phonetic difference certainly results from an alternating gemination of **b*, i.e. original single **b*

36 The Gə'əz meaning component 'sit' still exists in certain derived forms in modern ES, as in the Amharic causative *ʔanorā* 'put, set, store up' from *norā* 'live' (cf. Kane 1990: 1049) (< $\sqrt{n-b-r}$).

37 Borrowed words/archaisms from the root $\sqrt{h-j-w}$ may occur, like Amharic *hijwāt* 'life', beside regular *nuro* 'life' (cf. Kane 1990:26, 1049), whereas Muher only has *nibrāt* 'life'.

38 In other Transversal South ES languages, the weakened **b* is found in the past auxiliary, but not in the regular verb. Moreover, weakened **b* does not cause labialization, but lengthening/lowering of the vowel *ā* to *a~ā*, as in Zay, Silt'e and Harari *nar~nār*, or is completely lost in Wolane *nār* (cf. Meyer 2016:195).

was weakened, while geminated **bb* was retained. According to received opinion, the Amharic lexical verb *norä* stems from an assumed imperfective base **näbr*, but the past auxiliary from the perfective base **näbbär* (Klingenheben 1968:122; Podolsky 1991:48). This might fit the current Amharic pattern, in which the gemination of the second root consonant in the perfective, and its degemination in the imperfective are assumed innovations, but it does not account for the situation in Eastern Gurage and Harari, which lack gemination throughout (cf. Meyer 2016:178–180). Therefore, the alternating gemination pattern most probably represents an archaic variation between the non-geminating basic stem (Type A) **näbär* vs. the geminating doubled stem (Type B) **näbbär*.

Muher (and other Gunnän Gurage languages) replaced the past auxiliary *näbbär* by the innovative element *bannä* in affirmative main clauses whose origin is discussed variously in the literature (cf. Leslau 1979:143–144; Hever 2010:126–127). Leslau's (1949:220; 1956:76) assumption – and its further substantiation in Hever (2010) – that *bannä* consists of a prefix *b(ä)-* followed by the existential auxiliary *=annä* is most plausible, as a similar construction (i.e. imperfective verb plus the prefix *b(ä)-*) refers to past situations in Endegagn, cf. (55) and (56) in §6.

8 Summary

Tense as an obligatory grammatical category of main clause predicates in modern ES started to emerge as an optional feature in Gə'əz. It first occurred in copula clauses and in clauses with an imperfective main verb. Later, tense marking became an inherent part of periphrastic constructions denoting phasal aspects, mainly the perfect, proximative and progressive. These constructions are limited to main clauses, as subordinate predicates only express viewpoint aspect but not tense.

Figure 5 shows that the emergence of tense is accompanied by the grammaticalization of two distinct copula predicates, viz. the linker copula 'be' and the existential auxiliary 'exist', which both have the past auxiliary as tense-marked counterpart:

Figure 5 Copula predicates in affirmative main clauses

Gə'əz			⇒			AMHARIC AND MUHER		
[± past]			([+ past])			[− past]		
INDICATIVE	LINKER	EXISTENTIAL	LINKER/EXISTENTIAL			LINKER	EXISTENTIAL	LINKER/EXISTENTIAL
	∅ >PRO	bo >√ h-l-w	(>√ k-w-n)			*n	√ _{AUX} h-l-w >jinä	√ _{AUX} n-b-r >bannä
JUSS	√ k-w-n	√ h-l-w				√ k-w-n	√ n-b-r	

√ h-l-w 'exist'; √ k-w-n 'be(come)'; √ n-b-r 'sit, (dwell, live)' (Gə'əz) but 'live' (Amharic, Muher)

PRO pronoun copula; √ regular verb; √_{AUX} only perfective form; > additional form

The existential relation in Gə'əz can be expressed through *bo* 'on him/it > there is/he has' as locative copula complement, or the regular verb √ h-l-w 'exist'. In Amharic and Muher, a cognate to the Gə'əz perfective form of √ h-l-w grammaticalized as existential auxiliary, which Muher replaced by the auxiliary *jinä* in affirmative main clauses. Thus, the existential relation in Amharic and Muher is formally separated from the linking relation.

The original tenseless copula and existential predicates in Gə'əz acquired non-past as a secondary semantic feature in modern ES when tense marking conventionalized as an obligatory part of main clauses. The overt past auxiliary interfered with the semantics of the copula so that its occurrence was limited to non-past situations. Consequently, a zero morpheme for non-past emerged that eventually became an inherent component of the copula and the existential auxiliary.

As with copula predicates, the obligatory marking of the past imperfective interfered with the semantics of plain imperfective verbs so that they became limited to non-past situations in main clauses. Subordinate imperfective verbs, in contrast, are still unmarked for tense. The opposition of an overt past auxiliary vs. a zero non-past morpheme became the most common pattern in ES, which is represented as Stage 2 in Figure 6:

Figure 6 Grammaticalization of tense marking on main-clause predicates

	STAGE ₁	>	STAGE ₂	>	STAGE ₃
	Gə'əz		Muher		Amharic
	(konä)		bannä		(negation)
PAST			ø		näbbär
NON-PAST			ø		ʔallä

In another step, the non-past zero morpheme was replaced by an overt tense marker, viz. the existential auxiliary in Amharic, which initially marked the continuous phasal aspect.

Finally, overt past marking entered the irrealis domain in which it substituted opaque synthetic verb forms by transparent analytic constructions. When the past auxiliary became part of hypothetical clauses, it generalized to a marker of non-actuality denoting situations that are not immediately experienceable or persistent at the moment of utterance.

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Abbreviations

?	Uncommon form/meaning	JUSS	Jussive/imperative
*	Ungrammatical, hypothetical form/meaning	LNK	Linker
		LOC	Locative
√	Lexical root	M	Masculine, male
1,2,3	1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd person	MAL	Malefactive
ABL	Ablative	MVM	Affirmative main clause marker
ACC	Accusative	MVMP	Combination CNV-NPST functioning as present perfect
ADE	Adessive		
ALL	Allative, dative	NEG	Negation
APL	Applicative	NPST	Non-past
AUG	Augment	OBJ	Object suffix
AUX	Auxiliary	P	Plural
CNV	Converb	PF	Plural-feminine
COM	Comitative	PFV	Perfective
COP	Copula	PM	Plural-masculine
DEF	Definite	POSS	Possessive
DST	Distal	PRX	Proximal
DSTR	Distributive	PST	Past
EMPH	Emphatic	REL	Relative clause marker
EXIST	Existential auxiliary	S	Singular
F	Feminine, female	SF	Singular-feminine
FOC	Focus	SIM	Similative
GEN	Genitive	SBJ	Subject affix
INST	Instrumental	SM	Singular-masculine
INTJ	Interjection	SNG	Singulative
IPFV	Imperfective	SUB	Subordinating conjunction ‘while’
IRR	Irrealis condition	VN	Verbal noun
ITER	Iterative		

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