

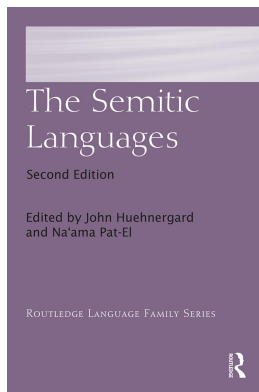
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## The Semitic Languages

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### Gurage (Muher)

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429025563-10>

Ronny Meyer

**Published online on: 06 Mar 2019**

**How to cite :-** Ronny Meyer. 06 Mar 2019, *Gurage (Muher) from: The Semitic Languages* Routledge  
Accessed on: 31 May 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429025563-10>

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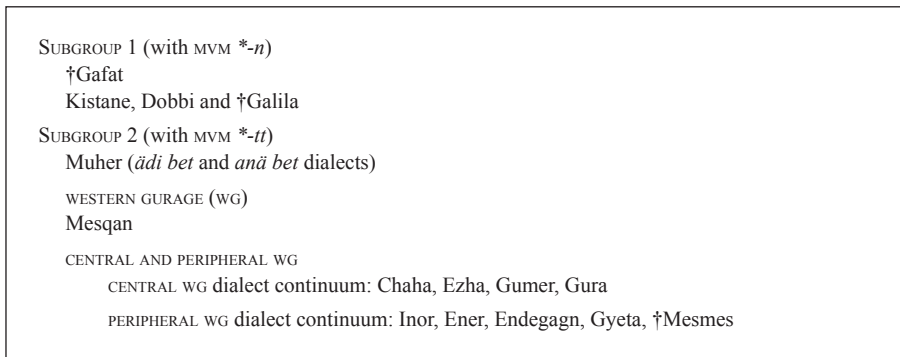
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## CHAPTER 10

**GURAGE (MUHER)<sup>1</sup>***Ronny Meyer***1 INTRODUCTION**

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

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

**FIGURE 10.1** OUTER SOUTH ETHIOSEMITIC

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



MAP 10.1 THE MUHER SPEECH AREA

## 2 WRITING SYSTEM

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

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

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

**TABLE 10.1 CURRENT PAN-GUNNÄN GURAGE SCRIPT**

CONSONANT (C)	Cä	Cu	Ci	Ca	Ce	C(i)	Co
<i>h</i>	ሐ	ሑ	ሒ	ሓ	ሔ	ሕ	ሖ
<i>ç/hʲ</i>	ሕ	ሑ	ሒ	ሓ	ሔ	ሕ	ሖ
<i>hʷ</i>	ሑ	ሑ	ሒ	ሓ	ሔ	ሕ	ሖ
<i>l</i>	ለ	ሉ	ሊ	ላ	ሌ	ል	ሎ
<i>m</i>	መ	ሙ	ሚ	ማ	ሜ	ም	ሞ
<i>mʷ</i>	ሙ	ሙ	ሚ	ማ	ሜ	ም	ሞ
<i>r</i>	ረ	ሩ	ሪ	ራ	ራ	ር	ሮ
<i>s</i>	ሰ	ሱ	ሲ	ሳ	ሴ	ሰ	ሶ
<i>f/sʲ</i>	ሸ	ሹ	ሺ	ሻ	ሼ	ሸ	ሺ
<i>kʰ</i>	ቀ	ቁ	ቂ	ቃ	ቄ	ቅ	ቆ
<i>cʰ/kʲ</i>	ቆ	ቆ	ቂ	ቃ	ቄ	ቅ	ቆ
<i>kʷ</i>	ቆ	ቆ	ቂ	ቃ	ቄ	ቅ	ቆ
<i>b</i>	በ	ቡ	ቢ	ባ	ቤ	ብ	ቦ
<i>bʷ</i>	ቡ	ቡ	ቢ	ባ	ቤ	ብ	ቦ
<i>v</i>	ቨ	ቩ	ቪ	ቫ	ቬ	ቭ	ቮ
<i>t</i>	ተ	ቱ	ቲ	ታ	ቲ	ት	ቶ
<i>fʃ/tʲ</i>	ቸ	ቹ	ቺ	ቻ	ቼ	ቸ	ቺ
<i>n</i>	ነ	ኑ	ኒ	ና	ኔ	ነ	ኖ
<i>n/nʲ</i>	ኑ	ኑ	ኒ	ና	ኔ	ነ	ኖ
(ø or vowel)	አ	አ	አ	አ	አ	አ	አ
<i>k</i>	ከ	ከ	ከ	ካ	ኬ	ከ	ኮ
<i>c/ki</i>	ከ	ከ	ከ	ካ	ኬ	ከ	ኮ
<i>kʷ</i>	ከ	ከ	ከ	ካ	ኬ	ከ	ኮ
<i>w</i>	ወ	ዉ	ዊ	ዋ	ዌ	ወ	ዎ
<i>ʔ</i>	ዐ	ዑ	ዒ	ዓ	ዔ	ዐ	ዖ
<i>z</i>	ዘ	ዙ	ዚ	ዛ	ዜ	ዘ	ዞ
<i>ʒ/zʲ</i>	ዘ	ዙ	ዚ	ዛ	ዜ	ዘ	ዞ
<i>j</i>	የ	የ	የ	ያ	ዬ	የ	ዮ
<i>d</i>	ደ	ዱ	ዲ	ዳ	ዴ	ደ	ዶ
<i>dʒ/dʲ</i>	ደ	ዱ	ዲ	ዳ	ዴ	ደ	ዶ
<i>g</i>	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ
<i>j/gʲ</i>	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ
<i>gʷ</i>	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ
<i>tʰ</i>	ጠ	ጡ	ጢ	ጣ	ጤ	ጠ	ጦ
<i>fʃ/tʲ</i>	ጠ	ጡ	ጢ	ጣ	ጤ	ጠ	ጦ
<i>pʰ</i>	አ	አ	አ	አ	አ	አ	አ
<i>sʰ</i>	አ	አ	አ	አ	አ	አ	አ
<i>f</i>	ፈ	ፉ	ፊ	ፋ	ፅ	ፍ	ፎ
<i>fʷ</i>	ፅ	ፅ	ፅ	ፅ	ፅ	ፅ	ፅ
<i>p</i>	ፐ	ፑ	ፒ	ፓ	ፔ	ፐ	ፖ
<i>pʷ</i>	ፐ	ፑ	ፒ	ፓ	ፔ	ፐ	ፖ





### 3.4 Morphophonological processes

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

#### 3.4.1 Palatalization

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

- (3) a /gda-i/>[gidʒä/ε] ‘Pour (FSG)!’    b /ʃab-i/>[ʃeβ] ‘Pull (FSG)!’

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

#### 3.4.2 Labialization

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

- (4) a /zarräg-wi-i-m/ [zarrägʷim] ‘one went away’  
       move.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG-PRF  
   b /säbbär-wi-i-m/ [säbbʷrim] ‘one broke’  
       break.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG-PRF  
   c /gärra-wi-i-m/ [gʷrrem] ‘one is satisfied’  
       be\_satisfied.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG-PRF

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

- (5) a /säkkʷäi-wi-i-m/>[säkkʷjm]    b /jä-skʷi-wi-i/>[jäskʷuj]  
       hang.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG-PRF        3-hang.PCS-IPS-OI:3MSG  
       ‘One has hung.’                    ‘May one hang!’

## 4 MORPHOLOGY

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

### 4.1 Pronouns

#### 4.1.1 Personal pronouns and possessive suffixes

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

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

#### 4.1.2 Demonstratives

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

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

#### 4.1.3 Interrogatives

Basic and selected derived interrogatives are shown in Table 10.5.

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

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

TABLE 10.4 PERSONAL PRONOUNS AND POSSESSIVE SUFFIXES

	GENDER	SINGULAR		PLURAL	
		PRONOUN	POSSESSIVE	PRONOUN	POSSESSIVE
1	COMMON	<i>ädi</i>	<i>-ddi</i>	<i>ijña</i>	<i>-nna</i>
2	MALE		<i>(-)dä-hä</i>		<i>(-)dä-him<sup>w</sup></i>
	FEMALE		<i>(-)dä-ç &lt; *däh'</i>		<i>(-)dä-hma</i>
3	MALE	<i>h<sup>wa</sup></i>	<i>-h<sup>wt</sup>(a)</i>		<i>(-)hinnäm<sup>w</sup></i>
	FEMALE		<i>(-)ça/(-)hija</i>		<i>(-)hinnäma</i>

TABLE 10.5 INTERROGATIVES

BASIC		DERIVED	
<i>ma</i>	‘who’	<i>jä-ma</i>	(GAD-who) ‘whose, (for) whom’
<i>*m(in)</i>	‘what’	<i>mi?e /m-k'e/</i>	(what-NSPEC) ‘what’
		<i>jä-n-k'e</i>	(GAD-what- NSPEC) ‘why’
		<i>bä-n-k'e</i>	(MIL-what- NSPEC) ‘by what’
<i>että</i>	‘where’	<i>t-että</i>	(ABL-where) ‘from where’
		<i>b-että</i>	(LOC-where) ‘at which place’
		<i>ett-ät-innijä</i>	(where-ADE-DIR) ‘towards which place’
<i>mätfä</i>	‘when (NPST)’	<i>mätfä-na</i>	(when-PST) ‘when (PST)’
		<i>inf<sup>o</sup>ä-we</i>	(which-DEF) ‘which’



## 4.1.4 Indefinites

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

- (7) a *attim säb* ‘nobody’    *attin-k’e* ‘nothing’  
 b *mannim säb* ‘whoever’    *mannin-k’e* ‘whatever, of any kind’  
 c *affi-säb* ‘somebody’    *af-k’e* ‘something’

## 4.2 Nominals

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

- (8) *mam<sup>w</sup>ä*    *bora* / *mam<sup>w</sup>ä*    *addär-hä-m?*  
 good    ox    good    spend\_night.sc-2MSG-PRF  
 ‘a good ox’    ‘Did you spend the night well?’

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

## 4.2.1 Nominal inflection

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

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

TABLE 10.6 NUMBER AND GENDER OF NOMINALS

	ANIMACY	GENDER	INDEX	NUMBER		
				SG	PL	TRANSDUMERAL
a	INANIMATE	COMMON	3MSG			<i>bet</i> ‘house’
b	ANIMAL	COMMON	3MSG			<i>bulle</i> ‘pigeon’
c	HUMAN	COMMON	3MSG			<i>merräññä</i> ‘worker’
d		COMMON	3MSG			<i>amara</i> ‘Amhara’
e	HUMAN	FEMALE	3FSG			<i>annafuwät</i> ‘female relative (of father)’
f		MALE	3MSG			<i>akkäbäja</i> ‘male relative (of father)’
g	ANIMAL	MALE	3MSG			<i>bora</i> ‘ox’
h	HUMAN	FEMALE	3FSG/FPL	<i>gäräd</i>	<i>gred</i>	‘girl’
i		MALE	3MSG/MPL	<i>jidž</i>	<i>denja</i>	‘boy’
j	ANIMAL	FEMALE	3MSG/MPL	<i>innam</i>	<i>gizz</i>	‘cow’

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

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

- (9) a *merräññä määrrär-ä-m.*  
 worker be\_bitter.SC-3MSG-PRF  
 ‘A worker (M/F) was/Workers (M/F) were angry.’
- b *addis-we merräññä tamijña {am-märär}-ä/-ätt/-m<sup>w</sup>/-ma.*  
 new-DEF worker yesterday {NEG-be\_bitter.SC.NEG}-3MSG/-3FSG/-3MPL/-3FPL  
 ‘The new worker(s) (M/F) was/were not angry yesterday.’

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

- (10) a *jä-kubra bulle azzä-hu-{nni/nnimu}-m*  
 LNK-Kubra.F pigeon see.SC-SI:1SG-{OI:3MSG/3MPL}-PRF  
 ‘I saw Kubra’s dove/s.’
- b *innam-hut fäkk’är-ä-m.*  
 COW.FSG-POSS.3MSG be(come)\_fat.SC-3MSG-PRF  
 ‘His cow is fat.’

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

- (11) *att / att-att merräññä jino.*  
 a some worker EXIST.3MSG.MVM  
 ‘There is a (certain) worker/are some workers.’

#### 4.2.2 Nonspecific -k’e

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

- (12) a *jä-gäbäja-ʔe j-aʔet’im-mu-tt.*  
 LNK-market-NSPEC 3-trade.PCL-MPL-MVM  
 ‘They trade the (common) market items.’
- b *tikä-ddi bä-hon-ä-ʔe n-iʒʒ-inn.*  
 child-POSS.1SG LOC-[be(come).SC-3MSG]-NSPEC SI:1SG-see.PCS-OI:3MSG  
 ‘Let me see about the whereabouts of my child (lit. the state in which he is)!’

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

- (13) *šaff-hija*                      *mam<sup>w</sup>ä-ʔe*                      *aggäd-ätt-u-m*  
 scarf-POSS.3FSG    good-NSPEC[>well/correctly]    tie.SC-SI:3FSG-OI:3MSG-PRF  
 ‘She tied her scarf well.’

#### 4.2.3 Nominal patterns

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

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

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

TABLE 10.7 FREQUENT NOMINAL PATTERNS

BASIC PATTERN	SUB PATTERN	EXAMPLE	ROOT	GLOSS
$C_1C_2C_3$	$C_1C_2C_3$ -ät	<i>kift</i>	√ k-f-t	‘open’
	$C_1C_2C_3$ -a/-ä	<i>nibr-ät</i>	√ n-b-r	‘life, wealth’
	$C_1C_2C_3^w$	<i>gidij-ä</i>	√ g-d-j	‘sleeping (state)’
	$C_1C_2C_3^wä$	<i>gurz</i>	√ g-r-z	‘old’
$C_1äC_2C_3$	$C_1C_2C_3^wä$	<i>kitf<sup>v</sup>ä</i>	√ k-t-f	‘minced beef/food’
		<i>äʃ<sup>r</sup>ir</i>	√ A-ʃ <sup>r</sup> -r	‘fence’
$C_1äC_2äC_3$	$C_1äC_2äC_3$ -a	<i>t<sup>r</sup>äräʔ</i>	√ t <sup>r</sup> -r-k <sup>r</sup>	‘dry’
		<i>bazän-a</i>	√ c b-z-n	‘guest’
$C_1C_2aC_3$	$C_1C_2aC_3$ -ä	<i>zinab</i>	√ z-n-b	‘rain’
		<i>ʃikk<sup>w</sup>afä</i>	√ b ʃ <sup>r</sup> -k <sup>w</sup> -s	‘begging’
$C_1äC_2aC_3^j$	$C_1C_2aC_3^j$ -ä	<i>ʃ<sup>r</sup>äʔ<sup>w</sup>af</i>	√ b ʃ <sup>r</sup> -k <sup>w</sup> -s	‘beggar’
		<i>hädʒi</i>	√ h-d-A	‘traitor’
		<i>wabi</i>	√ ø-A-b (*w-h-b)	‘charitable person’
		<i>m<sup>w</sup>af</i>	√ m <sup>w</sup> -ø-t (*m-w-t)	‘dead person’
	$C_1äC_2aC_3^j$ -ä	<i>däraj-ä</i>	√ d-r-g ‘hit’	‘swimming’

TABLE 10.8 NOMINALS DERIVED BY *-jä*

	BASE		DERIVED NOMINAL	
a	<i>mult<sup>r</sup></i>	‘(being) bold’	<i>mult<sup>r</sup>-jä</i>	‘(getting) bold’
b	<i>t<sup>r</sup>iʔur</i>	‘black’	<i>t<sup>r</sup>iʔur-jä</i>	‘black; (blackish) low-quality ensete pith’
c	<i>furt<sup>r</sup></i>	‘blind’	<i>furt<sup>r</sup>-jä</i>	‘blind; not flourishing ensete’
d	<i>jä-m<sup>w</sup>ət</i>	‘of death’	<i>jä-m<sup>w</sup>ət-jä</i>	‘carrion’
e	<i>j-ank<sup>w</sup>ä</i>	‘of egg’	<i>j-ank<sup>w</sup>ä-jä</i>	‘laying hen’
f	<i>jä-bafä</i>	‘of illness’	<i>jä-baf-jä</i>	‘ill person/animal’
g	<i>jirot<sup>r</sup></i>	‘he who runs’	<i>ji-rot<sup>r</sup>-jä</i>	‘runner’

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

#### 4.2.4 Nominalized relative clauses

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

- (14) a *jix<sup>wari</sup>-bb<sup>wä</sup>-?e* ‘instrument for digging’  
*j-här<sup>wi</sup>-bb<sup>wä</sup>-k'e*  
 SI:3-dig.PCL-IPS-MIL-OI.  
 3MSG-NSPEC
- b *jidg<sup>waddo</sup>-bb<sup>wä</sup>-?e* ‘place for sleeping’  
*j-tägäddäi<sup>wi</sup>-bb<sup>wä</sup>-k'e*  
 SI:3-sleep.PCL-IPS-MIL-OI.  
 3MSG-NSPEC
- c *jix<sup>war</sup>* *säb* ‘he who digs > digger’  
*j-här*  
 SI:3-dig.PCL:MSG person

Lexicalized instrument nominalizations may lack *-k'e*, e.g., *ji?arfi-bb<sup>wä</sup>* ‘beginning’.

#### 4.2.5 Adjectives

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

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

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

- (15) *jä-ǰilalu* (i) *zärma* *jiddǰ jinä-nni-tt.*  
 (ii) *zärma-?e*  
 DAT-Jilalu.M marriagable-NSPEC boy EXIST.SI:3MSG-OI:3MSG-MVM  
 i. ‘Jilalu has a boy of marriageable age.’ (speaker is certain)  
 ii. ‘Jilalu has a boy who is (probably) about to be of marriageable age.’

#### 4.2.6 Numerals

Muher has a decimal number system (Table 10.10).

The teens are formed from *asrä-* plus the digits, usually preceded by *-m*, e.g., *asrä(-m)-arbätt* ‘fourteen’. The hundreds and thousands are specified by a preposed digit: *h<sup>wett</sup> mäto (huja-m-h<sup>wett</sup>)* ‘two-hundred (twenty-two)’.

TABLE 10.9 ADJECTIVES

NOMINAL PROPERTY CONCEPT		VERB	
DIMENSION			
a	<i>inissijä</i>	‘small, little’	<i>annäsä-m</i> ‘be(come) small’
b	<i>liḥjä</i>	‘big’	<i>laḥä-m</i> ‘surpass, grow’
AGE			
c	<i>iniss</i>	‘younger sibling’	cf. (a)
d	<i>liḥi</i>	‘older sibling’	cf. (b)
VALUE			
e	<i>mamwä</i>	‘good, healthy’	
f	<i>t’ifwä</i>	‘bad’	
COLOR			
g	<i>t’iḥur</i>	‘black’	<i>t’äkkwärä-m</i> ‘be(come) black’
h	<i>gwad</i>	‘white (inanimate item)’	
PHYSICAL PROPERTY			
i	<i>bisu</i>	‘ripe’	<i>bässeä-m</i> ‘be(come) ripe’
j	<i>ziza</i>	‘raw, wet’	
CORPOREAL PROPERTY			
k	<i>fiḥur</i>	‘fat’	<i>fäkkwärä-m</i> ‘be(come) fat’
l	<i>sissä</i>	‘thin’	<i>sassa-m</i> ‘be(come) thin’

TABLE 10.10 BASIC NUMERALS

DIGITS		DECIMALS		OTHER	
i. <i>att/ii. k’una</i>	‘one’	<i>assir/asrā-</i>	‘ten’	<i>mäto/(bāḥi)</i>	‘hundred’
<i>h’ett</i>	‘two’	<i>huja</i>	‘twenty’	<i>fi</i>	‘thousand’
<i>sḥast/sost</i>	‘three’	<i>sälasa</i>	‘thirty’		
<i>arbätt</i>	‘four’	<i>arba</i>	‘forty’		
<i>ammist</i>	‘five’	<i>amsa</i>	‘fifty’		
<i>siddist</i>	‘six’	<i>silsa</i>	‘sixty’		
<i>säbätt/säbatt</i>	‘seven’	<i>säba</i>	‘seventy’		
<i>simmutt</i>	‘eight’	<i>sämana</i>	‘eighty’		
<i>zät’ä</i>	‘nine’	<i>zätt’äna</i>	‘ninety’		

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

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

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

### 4.3 Verbs

#### 4.3.1 Verb inflection and derivation

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

Quadrilateral roots rarely have four distinct consonants (an example is  $\sqrt{k'-n-t'-s}$  ‘pinch off’), but usually reduplicate consonants (cf. Table 10.13). Reduplicated trilateral roots are less frequent:  $\sqrt{b-t-t}$  ‘be(come) wide’,  $\sqrt{k^w-k^w-r}$  ‘wring, squeeze’.

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

- 1 Jussive conjugation (PCS):  $SI-C_1C_2C_3-SI$  /  $SI-C_1\check{a}C_2C_3C_4-SI$   
 Subtypes:  $SI-C_1C_2\check{a}C_3-SI$  for a few intransitive Type A roots, and  $SI-C_1\check{a}CC_2C_3-SI$  for Type B
- 2 Imperfective conjugation (PCL):  $SI-C_1\check{a}(C)C_2C_3-SI$  /  $SI-C_1C_2\check{a}CC_3C_4-SI$
- 3 Perfective conjugation (SC):  $C_1\check{a}CC_2\check{a}C_3-SI$  /  $C_1C_2\check{a}CC_3\check{a}C_4-SI$   
 Subtype:  $C_1\check{a}C_2\check{a}C_3-SI$  for negated Type A verbs

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

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

TABLE 10.11 SUBJECT INDEX

		SUFFIX CONJUGATION (SC)		PREFIX CONJUGATIONS (PC)			
		SINGULAR	PLURAL	SINGULAR	PLURAL		
1		-h <sup>w</sup>	-nä	ä-/n-	n-	... -nä	
2	M	-hä	-hm <sup>w</sup>	t-	... ø	t-	... -m <sup>w</sup>
	F	-ç (-hj)	-hma	t-	... -j	t-	... -ma
3	M	-ä	-m <sup>w</sup>	j(ä)-	... ø	j(ä)-	... -m <sup>w</sup>
	F	-ätt	-ma	t-		j(ä)-	... -ma
	IPS	-wj				j(ä)- ... -wj	

TABLE 10.12 OBJECT INDEX

			BASE	PRIMARY OBJECT	APPLIED OBJECT		
					BEN	MIL	
1	SG	LIGHT	*-Lj	-e (*-ä-j)	-nn-i	-b-i	
		HEAVY		-jɲ		-bb-i	
	PL	LIGHT	*-nä	-ä-nä	-ni-nä	-b-nä	
		HEAVY		-nnä	-nni-nä	-bbi-nä	
2	SG	M	LIGHT	*-hä	-(nn-)hä	-b-hä	
		HEAVY		-kkä	-nni-kkä	-bbi-kkä	
	F	LIGHT	*-hj	-(nn-)ç	-n-c	-b-ç	
		HEAVY		-cc	-nni-cc	-bbi-cc	
	PL	M	LIGHT	*-hm <sup>w</sup>	-(nn-)hm <sup>w</sup>	-n-kim <sup>w</sup>	-b-him <sup>w</sup>
		HEAVY		-kkim <sup>w</sup>	-nni-kkim <sup>w</sup>	-bbi-kkim <sup>w</sup>	
	F	LIGHT	*-hma	-(nn-)hma	-b-hima		
	HEAVY		-kkima	-nni-kkima	-bbi-kkima		
3	SG	M	LIGHT	*-:/*-Uä	-nn/-w	-no	-wä (*-b-wä)
		HEAVY		-:/-U	-nn-o	-bb-wä	
	F	LIGHT	*-:/*-Ua	-nn-a/-w-a	-n-a	-b-a	
		HEAVY		-:/-Ua	-nn-a	-bb-a	
	PL	M	LIGHT	*-:äm <sup>w</sup> /	-nn-äm <sup>w</sup> /-w-äm <sup>w</sup>	-nn-äm <sup>w</sup>	-b-äm <sup>w</sup>
		HEAVY		*-:Uäm <sup>w</sup>	-:äm <sup>w</sup> /-Uäm <sup>w</sup>	-nn-äm <sup>w</sup>	-bb-äm <sup>w</sup>
	F	LIGHT	*-:äma/	-nn-äma/-w-äma	-n-äma	-b-äma	
	HEAVY		*-:Uäma	-:äma/-Uäma	-nn-äma	-bb-äma	

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

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

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

- (17) a *abba* (or *abinna*)! b *jiläggidditt* (or *jilägdinnitt*). c *orridɟ* (or *ordɟ-u*)!  
 ab-:a (ab-nna) j-lägd-:-tt (j-lägd-nn-tt) awrd-:- (awrd-:-w)  
 give.PCS.SI:2MSG-OI:3FSG SI:3-touch.PCL.MSG-OI:3MSG-MVM take\_down.PCS-SI:2FSG-OI:3MSG  
 ‘Give [it] to her!’ ‘He touches it.’ ‘Take it/him down!’

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

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

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

TABLE 10.13 PRIMARY CONJUGATIONS IN THE SIMPLEX (BASIC FORMS)

TYPE	ROOT	SUFFIX CONJUGATION	PREFIX CONJUGATION	
			LONG (PCL)	SHORT (PCS)
TRILITERAL ROOTS				
A	√ l-g-d 'touch'	<i>läggäd-ä/lägäd-ä</i> (AFF/NEG)	<i>ji-lägd</i>	<i>jä-lgid</i>
	√ b-t-t 'be wide'	<i>bättät-ä/bätät-ä</i> (AFF/NEG)	<i>ji-bätt</i>	<i>jä-btät</i> (INTR)
B	√ f-k-t 'do'	<i>fäkkät-ä</i>	<i>ji-fäkkit</i>	<i>jä-säkkit</i>
C	√ ʒ-r-g 'go'	<i>zarräg-ä</i>	<i>ji-zarrig</i>	<i>jä-zarg</i>
QUADRILITERAL ROOTS				
C	√ c-f-c-f 'sprinkle'	<i>cifäccäf-ä</i>	<i>ji-cifäccif</i>	<i>jä-cäfcif</i>
	√ t'-b-l-l 'wrap'	<i>t'iballäl-ä</i>	<i>ji-t'ballil</i>	<i>jä-t'balil</i>

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

1 Prefixation:

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

2 Internal stem modifications for various pluractional stems:

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

3 Combinations of 1 and 2

Examples for 1 and 2 are shown in Table 10.14.

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

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

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



TABLE 10.14 EXAMPLES OF DERIVED STEMS

	<i>SIMPLEX (SC)</i>		<i>DERIVED STEM (SC)</i>	
CAUSATIVE				
a	<i>bässa-</i>	'come'	<i>a-bässa-</i>	'bring'
b			<i>at-bässa-</i>	'import, help to bring'
c	<i>k'ärräb-</i>	'be(come) present'	<i>a-?ärräb-</i>	'bring close, deliver'
d			<i>at-k'ärräb-</i>	'help to come close'
e	<i>bänna-</i>	'eat'	<i>a-bänna-</i>	'feed, help to eat'
f			<i>at-bänna-</i>	'make to be eaten'
g	<i>srä-</i>	'buy'	<i>a-srä-</i>	'sell'
MEDIOPASSIVE				
h	<i>gäddä-</i>	'put to sleep'	<i>tä-gäddä-</i>	'sleep'
i	<i>kättäf-</i>	'chop'	<i>tä-kättäf-</i>	'be chopped well'
j	<i>k'ärräb-</i>	'be(come) present'	<i>*tä-k'ärräb-</i> [tä?ärräb-]	'present oneself'
k	<i>k'wämmä-</i>	'win'	<i>*tä-k'wämmä-</i> [tä?ömmä-]	'lose'
PLURACTIONALS				
ONLY REDUPLICATION				
l	<i>arrät'-</i>	'cut'	<i>ärärrät'</i>	'cut into many pieces'
m	<i>näbba-</i>	'crack'	<i>nibäbba-</i>	'crack (at various places)'
ONLY INSERTION OF VOWEL <i>a</i>				
n	<i>k'imätt'äi-</i>	'cut in two parts, separate by cutting'	<i>k'imatt'äi-</i>	'separate several parts'
REDUPLICATION AND INSERTION OF VOWEL <i>a</i>				
o	<i>fäkkät-</i>	'prepare'	<i>fikkäät-</i>	'finish to prepare, prepare well'
p	<i>läggäd-</i>	'touch'	<i>ligaggäd-</i>	'touch repeatedly'

TABLE 10.15 COMPLEX PLURACTIONAL STEMS

	<i>SIMPLEX (SC)</i>		<i>DERIVED STEM (SC)</i>	
PREFIX <i>tä-/a(t)-</i> PLUS VOWEL <i>a</i> INSERTION				
a	<i>näkkäs-</i>	'bite'	<i>tä-näkkäs-</i>	'quarrel (with each other), bite each other'
b			<i>at-näkkäs-</i>	'make quarrel with each other'
c	<i>fäkkät-</i>	'prepare'	<i>tä-fäkkät</i>	'be reconciled (with each other)'
d			<i>af-fäkkät-</i>	'reconcile'
e	<i>zinäj</i>		<i>tä-znajj-</i>	'discuss, fix a price'
f			<i>a-znajj-</i>	'address, appeal'
g	<i>nätf'ä-</i>	'tear, root out'	<i>tä-nätf'ä-</i>	'tear each other's hair'
PREFIX <i>tä-/at-</i> WITH CONSONANT REDUPLICATION				
h	<i>häi</i>	'know'	<i>tä-çäçäi-</i>	'get to know each other'
i			<i>at-çäçäi-</i>	'introduce a person to another'
j	<i>lah-</i>	'send'	<i>tä-läläh-</i>	'agree to be sent several times'
k	<i>aggäd-</i>	'tie'	<i>tä-gäggäd-</i>	'be tied well, be handicapped (in moving)'
l	<i>arrät'-</i>	'cut'	<i>tä-rärrät'-</i>	'be cut well, be cut in many pieces'
m	<i>ammän-</i>	'believe'	<i>tä-mämmän-</i>	'believe each other'
PREFIX <i>tä-</i> WITH CONSONANT REDUPLICATION AND VOWEL <i>a</i> INSERTION				
n	<i>fäkkät-</i>	'prepare'	<i>tä-fkakkät-</i>	'be prepared well, be in order, be ready'
o	<i>läggäd-</i>	'touch'	<i>tä-lgaggäd-</i>	'wrestle, grapple with each other'

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

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

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

- (19) a *ä-bsa-fä* / b *ji-bsa-fä*  
 1SG-come.PCS-FUT 3MSG-come.PCS-FUT  
 ‘I intend to come.’ ‘He is expected to come.’

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

#### 4.3.2 Converbs

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

- (20) a *gäg-χut* *tannä?-ä-m* *m<sup>w</sup>ət-ä-m.*  
 self-POSS.3MSG be\_strangled.SC-3MSG-CVB die.SC-3MSG-PRF  
 ‘He strangled himself and died/He killed himself by strangulation.’
- b *ädarä* *bija-m* *nä-hä!*  
 lunch eat.PCS.2MSG-CVB come.IMP-2MSG  
 ‘Eat lunch and come!’
- c *bet* *j-aräfi-m* / *aräffä-m* *muſra* *j-agäba-ät-n* [jagäβatin].  
 house 3-build.PCL.MSG-CVB build.SC.3MSG-CVB bride 3-marry.PCL.MSG-ADE-COP.3MSG  
 ‘He will build (PCL) a house, and then marry a woman.’/  
 ‘He has built (SC) a house, and is (now) going to marry a woman.’

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

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

- (21) *dǧilalu bāsār kātuǧf-ā-m ab-ā-nna-nta fukrija t-asāle.*  
 Jilalu.M meat chop.SC-3MSG-CVB give.SC-SI:3MSG-OI:3FSG-CVB.AUG Shukriya.F 3FSG-bring.PCL.MVM  
 ‘Jilalu chops the meat and gives it to Shukriya; and then she brings (it to the customers).’

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

#### 4.3.3 Main verb marker

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

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

- (22) *ti-sābr-i* vs. *ti-dǧādi-u*  
 3FSG-break.PCL.NPST-MVM 3FSG-sleep.PCL.NPST-MVM  
 ‘she breaks’ ‘she sleeps’

TABLE 10.16 ALLOMORPHS OF THE MAIN VERB MARKER

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

TABLE 10.17 INFLECTION OF COPULAS

	EQUATION		EXISTENCE	
1SG	<i>-n-χ<sup>w</sup></i>	‘I am’	<i>jinā-χ<sup>w</sup>-i</i>	‘There I am; I exist’
2MSG	<i>-n-χā</i>	...	<i>jinā-hā-u</i> [jināho]	...
2FSG	<i>-n-ç</i>		<i>jinā-ç-i-tt</i>	
3MSG	<i>-n</i>		<i>jinā-ā-u</i> [jino]	
3FSG	<i>-ja</i>		<i>jinā-ātt-i</i>	
1PL	<i>-n-nā</i>		<i>jinā-nā-u</i> [jināno]	
2MPL	<i>-n-χim<sup>w</sup></i>		<i>jinā-χm<sup>w</sup>-tt</i>	
2FPL	<i>-n-χima</i>		<i>jinā-χma-tt</i>	
3MPL	<i>-n-ām<sup>w</sup></i>		<i>jinā-m<sup>w</sup>-tt</i>	
3FPL	<i>-n-āma</i>		<i>jinā-ma-tt</i>	

TABLE 10.18 COPULA PREDICATES

CLAUSE	POLARITY	NON-PAST		PAST
		EQUATIVE	EXISTENTIAL	
Main indicative	AFF NEG	<i>-n+SI</i>	<i>jinä-SI-MVM</i> <i>jännä-SI</i>	<i>bannä-SI-MVM</i> ( $\sqrt{\text{n-b-r}}$ )
Main jussive	AFF/NEG		( $\sqrt{\text{n-b-r}}$ )	
Converb	AFF	( $\sqrt{\text{h}^{\text{w}}-\text{ø-n}}$ )		
Relative	AFF NEG		<i>jannä-SI jännä-SI</i>	( $\sqrt{\text{n-b-r}}$ )
Other dependent	AFF/NEG		( $\sqrt{\text{n-b-r}}$ )	

Notes:  $\sqrt{\text{h}^{\text{w}}-\text{ø-n}}$  ‘be(come)’,  $\sqrt{\text{n-b-r}}$  ‘live, exist’.

#### 4.3.4 Copulas

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

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

#### 4.4 Flags and relational nouns

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

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

- (23) a *mam<sup>w</sup>ä* [*jä-bet* *mäzja*] b [*jä-mäm<sup>w</sup>ä* *bet*] *mäzja*  
 good LNK-house door LNK-good house door  
 ‘a good house door’ ‘a door of a good house’
- (24) *bä-[džilalu* (*\*bä-jä-džilalu*) *bet*]  $\chi^{\text{w}}\text{ett}$  *denja* *jin-mu-tt*.  
 LOC-Jilalu house two boy.PL EXIST-3MPL-MVM  
 ‘There are two boys in Jilalu’s house.’

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

- (25) *jä-džilalu* (vs. *jä-džilalu-?e*) *jä-hun!*  
 DAT-Jilalu.M LNK-Jilalu-NSPEC 3-be(come).PCS.MSG  
 ‘It shall be for Jilalu (vs. It shall be Jilalu’s)!’

TABLE 10.19 FLAGS

	AFFIX	ON NOMINALS	ON CLAUSES
a	<i>j(ä)-</i>	Dative (beneficiary, recipient, addressee) Accusative (primary object) Linker (genitive)	Relative clause (affirmative sc)
b	<i>b(ä)-</i>	Location ‘in, on, at’ Motion (within a border) Instrumental Malefactive	SC: Real protasis, Irreal apodosis, PCL: Temporal
c	<i>t(ä)-</i>	Lative (ablative, motion to/via) Comitative Comparative	PCL: Irreal protasis, Simultaneous co-event, SC: Temporal
d	<i>-hāma</i>	Similative	RELATIVE VERBS: Temporal (incidence), Complement, Purpose
e	<i>-āt</i>	Adessive (in the vicinity of)	RELATIVE VERBS: Cause, Purpose
f	<i>-nnijä</i>	Directional ‘towards’	—

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

- (26) a *abdo jā-džāmal hanan ab-ä-nni-m.*  
 Abdo.M ACC-Jamal.M Hanan.F give.SC-SI:3MSG-OI:3MSG-PRF  
 ‘Abdo gave Hanan to Jamal.’
- b *asfa jā-rawda ji-wāddi-nna-tt.*  
 Asfa.M ACC-Rawda.F SI:3-like.PCL.MSG-OI:3FSG-NPST:MVM  
 ‘Asfa likes Rawda.’

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

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

## 5 SYNTAX

### 5.1 Word order

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

- (27) TOPIC COMMENT  
 a *bora* <sub>subject</sub> *gāfä* <sub>object</sub> *a33ä-m.*  
 ox hyena see.SC.SI:3MSG-PRF  
 ‘An ox saw a hyena.’



TABLE 10.20 VERBAL PREDICATION TYPES

CLAUSE	POLARITY	TENSE	PERFECTIVE	IMPERFECTIVE	JUSSIVE
Main	AFF	NPST PST	SC- <i>m-∅</i> SC- <i>m bannä</i> -MVM	PCL- <i>∅</i> -MVM PCL <i>bannä</i> -MVM	PCS
	NEG	NPST PST	<i>an</i> -SC(.NEG)	<i>a</i> -PCL- <i>∅</i> <i>b-a</i> -PCL(-MVM)	<i>a</i> -PCS
Converb			SC- <i>m (tannä)</i>	PCL- <i>m (tannä)</i>	PCS- <i>m (tannä)</i>
Relative	AFF/NEG		<i>jä</i> -SC/ <i>an</i> -SC(.NEG)	PCL/ <i>a</i> -PCL	
Other dependent	AFF/NEG		{Flag+SC}	{Flag+PCL}	

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

- (31) a *ahuyña/ nägä/ \*tamiñña ji-bäsa-∅-u* [jibäso].  
 now tomorrow yesterday 3-come.PCL.MSG-NPST-MVM  
 ‘He comes now/will come tomorrow/\*came yesterday.’
- b *tamiñña ji-bäsa banno.*  
 yesterday 3-come.PCL.MSG PST.3MSG.MVM  
 ‘He had been coming yesterday.’

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

- (32) *tamiñña bässa-ä-m-∅* [bässam].  
 yesterday come.SC-3MSG-{CVB-NPST}:PRF  
 ‘He came/has come yesterday.’

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

- (33) *mango tä-wä-bja-dähä* [tojädähä] *jift-üt*  
 mango ABL-VN-eat.PCS-POSS.2MSG [LNK.face-ADE]>before  
*täjf’äna wə-mätf’ jinä-ä-b-hä-u* [jinäφχo].  
 properly VN-wash.PCS EXIST-SI.3MSG-MIL-OI.2MSG-MVM  
 ‘Before you eat a mango, you must properly wash it.’





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

- (38) a *jä-merra-n*      *jä-bässa-χ<sup>w</sup>*      b *rawda*   *jä-bässatt*      *tamiñña-n*.  
 DAT-work-COP.3MSG LNK-come.SC-2SG      Rawda.F LNK-come.SC.3FSG yesterday-COP.3MSG  
 ‘It is for work that I came.’      ‘It is yesterday that Rawda has come.’

## 5.5 Negation

The primary conjugations are negated by *an-/a-* (SC/PC), whereby *a-* merges with *j-* to *e-* (39a). Negated Type A sc verbs do not geminate C<sub>2</sub> (39b):

- (39) a *a-j-lägd* [elägd]      b *läggäd-ä-m*      vs. *an-läggäd-ä* [alläggädä]  
 NEG-3-touch.PCL.MSG.NPST      touch.SC-3MSG-PRF      NEG-touch.SC.NEG-3MSG  
 ‘he does not touch’      ‘he touched’      ‘he did not touch’

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

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

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

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

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

## 5.6 Focus markers

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

- (42) *m<sup>w</sup>χhir*   *jä-mäʔork<sup>w</sup>χr-im-häma*   *ji-znäjj-u-f*.  
 Muher   LNK-Maḳorḳor-FOC-SIM   3-speak.PCL.MSG-NPST.MVM-ASS  
 ‘Indeed, the Muher also speak like the Maḳorḳor.’

The scope of *-f* is the whole utterance; *-m* focuses individual constituents. Moreover, *-m* occurs on indefinites (§4.1.4), marks converbs (§4.3.2), and coordinates nominals (see also §4.2.6): *ḏjilalu-m ḏjämil-im* ‘Jilalu and Jamil’.

## 6 LEXICON

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

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

## 7 SAMPLE TEXT

### *k'awa* 'coffee'

- (43) *bä-mädžämmära k'awa bä-g'arra läkk'am-wj-m* [läkk'ämum]  
 LOC-begin coffee LOC-garden pick.SC-IPS-CVB  
*j-abäsa-wj-i-tt* [jawəfett].  
 3-bring.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM  
 'First, one picks the coffee from the garden and brings it (to the house).'
- (44) *tähañc'ä-ta att'äb-wj-m* [att'əwim] *bä-mdad j-k'wäLj-wj-i-tt* [jo?ojtt].  
 then-AUG wash.SC-IPS-CVB LOC-frying\_plate 3-roast.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM  
 'Then, it is washed and roasted on a frying plate.'
- (45) *isat atäwäz-wj-m* [atäwäzim] *bä-mädžadda midad awännä-wj-m* [ännäm]  
 fire let\_hold\_each\_other.SC-IPS-CVB LOC-fireplace frying\_plate put.SC-IPS-CVB  
*jä-mädžämmära-we k'awa j-k'wäLj-wj-i-tt* [jo?ojtt].  
 LNK-begin-DEF coffee 3-roast.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM  
 'After kindling a fire and putting a frying plate on the fireplace, the first coffee is roasted.'
- (46) *tähañc'ä bä-mi?ät'k'ät' j-wäga-wj-i-tt* [jowəg'wett].  
 then LOC-mortar 3-stab.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM  
 'Then it is crushed in a mortar.'
- (47) *j-wäga-wj-i-m=ta* [jowəg'wenta] *afära-we j-anäfs-wj-m* [janäf'wim]  
 3-stab.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-CVB=AUG coffee\_husk-DEF 3-winnow.PCL-IPS-CVB  
*c'ifir-we jäm'anät j-awät'a-wj-i-tt* [joəf'ett].  
 coffee\_bean-DEF aside 3-bring\_out.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM  
 'Having crushed it, the coffee beans are brought out separately by winnowing the husk.'
- (48) *tähañc'ä c'ifir-we jäm'anät afära-we jäm'anät*  
 then coffee\_bean-DEF aside coffee\_husk-DEF aside  
*j-k'wäLj-wj-i-tt* [jo?ojtt].  
 3-roast.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM  
 'Then the coffee beans and the coffee husk are roasted separately.'
- (49) *tähañc'ä džäβäna bä-mädžadda j-awäna-wj-i-tt* [jäñnett].  
 then kettle LOC-fireplace 3-put.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM  
 'Then a kettle is put on the fireplace.'
- (50) *džäβäna bä-awännä-wj-i=ge* [böannege] *jä-k'wäLLj-wj-i-we* [jä?əñniwe] *k'awa*  
 kettle LOC-put.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG=TIME LNK-roast.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG-DEF coffee  
*j-wäga-wj-i-tt* [jowəg'wett].  
 3-stab.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM  
 'After the kettle is put (on fire), the coffee that was roasted is crushed.'

- (51) *bä-wägga-wi-i=ge* [b<sup>h</sup>ägg<sup>w</sup>ege] *jä-awänna-wi-i-we* [j<sup>h</sup>ännewe] *ḍäḍäna*  
 LOC-stab.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG=TIME LNK-put.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG-DEF kettle  
*t-i-nsirässir* *k'awa-we* *j-gäfa-wi-i-tt* [jigäf<sup>w</sup>ett].  
 while-3-bubble.PCL.MSG coffee-DEF 3-push.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM  
 'After being crushed, and when the kettle that was put (on fire) is bubbling, the coffee powder is added.'
- (52) *k'awa-we* *ji-wot'a=dar* *sin* *att'äb-wi-m* [att'öwim]  
 coffee-DEF 3-exit.PCL.MSG=UNTIL demitasse wash.SC-IPS-CVB  
*bä-sin ätff'ä* *j-atc'ärrb-wi-i-tt* [jat'c'ärrwitt].  
 LOC-coffee\_tray 3-let\_be\_near.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM  
 'Until the coffee is ready, demitasses are washed and presented on a coffee tray.'
- (53) *j-atc'ärrb-wi-m=tannä* [jat'c'ärriwim tannä] *k'awa-we* *t-i-wot'a=ge*  
 3-let\_be\_near.PCL-IPS-CVB=AUG coffee-DEF while-3-exit.PCL.MSG=time  
*ji-gäda-we* *säb* *j-täwänna-wä-k'e* [jit<sup>h</sup>ännawä?e] *sorär*  
 3-pour.PCL.MSG-DEF person SI:3-sit.PCL.MSG-MIL.3MSG-NSPEC seat  
*fä-m* *k'awa-we* *bä-ŷeffat* *awänna-m=tannä* [öännam tannä]  
 want.SC.3MSG-CVB coffee-DEF LOC-stand put.SC.3MSG-CVB=AUG  
*j-atc'ärrb-u* [jat'c'ärrißu].  
 3-let\_be\_near.PCL.MSG-MVM  
 'When (the demitasses) are put (on the tray) and the coffee is ready, the person who will serve (the coffee) looks for a seat on which he will sit, puts the coffee (kettle) on a stand, and serves it.'
- (54) *tähañc'ä* *j-tk'äw-wi-i-tt* [jit'k'äwitt].  
 then 3-drink.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM  
 'Then one drinks (the coffee).'

## NOTES

- 1 Additional glossing abbreviations in this chapter: A vocalic radical; ADE adessive; AFF affirmative; ASS assertive focus; GAD genitive/linker-accusative-dative; HUM human; IPS impersonal; LNK linker (genitive, relative marker); MIL malefactive-instrumental-locative (applied object); MVM main verb/clause marker; NHUM nonhuman; NSPEC non-specific; OI object index; SI subject index; SIM similitative; VN verbal noun. Note also E.C. Ethiopian calendar.
- 2 The description is based on data gathered during several field stays since 1998, partly supported by the SFB 295 (Mainz University), and the Norhed project *Linguistic Capacity Building*. I am grateful to Abubakr Sherifo and Sitti Gragn for teaching me Muher, and Seid Ahmed for his assistance.
- 3 The Ethiopic script or fidel is an alphasyllabary, in which a basic grapheme (representing *Cä*, whereby *C* stands for a consonant) is modified by diacritic signs to alter the vowel (cf. Meyer 2016a).
- 4 The first linguistic attestation of Gurage is found in grammatical tracts of Arabic scholars from the 13th century CE (Muth 2009, Bulakh and Kogan 2011, 2017).
- 5 The currently adopted script for all Gunnän Gurage languages and Wolane was officially introduced in the journal of the Gurage Zone administration, i.e., at the verso of the cover page in አልፍኝ [Älfñ] 11, 2006 E.C. [= 2013/14].

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

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**FURTHER READING**

- Comparative grammar sketches of Gurage (with references to previous publications) are Hetzron (1977) and Meyer (2011).
- Comprehensive grammars exist for Mesqan (Ousman 2015), Ezha (Endalew 2014; see also Polotsky 1951), Endegagn (Yohannes 2015), Gyeta (Meheretu 2016), Wolane (Meyer 2006) and Zay (Meyer 2005b; see also Leslau 1999), and in-depth morphophonological studies for Kistane (Goldenberg 1968; Bedilu 2010), Chaha (Degif 2000; see also Leslau 1983) and Gumer (Völlmin 2017). Grammatical sketches are available for Muher (Leslau 1981), Inor (Berhanu and Hetzron 2000; Leslau 1983), Silt'e (Gutt 1997) and Mesmes (Ahland 2010).
- Texts samples are included in Hetzron (1977). For book publications in Gurage, see Goldenberg (2009).
- The basic Gurage dictionaries are Leslau (1979) and Gutt and Hussein (1997).