CHAPTER 6

GƏꞭƏZ (CLASSICAL ETHIOPIC)

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1 INTRODUCTION

Gəʕəz – also called "Classical Ethiopic" or simply "Ethiopic" – was the language of the kingdom of Axum during Late Antiquity. Geographically, Gəʕəz had its homeland in what is today Eritrea and northern Ethiopia. It is, however, attested across a larger expanse covering all of Ethiopia (Map 6.1) and reaching east into the Arabian peninsula (especially modern Yemen) and north all the way up to Egypt. After the fall of the Axumite kingdom, toward the beginning of the 9th century, Gəʕəz continued to be used as a religious and literary language by the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches, and this remains the case up until the present day.

MAP 6.1 THE APPROXIMATE SPEECH AREA OF GƏꞭƏZ (CLASSICAL ETHIOPIC)

Gəʕəz belongs to the Ethiopian Semitic language group, a discrete branch of West Semitic (see Introduction). Ethiopian Semitic includes a variety of languages, such as Gəʕəz (described in this chapter), Tigre (Chapter 7), Tigrinya (Chapter 8), Amharic (Chapter 9) and Gurage (Chapter 10). Traditionally, Ethiopian Semitic was divided into two nodes: Northern Ethiopian Semitic, which consisted of Gəʕəz, Tigre and Tigrinya, vs. Southern Ethiopian Semitic, which included the remainder of the languages of Ethiopian Semitic (see, e.g., Cohen 1931, Hetzron 1972). Recently, however, Bulakh and Kogan (2010, 2013, see also Voigt 2010) have called the node of Northern Ethiopian Semitic into question noting that Gəʕəz, Tigre and Tigrinya do not share any (morphological) innovations. Rather, the features that they have in common are either retentions from an earlier stage or areal features due to geographic proximity. Thus, the traditional node of Northern Ethiopian Semitic can no longer be maintained. It further remains unclear whether any combination of Gəʕəz, Tigre and Tigrinya are more closely related to one another or to Southern Ethiopian Semitic. Thus, in the current state of research, it seems best to consider Gəʕəz, Tigre, Tigrinya and Southern Ethiopian Semitic as coordinated branches of Ethiopian Semitic.

The sources for Gəʕəz can be divided into four broad categories (in roughly chronological order): (a) Epigraphic Gəʕəz, (b) Axumite Gəʕəz, (c) Solomonic Gəʕəz and (d) the modern pronunciation tradition.

Epigraphic Gəʕəz consists of the varieties of Gəʕəz that are attested in inscriptions dating from the first millennium CE. There are more than 200 such inscriptions, though the vast majority of them are short. The varieties of Epigraphic Gəʕəz display some minor differences from Classical Gəʕəz as attested in the later manuscripts. In general, however, Epigraphic Gəʕəz is closely similar to the literary form of the language that is attested in later manuscripts. In contrast to literary Gəʕəz (whether Axumite or Solomonic), Epigraphic Gəʕəz constitutes the only direct evidence for original, non-translated texts produced by native speakers of Gəʕəz. Thus, it is of great importance for our knowledge of Gəʕəz generally, even though the corpus is limited and remains understudied.

The next two sources, i.e., Axumite and Solmonic Gəʕəz, comprise the literary form(s) of the language as attested in manuscripts. The Axumite period of Gəʕəz spans from approximately the 4th century to the beginning of the 9th. It consists (almost?) exclusively of translations from Greek, such as the Bible, the Rules of Pachomius, a body of theological texts known as Qerəllos (i.e., Cyril of Alexandria), and the more recently discovered group of texts now referred to as the *Axumite Collection*. With a few possible exceptions, such as the gospel manuscripts from Ǝnda Abba Gärima, the dating of which is disputed (as early as the 4th century to as late as the 13th), most, if not all, texts from the Axumite period are transmitted in manuscripts that were copied in the later Solomonic period, i.e., beginning in the 13th century (see the next paragraph). In addition, at least some – if not many – of the texts from the Axumite period were revised against Arabic versions or retranslated in the Solomonic period. This means that, setting aside the inscriptions discussed previously (i.e., Epigraphic Gəʕəz), there is little to no direct access to Gəʕəz in the Axumite period: Literary texts from the Axumite period are with a few possible exceptions always mediated by the later Solomonic period. Research on the most ancient Ethiopic manuscripts, especially those that contain Axumite period texts, has shown that these preserve certain archaic linguistic features, some of which are also attested in Epigraphic Gəʕəz (see especially Bausi 2005, with many references therein). These archaic features probably represent the proverbial tip of the iceberg of an earlier variety (better: varieties) of Gəʕəz that has been mostly standardized in the Solomonic period.

The Solomonic period of Gəʕəz traditionally begins with the (re-)institution of the Solomonic dynasty in 1270 and extends basically to the present.[1] In this period, Gəʕəz functioned as a literary and religious language, but it was probably never a first language: The use of Gəʕəz in the Solomonic period is often compared to that of Latin in Medieval Europe. It is thus not surprising that some Ethiopic texts from the Solomonic period betray significant influence from Amharic, the first language of many Gəʕəz users. In addition, though there are some native compositions from the Solomonic period, most texts are translations from Arabic, and some of these show considerable influence from their *Vorlagen*. The Gəʕəz texts from the Solomonic period are primarily Christian, falling into various genres, including hagiography, liturgy, homilies and chronicles. There are also a large number of prayer amulets. In addition to the Christian literature, Gəʕəz was used by the Betä Ǝsraʔel, or 'Ethiopian Jews' (also called Fälaša).

In addition to the written attestations of Gəʕəz, there is also a later oral witness: the so-called pronunciation tradition. This refers to the pronunciation of Gəʕəz as practiced by Ethiopian church scholars in the modern period. Though the pronunciation tradition of Gəʕəz often reflects the informants' first language, usually Amharic, it does reveal useful information, and for some features (e.g., stress) it remains the primary, if not only, source of information.

2   WRITING SYSTEM

Gəʕəz is written in a script known as the *fidäl*, which has signs for 26 different consonants that are marked for 7 different vowels for a total of 182 signs. These are summarized in Table 6.1. The Gəʕəz *fidäl* is an alphasyllabary in which a single symbol represents onset (consonant) and nucleus (vowel). The Gəʕəz *fidäl* is one of the rare writing systems among the Semitic languages in which vowels are indicated.

Alternative transcriptions are found for several signs in this chart. The sign *ś* is often transcribed as *š*, and its 'emphatic' (glottalic or ejective; see §3) counterpart *ṣ́* is often transcribed as *ḍ*. In addition, one will find the sign *ḫ* transcribed as *x* and *ḳ* transcribed as *q*. The phonemic realization of these signs is discussed later. Each of the columns of the chart refers to a different 'order' of vowel, which are numbered first through seventh.

The Gəʕəz *fidäl* derives from the writing system of Old South Arabian (see Chapter 13). The earliest inscriptions in Gəʕəz are written in an unvocalized iteration of the *fidäl* similar to that of Old South Arabian, which is also unvocalized. By the 4th century, the originally consonantal *fidäl* had developed vowel marking, as illustrated in Table 6.1. At that time, special signs for the labiovelar consonants were also introduced (illustrated in Table 6.2). Unlike its Old South Arabian predecessor, which was generally sinistrograde (right-to-left) at this time, the Gəʕəz *fidäl* is firmly dextrograde (left-to-right), perhaps due to the influence of Greek. Like Old South Arabian, the Gəʕəz *fidäl* makes regular use of a word divider (ː). The order of the letters in the Gəʕəz *fidäl* is similar to that of Old South Arabian.

The Gəʕəz *fidäl* is under-differentiated in several ways: (a) It does not mark consonantal gemination; (b) It does not mark the distinction between the vowel *ə* and no vowel (i.e., the sign ʋ can represent either *hə* or *h*); (c) It does not mark stress. These features can only be determined by recourse to comparative Semitic linguistics and/or to the pronunciation tradition.

TABLE 6.1 GƏʕƏZ FIDÄL

	1st ä	2nd u	3rd i	4th a	5th e	6th ə/ø	7th o
h	ሀ	ሁ	ሂ	ሃ	ሄ	ህ	ሆ
l	ለ	ሉ	ሊ	ላ	ሌ	ል	ሎ
ḥ	ሐ	ሑ	ሒ	ሓ	ሔ	ሕ	ሖ
m	መ	ሙ	ሚ	ማ	ሜ	ም	ሞ
ś	ሠ	ሡ	ሢ	ሣ	ሤ	ሥ	ሦ
r	ረ	ሩ	ሪ	ራ	ሬ	ር	ሮ
s	ሰ	ሱ	ሲ	ሳ	ሴ	ስ	ሶ
k	ቀ	ቁ	ቂ	ቃ	ቄ	ቅ	ቆ
b	በ	ቡ	ቢ	ባ	ቤ	ብ	ቦ
t	ተ	ቱ	ቲ	ታ	ቴ	ት	ቶ
ḫ	ኀ	ኁ	ኂ	ኃ	ኄ	ኅ	ኆ
n	ነ	ኑ	ኒ	ና	ኔ	ን	ኖ
ʔ	አ	ኡ	ኢ	ኣ	ኤ	እ	ኦ
k	ከ	ኩ	ኪ	ካ	ኬ	ክ	ኮ
w	ወ	ዉ	ዊ	ዋ	ዌ	ው	ዎ
ʕ	ዐ	ዑ	ዒ	ዓ	ዔ	ዕ	ዖ
z	ዘ	ዙ	ዚ	ዛ	ዜ	ዝ	ዞ
y	የ	ዩ	ዪ	ያ	ዬ	ይ	ዮ
d	ደ	ዱ	ዲ	ዳ	ዴ	ድ	ዶ
g	ገ	ጉ	ጊ	ጋ	ጌ	ግ	ጎ
ṭ	ጠ	ጡ	ጢ	ጣ	ጤ	ጥ	ጦ
ṗ	ጰ	ጱ	ጲ	ጳ	ጴ	ጵ	ጶ
ṣ	ጸ	ጹ	ጺ	ጻ	ጼ	ጽ	ጾ
ṣ́	ፀ	ፁ	ፂ	ፃ	ፄ	ፅ	ፆ
f	ፈ	ፉ	ፊ	ፋ	ፌ	ፍ	ፎ
p	ፐ	ፑ	ፒ	ፓ	ፔ	ፕ	ፖ

TABLE 6.2 LABIOVELAR CONSONANTS

	ä	i	a	e	ə
ḳʷ	ቈ	ቊ	ቋ	ቌ	ቍ
ḫʷ	ኈ	ኊ	ኋ	ኌ	ኍ
kʷ	ኰ	ኲ	ኳ	ኴ	ኵ
gʷ	ጐ	ጒ	ጓ	ጔ	ጕ

3 PHONOLOGY

The description of Gəʕəz phonology is of necessity a matter of reconstruction since there have not been native speakers of the language for probably over a millennium. Thus, the researcher is especially dependent here on comparative Semitic evidence and the pronunciation tradition in addition to written records (both manuscripts and inscriptions).

A description of the phonology of Gǝʿǝz is further complicated by the fact that there have been developments throughout the language's long history. Thus, there are legitimate questions about which stage of the language one should attempt to describe. Consider, for instance, the consonantal phonemes: a reconstructed pronunciation of Gǝʿǝz in early Axumite times might include 30 consonants as represented in the *fidäl*, whereas the pronunciation tradition preserves only 25 (this difference is the result of a number of mergers that will be discussed below). The presentation here has adopted a position closer to the latter, though not identical to it. Throughout this chapter, this stage will be termed 'later Gǝʿǝz' (in contrast to 'earlier Gǝʿǝz'). Chronologically later Gǝʿǝz has a *terminus ante quem* of at least the beginning of the Solomonic period (say 1300). Describing this stage of the language has the advantage of aligning with the majority of the autochthonous evidence: not only the pronunciation tradition *but also* the written evidence of manuscripts, since it will be recalled that almost all manuscripts stem from the Solomonic period. An effort has, however, been made to point out differences with a reconstructed pronunciation of earlier Gǝʿǝz.[2]

The consonantal inventory of later Gǝʿǝz consists of 25 phonemes, which are summarized in Table 6.3. Like many Semitic languages, Gǝʿǝz is characterized by several sets of consonantal triads consisting of a voiceless, voiced and 'emphatic' member. The emphatic member, which is traditionally represented with an under-dot in Semitic linguistics, was likely glottalic/ejective in Gǝʿǝz, as it is in the modern Ethiopian languages.

As already noted, the consonantal inventory given in Table 6.3 represents a reduction of an earlier consonantal inventory due to several mergers:

Five of these mergers involve what are traditionally called "gutturals": ʔ, ʿ, h, ḥ and ḫ. The gutturals h, ḥ and ḫ are all realized as a voiceless glottal fricative [h] in later Gǝʿǝz. This is the original pronunciation of h. Based on comparative evidence, however, ḥ was probably realized as a voiceless pharyngeal fricative [ħ] in the earlier history of Gǝʿǝz. Similarly, ḫ was probably realized as a voiceless velar fricative [x]. Both ḥ and ḫ eventually merged to [h]. All three of these signs are frequently interchanged in manuscripts, including some early ones.

The gutturals ʔ and ʿ are both realized as a voiceless glottal stop [ʔ] in later Gǝʿǝz. This is the original pronunciation of ʔ. The sign ʿ, however, was probably realized as a voiceless pharyngeal stop [ʕ] in the earlier history of Gǝʿǝz. This, however, eventually merged to [ʔ]. The signs for ʔ and ʿ can thus be interchanged in manuscripts, especially later ones.

Another merger involves s and ś, both of which are realized as a voiceless alveolar fricative [s] in later Gǝʿǝz. The sign ś, however, is reconstructed as a voiceless alveolar lateral fricative [ɬ] in Proto-Semitic (PS) (Steiner 1977), and it may have had a similar

TABLE 6.3 CONSONANTAL PHONEMES OF LATER GƎʿƎZ

	LABIAL/ LABIO-DENTAL	DENTAL	ALVEOLAR	PALATAL	VELAR	LABIOVELAR	GLOTTAL
Stop	p b ṗ [p']	t d ṭ [t']			k g ḳ [k']	kʷ gʷ ḳʷ [kʷ']	ʔ
Fricative	f		s z ṣ [s']			hʷ	h
Trill			r				
Lateral approximant			l				
Nasal	m		n				
Glide	w			y [j]			

pronunciation in the earlier history of Gəʿəz, as it still does in Modern South Arabian. Eventually, however, the sound represented by the sign *ś* merged to [s]. The earliest manuscripts already interchange the signs for *s* and *ś*, and this merger is in fact already attested in an inscription from the 6th century (Drewes 1991: 385–6).

A final merger involves *ṣ* and *ṣ́*, both of which are realized as a glottalic alveolar fricative [s'] in later Gəʿəz – often with affrication, i.e., [ʦ'], in the pronunciation tradition. Etymologically, the sign transcribed *ṣ́* is the glottalic/ejective counterpart of the sign transcribed *ś*. Thus, the sign transcribed *ṣ́* is the reflex of the PS glottalic voiceless alveolar lateral fricative *ɬ'. This pronunciation seems to have been preserved in early Gəʿəz, where it may have also been affricated (Weninger 1999, 2010: 79).

The consonantal phonemes of Gəʿəz are in general very stable. Minor changes include the following three consonantal assimilations:

- The feminine ending *t* assimilates to a preceding dental stop {*d*, *ṭ*}, e.g., *kəbədd* 'heavy' (F) (for **kəbədt*)
- The *t* in certain derived stems (see below for these) is assimilated to a following dental stop {*d*, *ṭ*} or sibilant {*z*, *s*, *ś*, *ṣ*, *ṣ́*}, e.g., *yəssämmäy* 'he will be named' (for **yətsämmäy*)
- The *k* of the 1st and 2nd person pronominal suffixes of the perfect assimilates to a preceding velar stop {*g*, *ḳ*}, e.g., *ḫädäggu* 'I left' (for **ḫädägku*)

These assimilations only affect affixed morphemes, not root consonants. In addition, the glottal stop *ʔ* of the causative prefix and of the first-person pronominal prefix assimilates to *y* before the proclitic negative *ʔi-*, e.g., *ʔi-yafḳärä* 'he did not love' (for **ʔi-ʔäfḳärä*).

Though it is not indicated in the writing system, gemination is phonemic in Gəʿəz. Consider, for instance, the following minimal pair: *ḫädägu* 'they left' vs. *ḫädäggu* 'I left'. Gemination is at times still realized in the pronunciation tradition, but it is at other times lost – not to mention found when not expected. The "gutturals" *ʔ*, *ʿ*, *h*, *ḥ* and *ḫ* cannot be geminated in the pronunciation tradition, though this is not necessarily the case for earlier stages of the language.

The vocalic inventory of later Gəʿəz consists of seven phonemes, which are summarized in Table 6.4. This reconstruction of later Gəʿəz differs from the pronunciation tradition, in which the vowels transcribed here as *e* and *o* are often realized as [ye] and [wo], respectively, i.e., with palatalization/labialization of the preceding consonant. In addition, this reconstruction differs from that of earlier forms of Gəʿəz, in which vowel length may still have been phonemic.

TABLE 6.4 VOCALIC PHONEMES OF LATER GƎʿƎZ

	FRONT	*CENTRAL*		*BACK*
High	i		ə	u
Mid		e	ä	o
Low			a	

The vowel transcribed here as *ə* is realized phonetically as [ɨ], as it is also sometimes transcribed. Alternative transcriptions are found in the secondary literature for several of the signs in this chart. The most common are *a* and *ā* for what are transcribed here as *ä* and *a*, respectively, as well as *e* and *ē* for what are transcribed here as *ə* and *e*, respectively. This chapter does not use the vowel signs with macrons because it is not synchronically accurate, at least for the stage of the language being described here: in later Gəʕəz, vowels do not have phonemic length.

There is little information for stress in Gəʕəz. According to one version of the pronunciation tradition (see Mittwoch 1926: 32–44), finite verbs without object suffixes are stressed on the penultimate, e.g., *nä ˈbärä* 'he remained', *yə ˈqättəl* 'he is killing', etc.[3] The same stress pattern is found for words that end in *-ä*, e.g., *nə ˈguśä* 'king' (ACC). Most other words are stressed on their ultimate, e.g., *nə ˈguś* 'king' (NACC). There are, however, exceptions to these rules, especially in the pronominal system.

4 MORPHOLOGY

The morphology of Gəʕəz is relatively conservative among the Semitic languages, preserving many features and forms of PS, especially compared to the other Ethiopian Semitic languages, which are attested primarily in the modern period and which tend to be far more innovative.

4.1 Pronouns

There are two sets of personal pronouns: independent (§4.1.1) and suffixal (§4.1.2). The suffixal pronouns are used as possessive pronouns on nouns and as objective pronouns on verbs. They also occur with prepositions and some particles and are employed to derive the independent possessive pronouns (§4.1.3). In addition to personal pronouns, Gəʕəz has demonstrative pronouns (§4.1.4), relative pronouns (§4.1.5), and interrogative and indefinite pronouns (§4.1.6).

4.1.1 Independent

The independent personal pronouns in Gəʕəz are summarized in Table 6.5. Case distinction is only found in the 3rd-person singular forms. In addition to the forms in the chart, *wəʔətomu* is used for 3CP. The pronoun *wəʔəton* is also occasionally found for 3FPL.

TABLE 6.5 INDEPENDENT PERSONAL PRONOUNS

	SG	PL
1	*ʔänä*	*nəḥnä*
2M	*ʔäntä*	*ʔäntəmu*
2F	*ʔänti*	*ʔäntən*
3M.NACC	*wəʔətu*	*ʔəm(m)untu*
3M.ACC	*wəʔətä*	
3F.NACC	*yəʔəti*	*ʔəm(m)antu*
3F.ACC	*yəʔətä*	

4.1.2 Suffixal

Pronominal suffixes can be attached to nouns to indicate possession. The realization of the pronominal suffixes varies slightly according to the type of noun. Table 6.6 illustrates the form of the suffixes when attached to a singular noun ending in a consonant. These suffixes are realized in slightly different forms with (a) singular nouns ending in -*i*; (b) singular nouns ending in -*e*, -*a* and -*o*; (c) the singular forms of the so-called four nouns, i.e., *ʔäb* 'father', *ʔəḥʷ* 'brother', *ḥäm* 'father-in-law' and *ʔäf* 'mouth' and (d) the "singular" form of the noun *ʔəd* 'hand'.[4]

Table 6.7 illustrates the form of the pronominal suffixes on plural nouns. Note that there is no distinction between non-accusative and accusative with the pronominal suffixes on plural nouns.

A slightly different set of pronominal suffixes occurs with verbs. The forms of these suffixes on the 3MSG perfect verb are given in Table 6.8. Note especially the different form of the 1SG suffix on verbs (-*ni*) as compared with that on nouns (-*yä*). The form of these suffixes varies, especially with the 3rd person pronouns, depending on the ending of the verb.

TABLE 6.6 PRONOMINAL SUFFIXES ON CONSONANT-FINAL NOUN (*HÄGÄR* 'CITY')

	Non-Accusative	*Accusative*
1SG	*hägär-əyä*	*hägär-əyä*
2MSG	*hägär-əkä*	*hägär-äkä*
2FSG	*hägär-əki*	*hägär-äki*
3MSG	*hägär-u*	*hägär-o*
3FSG	*hägär-a*	*hägär-a*
1PL	*hägär-ənä*	*hägär-änä*
2MPL	*hägär-əkəmu*	*hägär-äkəmu*
2FPL	*hägär-əkən*	*hägär-äkən*
3MPL	*hägär-omu*	*hägär-omu*
3FPL	*hägär-on*	*hägär-on*

TABLE 6.7 PRONOMINAL SUFFIXES ON PLURAL NOUNS (*ʔÄHGUR* 'CITIES')

	Non-Accusative/Accusative Noun
1SG	*ʔähgur-iyä* (also *ʔähgur-əyä*)
2MSG	*ʔähgur-ikä*
2FSG	*ʔähgur-iki* (also *ʔähgur-əki*)
3MSG	*ʔähgur-ihu*
3FSG	*ʔähgur-iha*
2PL	*ʔähgur-inä*
2MPL	*ʔähgur-ikəmu*
2FPL	*ʔähgur-ikən*
3MPL	*ʔähgur-ihomu*
3FPL	*ʔähgur-ihon*

TABLE 6.8 OBJECT PRONOMINAL SUFFIXES ON 3MSG PERFECT VERB

	SG	PL
1	-äni	-änä
2M	-äkä	-äkəmu
2F	-äki	-äkən
3M	-o	-omu
3F	-a	-on

4.1.3 Independent possessive pronouns

Independent possessive pronouns are formed through the combination of the suffixal personal pronouns (§4.1.2) and *ziʔä-* (MSG), *ʔäntiʔä-* (FSG) or *ʔəlliʔä-* (PL) in agreement with the possessed noun. So, *ziʔä-yä* is 'my' modifying a masculine singular antecedent.

4.1.4 Demonstrative

There are four sets of demonstrative pronouns in Gəʕəz, two of which are used for proximal deixis (Tables 6.9 and 6.10) and two for distal (Tables 6.11 and 6.12).

In the first series of proximal demonstratives (Table 6.9), case distinction is only found in the masculine singular. The singular forms are usually proclitic, e.g., *zə-bəʔsi* 'this man'. When another proclitic element is found (such as a preposition), the two proclitic elements attract to one another, e.g., *bä-zə bet* 'in this house'.

In addition to the forms given in Table 6.11 for the first series of distal demonstratives, the feminine singular *ʔäntə(k)ku* is also found for the accusative.

In the second series of distal demonstratives (Table 6.12), the masculine plural forms are also used with the feminine plural. There is case distinction throughout the series, and there are by-forms, with *kʷ* for *k*, in all the masculine forms.

In addition to the four sets of demonstrative pronouns (two proximal and two distal) given in Tables 6.9–6.12, the 3rd person independent personal pronouns (see Table 6.5) can function as demonstrative pronouns (especially for distal deixis).

4.1.5 Relative

The forms of the relative pronouns are given in Table 6.13. Note that MSG *zä-* is proclitic, e.g., *bəʔsi zä-mot-ä* 'the man who died' (man-NCST REL-die-PRF.3MSG). When not used in a headless construction, FSG *ʔäntä* and PL *ʔällä* can optionally be replaced by MSG *zä-*. The relative pronouns in Table 6.13 form part of the base for the independent possessive pronouns (§4.1.3).

4.1.6 Interrogative pronouns

The interrogative pronouns and adjectives are summarized in Table 6.14. In addition to *männu / männä*, a marked plural form *ʔällä mannu* 'who?' occurs rarely.

TABLE 6.9 FIRST SERIES OF PROXIMAL DEMONSTRATIVES

	SG	PL
M.NACC	zə-	ʔəllu
M.ACC	zä-	
F	za-	ʔəlla
		ʔəllon

TABLE 6.10 SECOND SERIES OF PROXIMAL DEMONSTRATIVES

	SG	PL
M.NACC	zəntu	ʔəllontu
		ʔəlluntu
M.ACC	zäntä	ʔəllontä
		ʔəlluntä
F.NACC	zat(t)i	ʔəllantu
		ʔəllanti
F.ACC	zat(t)ä	ʔəllantä

TABLE 6.11 FIRST SERIES OF DISTAL DEMONSTRATIVES

	SG	PL
M.NACC	zə(k)ku	ʔəllə(k)ku
M.ACC	zə(k)kʷä	
F.NACC	ʔəntə(k)ku	
F.ACC	ʔəntə(k)kʷä	

TABLE 6.12 SECOND SERIES OF DISTAL DEMONSTRATIVES

	SG	PL
M.NACC	zəktu	ʔəlləktu
	zəkʷtu	ʔəlləkʷtu
M.ACC	zəktä	ʔəlləktä
	zəkʷtä	ʔəlləkʷtä
F.NACC	ʔəntakti	ʔəllaktu
F.ACC	ʔəntaktä	ʔəllakta

TABLE 6.13 RELATIVE PRONOUN

	SG	PL
M	zä-	ʔəllä
F	ʔəntä	

TABLE 6.14 INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

	Non-Accusative	*Accusative*
who?	*männu*	*männä*
what?	*mənt*	*məntä*
which? (SG)	*ʔäyy*	*ʔäyyä*
which? (PL)	*ʔäyyat*	*ʔäyyatä*

4.2 Nouns

4.2.1 General

Nouns in Gəʕəz include substantives and adjectives. The primary morphosyntactic categories for nouns are gender (masculine and feminine), number (singular and plural), case (non-accusative and accusative) and state (nonconstruct and construct).

4.2.2 Pattern

Nouns can be derived by pattern as well as by affixes.

4.2.3 Gender

There are two genders in Gəʕəz: masculine and feminine. Masculine nouns are unmarked, e.g., *bəʔsi* 'man' and *nəguś* 'king'. Many feminine nouns are marked with *-(ä)t*, e.g., F *bəʔsit* 'woman' (compare M *bəʔsi* 'man') and F *nəgəśt* 'queen' (compare M *nəguś* 'king'). Only rarely are feminine human nouns unmarked, e.g., *ʔəmm* 'mother'. With human nouns, gender is a relevant category since these nouns must take appropriate agreement, as is illustrated in the following examples:

   wəʔətu bəʔsi 'that man' (DEM.MSG man)
   yəʔəti bəʔsit 'that woman' (DEM.FSG woman)

This can be contrasted with non-human nouns, which can take either masculine or feminine agreement:

   wəʔətu fənot 'that road' (DEM.MSG road) / *yəʔəti fənot* 'that road' (DEM.FSG road)

It should, however, be noted that many substantives do have a preference in gender agreement; for instance, *hägär* 'city' usually takes feminine agreement.

4.2.4 Number

There are two productive numbers in Gəʕəz: singular and plural.[5] The singular is unmarked. The plural can be marked in two ways: suffixes (external plurals) and patterns (internal plurals). The most common method of forming plurals is that of internal plurals (also called "broken plurals"). Internal plurals involve pattern replacement, several of which are illustrated in Table 6.15. An individual noun may have multiple internal plural forms, e.g., *ḥəzb* 'people, nation', the plurals of which are *ḥəzäb* and *ʔäḥzab*. There is a

TABLE 6.15 EXAMPLES OF INTERNAL PLURALS

	SG	PL
'mountain'	*däbr*	*ʔädbar*
'son'	*wäld*	*wəlud*
'king'	*nəguś*	*nägäśt*
'book'	*mäṣḥäf*	*mäṣaḥəft*

TABLE 6.16 EXAMPLES OF PLURAL SUFFIX -AT

	SG	PL
'prophet'	*näbiy*	*näbiyat*
'queen'	*nəgəśt*	*nəgəśtat*
'heaven'	*sämay*	*sämayat*

relatively small set of internal plural patterns. It is not, however, possible to predict which plural pattern occurs with a given noun.

External plurals do not involve pattern replacement but rather the affixation of the suffixes -*an* and/or -*at*. The suffix -*an* is basically restricted to masculine human plurals that are either adjectives or de-adjectival substantives, e.g., PL *ṣadəkan* 'just' (compare SG *ṣadək* 'just') and PL *likan* 'elders' (compare SG *lik* 'elder'). In contrast to -*an*, the suffix -*at* occurs with masculine human plurals, feminine human plurals, as well as non-human plurals, as is illustrated in Table 6.16. In addition, internal plurals can take the suffix -*at*, e.g., PL *ʔähgurat* 'cities' alongside the more common *ʔähgur* 'cities', both plurals of *hägär* 'city'. Nouns such as *ʔähgurat* are doubly marked for plurality: both as internal plurals and external plurals with -*at*. Similarly, external masculine plurals with -*an* can take the suffix -*at*, e.g., PL *likanat* 'elders' alongside *likan* and *likawənt*, all plurals of *lik* 'elder'.

Similar to the situation with gender agreement, human plurals take appropriate number agreement, as is illustrated in the following examples:

wəʔätu nəguś 'that king' (DEM.MSG king)
ʔəm(m)untu nägäśt 'those kings' (DEM.MPL king.MPL)

In contrast, non-human plurals can take either singular or plural agreement:

wəʔätu ʔädbar 'those mountains' (DEM.MSG mountain.MPL)
ʔəm(m)untu ʔädbar 'those mountains' (DEM.MPL mountain.MPL)

Thus, a non-human plural such as *ʔädbar* 'mountains' can take either masculine or feminine agreement (§4.2.3) as well as either singular or plural agreement.

4.2.5 *Case*

There are two cases in Gəʕəz: non-accusative and accusative. The non-accusative is unmarked. The ending of the accusative varies depending on the ending of the noun, as summarized in Table 6.17.[6]

TABLE 6.17 SUMMARY OF ACCUSATIVE MARKING

	Non-Accusative	*Accusative*
ending in consonant	*nəguś*	*nəguśä*
ending in *-i*	*ṣäḥafi*	*ṣäḥafe*
ending in *-e, -a, -o*	*ʔärwe*	*ʔärwe*

The accusative case usually functions as the direct object of a verb, as in the following example:

   räkäb-ä   *säbʔ-ä*   *bəzuḥ-ä*
   find-PRF.3MSG   people-ACC   many-ACC
   'He found many people.' (Matthew 14:14 [A-text])

The accusative also has a number of other uses in Gəʕəz, especially various adverbial functions, e.g., *lelitä* 'at night', with the same meaning as the prepositional phrase *bälelit* 'at night'.

4.2.6 State

There are two states for nouns in Gəʕəz: nonconstruct and construct. The nonconstruct is the state in which a noun is not bound to a following noun, e.g., *bet* 'a/the house'. The nonconstruct state is unmarked. The construct is the state in which a noun is bound to a following noun, as is the case with *betä* in the following example:

   bet-ä nəguś-ø 'a/the house of a/the king' (house-CST king-NCST)

The endings of the construct state are the same as those for the accusative case, as given in Table 6.17.

4.2.7 Definiteness

Gəʕəz does not (regularly) mark definiteness. Thus, *bet* is either 'a house' or 'the house'. Occasionally, however, 3rd person possessive suffixes mark the incipient stage of a definite article, as in the following example:

   wä-mäṣaʔ-kəmu   *wä-qom-kəmu*   *taḥtä däbr*   *wä-yə-näddəd*   *däbr-u*
   and-come-PRF.2MPL   and-stand-PRF.2MPL under mountain and-3MSG-burn.IPRF mountain-his
   'You came and stood under a/the mountain, and the mountain was burning' (Deuteronomy 4:11)

In this example, there is no antecedent for the 3MSG pronominal suffix *-u* on *däbr-u*, literally 'his mountain'; this suffix instead marks definiteness. This use of the possessive pronominal suffixes is rare in Gəʕəz. In addition to this incipient definite article, several analytic constructions are only used when nouns are contextually definite (see §5.2).

4.3 Numerals

There are two types of numerals: cardinal (§4.3.1) and ordinal (§4.3.2).

4.3.1 Cardinal

The Gəʕəz cardinal numbers are summarized in Table 6.18. In addition to the forms given in the table, note that *kälʔe* '2' is also used with both masculine and feminine nouns regardless of case.

The Gəʕəz cardinal numbers for 3–10 exhibit so-called gender polarity whereby numbers marked with the feminine ending *-(a)t* are used with masculine nouns, and unmarked numbers (i.e., "masculine-looking") are used with feminine nouns.

The numbers 11–19 are constructed by coordinating the numbers given in Table 6.18 with the conjunction *wä-* 'and', e.g., *ʕäśärtu wä-ʔäḥädu* is 11 for a masculine noun, and *ʕäśru wä-ʔaḥatti* is 11 for a feminine noun.

The numbers 30–90 are derived from the base form of the number with the ending *-a*, e.g., *śälasa* '30', *ʔärbəʕa* '40', etc. Cardinal number 20 is formed in the same way, except based on 10, e.g., *ʕəśra* '20'. These cardinal numbers that end in *-a* are unmodified for gender or case.

4.3.2 Ordinal

The ordinal number for 'first' is *qädami* (F *qädamit*). Several different words can be used for 'second' including *kaləʔ* (F *kaləʔt*), *dagəm* (F *dagəmt*), *kaʕäb* (F *kaʕäbt*) and *baʕäd* (F *baʕädd*). The ordinals for 3–10 are based on the same roots as the cardinal numbers given in Table 6.18 with the nominal pattern $C_1aC_2əC_3$ (F $C_1aC_2əC_3t$), e.g., *śaləs* 'third' (M) and *śaləst* 'third' (F). With the exception of *kaləʔ* 'second', these ordinal numbers can optionally occur with the adjectival suffixes *-awi* (F *-awit*) and *-ay* (F *-it*), e.g., *śaləsawi* 'third' (M). A different set of ordinal numbers, based on the nominal pattern $C_1äC_2uC_3$, is used with measures of time (day, week, month, year, etc.), e.g., *śälus lelit* 'the third night'.

TABLE 6.18 CARDINAL NUMBERS 1–10

	Used With Masculine Nouns		*Used With Feminine Nouns*	
	Non-Accusative	*Accusative*	*Non-Accusative*	*Accusative*
1	*ʔäḥädu*	*ʔäḥädä*	*ʔaḥatti*	*ʔaḥattä*
2	*kälʔetu*	*kälʔetä*	*kälʔeti*	*kälʔetä*
3	*śälästu*	*śälästä*	*śälas*	*śälasä*
4	*ʔärbaʕtu*	*ʔärbaʕtä*	*ʔärbaʕ*	*ʔärbaʕä*
5	*ḥäməstu*	*ḥäməstä*	*ḥäms*	*ḥämsä*
6	*sədəstu*	*sədəstä*	*səssu*	*səssu*
7	*säbʕätu*	*säbʕätä*	*säbʕu*	*säbʕu*
	säbaʕtu	*säbaʕtä*	*sä/əbʕ*	
8	*sämä/antu*	*sämä/antä*	*sämani*	*sämani*
	sämanitu	*sämanitä*		
9	*tə/äsʕätu*	*tə/äsʕätä*	*tə/äsʕu*	*tə/äsʕu*
	täsaʕtu	*täsaʕtä*		
10	*ʕäśärtu*	*ʕäśärtä*	*ʕäśru*	*ʕäśru*
			ʕäśr	*ʕäśrä*

TABLE 6.19 FORMS OF THE VERB (√GBR 'TO MAKE, DO')

PERFECT	*gäbrä*	'He made.'
IMPERFECT	*yəgäbbər*	'He was making / is making / will make.'
SUBJUNCTIVE	*yəgbär*	'Let him make! / . . . so that he might make'
IMPERATIVE	*gəbär*	'Make!'
INFINITIVE	*gäbir*	' . . . to make. . . '
CONVERB	*gäbiro*	'He having made. . . '

4.4 Verbs

4.4.1 General

The primary morphological categories for verbs are form (§4.4.2), stem (§4.4.3), and inflection (§4.4.4). In general, verbal morphology is highly regular in GəʿƏz. Only a few developments affect weak roots, and almost all these developments can be explained by regular sound rules.

4.4.2 Form: tense, aspect, and mood

Verbs occur in one of six forms: perfect, imperfect, subjunctive, imperative, infinitive and converb; the first four of these are finite, the last two non-finite.

The *perfect* marks perfective aspect and functions most often as a simple past tense (Weninger 2001: 54–102). It also occurs in the protasis and apodosis of conditional clauses with the sense of a future tense

The *imperfect* marks imperfective aspect and occurs in future, present and past times (Weninger 2001: 103–56). It is common in circumstantial clauses, whether syndetic with *ʾənzä* 'while' or asyndetic.

The *subjunctive* – as it is usually but somewhat misleadingly called – is a general non-indicative (irrealis) form with several different uses (Weninger 2001: 157–208). When independent, it functions as a jussive and can optionally be augmented with the asseverative particle *lä-*. The subjunctive is also used with the negation *ʾi-* to form the negative imperative. Most commonly, however, the subjunctive is used in subordinate clauses to complement verbs or to express purpose or result, whether syndetic with *kämä* 'that' or asyndetic.

The *converb* is a non-finite, dependent form that expresses perfective aspect (Weninger 2001: 217–52, 2014).

4.4.3 Stem

There are two different types of *stems* in GəʿƏz: lexical and derived. The lexical stems are G, D, L and Q. These stems are lexical in that there is no derivational relationship between them, at least not synchronically. Table 6.20 provides an overview of the perfect form for the four lexical stems. The G stem is the basic stem (G for German *Grundstamm*). The G stem is further divided into two types, which in Ethiopic studies are often called *a* and *b*. The *a* type has *ä* after the second root consonant whereas the *b* type does not. This distinction only surfaces in the 3rd person forms of the

paradigm. There are no predictable semantic differences between the *a* and *b* types. The D stem is characterized by the doubling of the middle root consonant. The L stem is characterized by the 'lengthening' of the vowel after the first root consonant. The Q stem is characterized by having four root consonants.

In addition to the four lexical stems, there are also three derived stems. The derived stems are C, t and Ct. Table 6.21 provides an overview of the perfect form for the derived stems of each of the four lexical stems (the root √*ḳtl* is only used for illustration; it does not occur in all forms). Unlike the lexical stems, the derived stems mark particular semantic derivations. The C stem usually derives causatives. The t stem usually derives reflexives or passives. The Ct stem attests more variety in its derivational semantics, including causatives, factatives and estimatives (Waltisberg 2001).

4.4.4 Inflection

The perfect, imperfect, subjunctive and converb are inflected for person, gender and number. There are three persons (1, 2 and 3), two genders (masculine and feminine) and two numbers (singular and plural). The imperative has similar inflection but only occurs in the 2nd person. The infinitive is not inflected for person, gender and number.

TABLE 6.20 OVERVIEW OF LEXICAL STEMS

G stem (*a* type)	*näbärä*	'He remained.'
G stem (*b* type)	*gäbrä*	'He made.'
D stem	*näṣṣärä*	'He looked.'
L stem	*baräkä*	'He blessed.'
Q stem	*tärgʷämä*	'He translated.'

TABLE 6.21 OVERVIEW OF DERIVED STEMS

	G Stem	D Stem	L Stem	Q Stem
Underived	*ḳätälä* (*a*) *ḳätlä* (*b*)	*ḳättälä*	*ḳatälä*	*tärgʷämä*
C Stem	*ʔäḳtälä*	*ʔäḳättälä*	*ʔäḳatälä*	*ʔätärgʷämä*
t Stem	*täḳät(ä)lä*	*täḳättälä*	*täḳatälä*	*tätärgʷämä*
Ct Stem	*ʔästäḳ(ä)tälä*	*ʔästäḳättälä*	*ʔästäḳatälä*	*ʔästätärgʷämä*

TABLE 6.22 INFLECTION OF PERFECT (*B* TYPE; √*GBR* 'TO DO')

	SG	PL
1	*gäbär-ku*	*gäbär-nä*
2M	*gäbär-kä*	*gäbär-kəmu*
2F	*gäbär-ki*	*gäbär-kən*
3M	*gäbr-ä*	*gäbr-u*
3F	*gäbr-ät*	*gäbr-a*

TABLE 6.23 INFLECTION OF IMPERFECT (√GBR 'TO DO')

	SG	PL
1	ʔə-gäbbər	nə-gäbbər
2M	tə-gäbbər	tə-gäbbər-u
2F	tə-gäbbər-i	tə-gäbbər-a
3M	yə-gäbbər	yə-gäbbər-u
3F	tə-gäbbər	yə-gäbbər-a

TABLE 6.24 INFLECTION OF IMPERATIVE

	SG	PL
2M	gəbär	gəbär-u
2F	gəbär-i	gəbär-a

TABLE 6.25 INFLECTION OF CONVERB

	SG	PL
1	gäbir-əyä	gäbir-änä
2M	gäbir-äkä	gäbir-äkəmu
2F	gäbir-äki	gäbir-äkən
3M	gäbir-o	gäbir-omu
3F	gäbir-a	gäbir-on

The perfect is inflected through a set of suffixes (Table 6.22). The *a* type perfect only differs from this paradigm in the 3rd person forms, where *ä* occurs between C_2 and C_3, e.g., *näbär-ä, näbär-ät, näbär-u* and *näbär-a*.

The two prefix conjugations, i.e., the imperfect and subjunctive, are inflected through a set of prefixes and suffixes (Table 6.23). The inflection of the subjunctive is the same, only replacing the bi-syllabic base *-gäbbər-* with the monosyllabic *-gbär-*, e.g., *ʔə-gbär, tə-gbär*, etc.

The imperative is inflected with the same suffixes as those of the 2nd person forms of the subjunctive but without prefixes. An epenthetic vowel, at least in the pronunciation tradition, breaks up the initial consonant cluster (Table 6.24).

The converb is inflected through a set of suffixes (Table 6.25). These are the same suffixes as the possessive pronominal suffixes used with an accusative noun that ends in a consonant (see Table 6.6).

4.5 Prepositions, conjunctions and adverbs

Prepositions are always positioned before their nominal dependent. The monosyllabic prepositions are enclitic. Interestingly, *bä-* 'in' and *lä-* 'to' can be repeated to express a distributive notion, e.g., *sisay-ä-nä zä-**lä-llä** ʕəlät-ənä häb-änä yom* 'Give us today our sustenance for each of our days' (Matthew 6:11 [B-Text]) (sustenance-ACC-our REL-**for-for** day-our give.IMP-us today).

Gəʕəz has a limited number of conjunctions. Some, such as *ʔəm(mä)* 'if', *ʔäw* 'or', and the ubiquitous *wä-* 'and', are widespread throughout the Semitic languages. Others, such as *ʔəsmä* 'because, since', *ʔənzä* 'while, when', and *baḥəttu* 'but, nevertheless', have a more restricted distribution, often limited to Ethiopian Semitic.

Gəʕəz makes use of a handful of discourse particles. Some occur in clause-initial position, e.g., *ʔənga* 'indeed' and *ʔənkä* 'therefore', whereas others are enclitic, e.g., *-ssä* 'but, however', *-hi* 'also', *-ni* 'too', *-ke* 'therefore', *-mmä* 'precisely'. The meaning/function of most of these sentence particles remains unclear in the current state of research (though see recently Weninger 2015).

The only productive negation marker is *ʔi-*.

5   SYNTAX

5.1   General

The study of Gəʕəz syntax is significantly hindered by the source material. As outlined previously (§1), most Gəʕəz literary texts are translations, whether from Greek in the Axumite period or from Arabic in the Solomonic period. Thus, Epigraphic Gəʕəz constitutes the only direct evidence for original, non-translated texts produced by native speakers of Gəʕəz, and so it is an invaluable source for the study of Gəʕəz syntax. Nevertheless, even with Epigraphic Gəʕəz language contact cannot be ruled out, since several inscriptions have parallel texts in Greek, and even when there are no parallel texts, Greek was clearly part of the linguistic milieu. In addition, and more importantly, many of the Epigraphic Gəʕəz texts are short, and even the long ones are not as conducive to syntactic research as one would hope.

These difficulties in the study of Gəʕəz syntax can be illustrated with a simple example: word order in verbal clauses. It is usually stated that word order in verbal clauses is loosely V-S-O in literary Gəʕəz, though with numerous alternative orders also attested. In a recent study, Bulakh (2012) has turned to Epigraphic Gəʕəz to clarify this. V-S-O is attested in Epigraphic Gəʕəz, as in the following example:

> w-ʔrʔy-n   ʔgzʔ bḥr   ḳds-h
> and-show.PRF.3MSG-me   God   holiness-his
> 'God showed me his holiness.' (RIÉ 191: 37–38)

But, a variety of other word orders are found as well, including S-V-O, as in the following example:

> ʔəgziʔ-ä   sämay   yä-ṣnəʕ   mängəśt-əyä
> lord-CST   heaven   3MSG-strengthen.SBJV   kingdom-my
> 'May the Lord of Heaven strengthen my kingdom.' (RIÉ 189: 45–6)

In fact, as it turns out, S-V-O is several times more common than V-S-O in Epigraphic Gəʕəz – contradicting the traditional pronouncement in favor of V-S-O. Nevertheless, there are only a dozen or so examples in total. In addition, in some cases in Epigraphic Gəʕəz, word order is clearly determined by focus-marking, as in the following example:

> znt   whb-n   ʔgz bḥr
> this.ACC   give.PRF.3MSG-me   God
> 'This, God gave me.' (RIÉ 191: 33)

Examples such as this raise questions about whether focus-marking also plays a role in the other examples cited previously, especially the one with S-V-O. So, in the end, little can be definitively said about word order in Epigraphic Gəʕəz, much less in Gəʕəz more broadly, other than that it had a variable word order probably at least partly determined by focus-marking (for which, see §5.3). Such a vague statement is largely due to the state of the extant corpus of Gəʕəz. This is further complicated by the fact that very few specialized studies on Gəʕəz syntax, such as Bulakh's referenced here, have been conducted, leaving the current state of knowledge of Gəʕəz syntax on even shakier ground.

Several (morpho-)syntactic topics have been treated previously in the sections on morphology, including agreement (§4.2.3 and §4.2.4), definiteness (§4.2.7) and tense/aspect/ mood (§4.4.2). The following sections deal with several other topics, especially those that may be of wider linguistic interest.

5.2 Synthetic vs. analytic

In addition to preserving synthetic constructions from PS, Gəʕəz has innovated several analytic ones. This can be illustrated with object marking. Gəʕəz preserves the earlier PS synthetic construction in which the direct object is marked with the accusative case:

wä-mätär-u   *rəʔs-o*
and-cut.off-PRF.3MPL   head.ACC-his
'They cut off his head.' (Matthew 14:10 [A-text])

Gəʕəz also makes use of an analytic construction in which an object pronominal suffix occurs on the verb (agreeing in gender and number with the logical direct object) and the logical direct object carries the preposition *lä* and so is non-accusative:

ʔäḫäz-o   *lä-yoḥännəs*
take.PRF.3MSG-him   for-PN
'He seized John.' (Matthew 14:3 [A-text])

In this example, the pronominal suffix 'him' (-*o*) is proleptic for 'John'. The synthetic and analytic constructions have similar distribution, though the analytic one is only employed when the direct object is contextually definite.

Similar synthetic and analytic constructions are used to express the genitive relationship in Gəʕəz. Gəʕəz preserves the earlier PS synthetic genitive construction (traditionally called 'construct chain'):

bəʔsit-ä   *filəṗṗos*
woman-CST   PN
'wife of Philip' (Matthew 14:3 [A-text])

Gəʕəz also uses an analytic construction with a possessive pronominal suffix on the head noun (agreeing in gender and number with the dependent noun) and the preposition *lä-* on the dependent noun:

rəʔs-o   *lä-yoḥännəs*
head.ACC-his   for-PN
'the head of John' (Matthew 14:10 [A-text])

Again, these two construction have similar distribution, though the analytic one is only used when the genitive phrase is contextually definite.

Gəʕəz has a second analytic construction for the genitive. This employs *zä-*, which is historically the MSG relative pronoun (§4.1.5), on the dependent noun:

> *betä ləḥem   zä-yəhuda*
> GN   REL-GN
> 'Bethlehem of Judah' (Matthew 2:5 [A-text])

> *ʔäklil   zä-wärḳ*
> crown   REL-gold
> 'crown of gold' (Revelation 14:14 [ms. H])

Unlike the two previous constructions, the genitive construction with *zä-* is generally found only in certain contexts, including when the synthetic construction is undesirable or impossible, as in the first example, when a genitive of material is involved, as in the second example.

Analytic constructions are also found in verbal morphology. Both the perfect and imperfect can be combined with perfect and imperfect forms of the verbal auxiliaries *konä* 'to be[come]' and *hälläwä* 'to exist, be' to form various compound verbal forms (for a full inventory, see Weninger 2001: 256–301). The most frequently occurring of these involves the perfect of *konä* plus an imperfect to create a durative or habitual marked for past time, e.g., *kon-ä yə-gäbbər* 'he was making, he used to make' (be-PRF.3MSG 3MSG-make.IPRF).

5.3 Focus-marking

Gəʕəz employs a variety of focus-marking strategies. One of the most frequent is left-dislocation, which occurs in two types. One, which can simply be called fronting, involves the movement of the focused item to clause-initial position, as the following example illustrates:

> *wä-zäntä   ʔäzzäz-u   mäfḳäriy-an-ä   krəstos   nägäśt*
> and-this.ACC   command-PRF.3MPL   loving-PL-CST   Christ   king.PL
> 'This, the Christ-loving king commanded.' (Qerəllos)

Note that *zäntä* (ACC) retains its case marking; it has just been moved to first position in the sentence. A different type of left-dislocation found in Gəʕəz is traditionally called *casus pendens* (literally 'hanging case'). In this construction, the fronted item is found in the unmarked case, i.e., non-accusative, and it is resumed by a pronominal suffix in the main clause, as in the following examples:

> *wä-zə-ni   mänafəst   ʔəllä   hälläw-u*
> and-this.NACC-indeed   spirit.PL.NACC   REL.PL   be-PRF.3MPL

> *bä-ḥəywät   ʕəṣəw-omu*
> in-life   imprison.IMP.2MSG-them
> 'As for those spirits who are alive, imprison them.' (Jubilees 10:5)

wä-zəntu	*ḳəddus*	*kon-ä*	*səm-u*
and-this.NACC	holy.NACC	be-PRF.3MSG	name.NACC-his

lä-ʔäb-u-hu	*ʔärsəw pawlos*
for-father-NACC-his	PN

'As for this saint, the name of his father was Aristobulos.' (Synaxarion)

In the first example, the focused item is the logical direct object of the sentence; in the second, it is the second term in a genitive relationship.

In addition to left-dislocation, Gəꜥəz also makes use of cleft sentences for focus-marking. Cleft sentences are most common in the negative, where the particle *ʔäkko* 'it is not' is employed with a relative pronoun:

ʔäkko	*ʔäntəmu*	*zä-fännäw-kəmu-ni*	*daʔəmu*	*ʔəgziʔäbḥer*
it.is.not	you	REL-send-PRF.2MPL-me	but	God

'It is not you who sent me but God.' (Genesis 45:8)

Negative cleft sentences are relatively common in Gəꜥəz, and they can be used to focus any element of a sentence apart from the verb. Positive cleft sentences are much rarer in Gəꜥəz. These are constructed without a positive element corresponding to *ʔäkko*, and thus they are only distinguished from a non-cleft sentence by what *prima facie* seems to be a superfluous relative pronoun as well as possibly marked word order:

wä-ʔəgziʔäbḥer	*zä-ʔärʔäy-o*	*zäntä*
and-God	REL-show.PRF.3MSG-him	this.ACC

'It is God who showed him this.' (*History of Joseph*)

Cleft sentences are not as common in Gəꜥəz as they are in other Ethiopian Semitic languages.

6   LEXICON

Gəꜥəz attests a relatively large lexicon. In addition to inherited words, Gəꜥəz contains loan words from several different sources. The most significant source of loan words in Gəꜥəz is Cushitic. Cushitic loan words include *śəga* 'flesh, meat', *śərnay* 'wheat' and *dorho* 'chicken'. In addition, a number of Greek – and Latin via Greek – loan words entered Gəꜥəz during the Axumite period (Weninger 2005: 469–71). Most of these are related to Christianity, e.g., *mänäkos* 'monk' (< Greek *monakhos*) and *ṗaṗṗas* 'bishop' (< Greek *pappas*), but other semantic categories are found as well, e.g., *bisos* 'linen' (< Greek *byssos*). There are also a handful of Aramaic loan words in Gəꜥəz, e.g., *haymanot* 'faith' and *√trgʷm* 'to translate'. In the Solomonic period, Arabic loan words become more common (Weninger 2004). In the later period, Amharic loan words are also found.

7   SAMPLE TEXT

This selection consists of Matthew 14:1–12. Though a translation of a Greek text, this selection is preserved in two of the earliest extant Gəꜥəz literary manuscripts, mss. Ǝnda

FIGURE 6.1 PAGE FROM MS. ƎNDA ABBA GÄRIMA 2, WHICH IS ONE OF THE OLDEST SURVIVING ETHIOPIC MANUSCRIPTS (DATABLE TO AT LEAST BEFORE THE 12TH CENTURY AND POSSIBLY GOING BACK CENTURIES EARLIER). THE TEXT IS THE GƎ'ƎZ TRANSLATION OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW, A PORTION OF WHICH IS PROVIDED IN THE TEXT SAMPLE IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Image courtesy of Ǝnda Abba Gärima and Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML).

Abba Gärima 1 and 2 (see Figure 6.1). These have a *terminus ante quem* of around the 12th century CE and could go back to a much earlier date.[7] The text is cited according to the edition of Zuurmond (2001), but it has been checked against images of both manuscripts, which are available online thanks to the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library.[8]

1 | *wä-yəʔət-ä* | *ʔämir-ä* | *sämiʕ-o* | *herodəs* | *nəguś-ø* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| and-that-ACC | day-ACC.NCST | hear-CVB.3MSG | PN | king-NACC.NCST |

nägär-o	*lä-ʔiyäsus*	2	*wä-yə-bel-omu*	*lä-säbʔ-u*	*yoḥännəs*
word.ACC.CST-his	for-PN		and-3MSG-say.PRF-them	for-people.NACC.CST-his	PN

wəʔət-u	*zəntu*	*mäṭməḳ-ø*	*wəʔət-u*	*tänśəʔ-ä*	*ʔəmännä*
he-NACC	this.NACC	baptist-NACC.NCST	he-NACC	rise-PRF.3MSG	from

məwut-an-ø	*wä-bäʔəntä*	*zəntu*	*yə-raddəʔ-o*	*ḥayl-ø*	3
dead-PL-NACC.NCST	and-because.of	this.NACC	3MSG-help.IPRF-him	power-NACC.NCST	

ʔəsmä	*wəʔət-u*	*herodəs*	*ʔäḥäz-o*	*lä-yoḥännəs*	*wä-moḳəḥ-o*
because	he-NACC	PN	seize.PRF.3MSG-him	for-PN	and-imprison.PRF.3MSG-him

bäʔəntä	*herodəyada*	*bəʔsit-ä*	*filəṗṗos*	*ʔəḥ-u-hu*	4	*ʔəsmä*
because.of	PN	wife-NACC.CST	PN	brother-NACC.CST-his		because

yə-bel-o	*yoḥännəs*	*ʔi-yə-käwwən-äkä*	*ta-wsəb-a*	5	*wä-fäḳäd-ä*
3MSG-say.PRF-him	PN	NEG-3MSG-be.IPRF-you	2MSG-marry.SBJV-her		and-want-PRF.3MSG

yə-ḳtəl-o	*wä-färəh-omu*	*lä-ḥəzb-ø*	*ʔəsmä*	*kämä*
3MSG-kill.SBJV-him	and-fear.PRF.3MSG-them	for-people-NACC.NCST	because	like

näbiy-ø	*wəʔət-u*	*bä-ḥäbe-homu*	6	*wä-ʔämmä*	*kon-ä*	*ʕälät-ä*
prophet-NACC.NCST	he-NACC	in-among-them		and-when	be-PRF.3MSG	day-(N)ACC.(N)CST

täwäld-ä	*herodəs*	*zäfän-ät*	*wälätt-ä*	*herodəyada*	*bä-maʔkäl-omu*
be.born-PRF.3MSG	PN	dance-PRF.3FSG	daughter-NACC.CST	PN	in-midst.NACC.CST-their

wä-ʔäddäm-ät-o	*lä-herodəs*	7	*wä-mäḥäl-ä*	*l-ati*	*yä-häb-a*
and-please-PRF.3FSG-him	for-PN		and-swear-PRF.3MSG	for-her	3MSG-give.SBJV-her

zä-säʔäl-ät-o	8	*wä-bä-kämä*	*tə-bəl-a*	*ʔəmm-a*	*tə-bel-o*
REL-ask-PRF.3FSG-him		and-in-as	3FSG-say.PRF-her	mother.NACC.CST-her	3FSG-say.PRF-him

häb-äni	*yəʔəze*	*bä-ṣaḥl-ø*	*rəʔs-o*	*lä-yoḥännəs*	*mäṭməḳ-ø*
give.IMP.2MSG-me	now	on-plate-NACC.NCST	head.ACC.CST-his	for-PN	baptist-NACC.NCST

9	*wä-täkkäz-ä*	*nəguś-ø*	*ʔəsmä*	*wäddəʔ-ä*	*mähäl-ä*	*wä-bäʔəntä-hi*
	and-sad-PRF.3MSG	king-NACC.NCST	because	finish-PRF.3MSG	swear-PRF.3MSG	and-because-indeed

ʔəllä	*yə-räffəḳ-u*	*ʔäzzäz-ä*	*yä-häb-əww-a*	10	*wä-fännäw-ä*	*wä-mätär-u*
REL.PL	3-recline.IPRF-MPL	command-PRF.3MSG	3-give.SBJV-MPL-her		and-send-PRF.3MSG	and-cut-PRF.3MPL

rəʔs-o	*lä-yoḥännəs*	*bä-wəstä*	*moḳəḥ-ø*	11	*wä-ʔämṣəʔ-u*	*rəʔs-o*
head.ACC.CST-his	for-PN	in-toward	prison-NACC.NCST		and-bring-PRF.3MPL	head.ACC.CST-his

bä-ṣaḥl-ø	*wä-wähäb-əww-a*	*lä-yəʔət-i*	*wälätt-ø*
on-plate-NACC.NCST	and-give-PRF.3MPL-her	for-that-NACC	daughter-NACC.NCST

wä-wälätt-ø	*wähäb-ät*	*lä-ʔəmm-a*
and-daughter-NACC.NCST	give-PRF.3FSG	for-mother.NACC.CST-her

'(1) On that day, after king Herod heard the news of Jesus, (2) he said to his people, "This is John the Baptist. He has arisen from the dead. Because of this, power is helping him." (3) For, Herod had seized John and imprisoned him on account of Herodias, the wife of Phillip, his brother (4) because John had told him, "It is not for you to marry her." (5) He wanted to kill him, but he feared the people because he was like a prophet among them. (6) When it was the day on which Herod was born, the daughter of Herodias danced among them, and she pleased Herod. (7) (Herod) swore to her to give her whatever she asked him. (8) Just as her mother told her, she told him, "Give me, now, on a plate the head of John the Baptist." (9) The king was saddened because he had already sworn (it) and because of those who were reclining (there) (but) he commanded that they give (it) to her. (10) He sent, and they cut off the head of John in prison. (11) They brought his head on a plate, and they gave (it) to that daughter, and the daughter gave (it) to her mother.'

Notes for the sample

1 The accusative *yəʔətä ʔämirä* is used as an adverb (§4.2.5).
1 *nägäro läʔiyäsus*, literally 'his word, for Jesus' is an analytic genitive construction (§5.2).
2 *yəbelomu läsäbʔu*, literally 'he said to them, for his people' is an analytic direct object construction (§5.2).
4 The subjunctive *tawsəb* complements the preceding verb *ʔi-yəkawwənäkä* 'it is not for you', or more idiomatically 'it is not allowed for you' (§4.4.2).
6 *ʕälätä täwäldä herodəs* 'the day on which Herod was born' is an asyndetic relative clause.
7 *zä-säʔäläto* 'whatever she asked him' is a headless relative clause.
9 *wäddəʔä mähälä* is a serial verb construction, meaning 'he had already sworn'.
9 *ʔəllä yəräffəku* 'those who were reclining' is a headless relative clause, translating a participle in the Greek *Vorlage* (συνανακειμένους). Gəʕəz makes limited use of participles, often employing such headless relative clauses instead.
11 *ʔämṣəʔu* 'they brought' is a CG stem of √*mṣʔ* 'to come'.

NOTES

1 Note, however, that the political Solomonic dynasty officially came to an end in 1974 with the rise of the Marxist Derg.
2 Throughout this chapter, the transcription (almost transliteration) of Gəʕəz stays close to the orthography of the language as it is written in the source with the exception that I have indicated gemination and distinguished *ə* and *ø*. Phonetic transcriptions, when necessary, are placed in square brackets, i.e., [. . .], and phonemic transcriptions in angled brackets, i.e., /. . ./. Thus, ኀደጎ is transcribed here as *ḫädägo* 'He left him', though phonemically /hadägo/ and phonetically [hadäg^{w}o], at least in the pronunciation tradition.
3 The only exception is the 2FPL perfect, where stress is on the ultimate, e.g., *näbärˈkən* 'you sat'.
4 Singular is in quotation marks because the form of *ʔəd* 'hand' with pronominal suffixes includes a connecting vowel *-e-* (< **ay*), e.g., *ʔədekä* 'your hand', which is a relic of the PS oblique dual ending (see Heide 2006).
5 Rare relics of a dual also exist; see Heide (2006) and note 4.

6 Proper nouns, whether personal names or geographic names, can optionally mark the accusative with the suffix *-ha*.

7 Mercier (2000), for instance, proposes a range of 330–650 CE based on radiocarbon dating.

8 See www.hmml.org/.

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