

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

A COMPARISON OF WAJERAT TIGRIGNA VS. STANDARD TIGRIGNA

BY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE
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SYMBOLS

| | |
|------|---|
| f | Feminine |
| IMPF | Imperfective |
| m | Masculine |
| n | Noun |
| ng | Negative |
| obj | Object |
| PERF | Perfective |
| pl | Plural |
| sg | Singular |
| 1sg | First Person Singular |
| 2ms | Second Person Masculine Singular |
| 2fs | Second Person Feminine Singular |
| 3ms | Third Person Masculine Singular |
| 3fs | Third Person Feminine Singular |
| 1pl | First Person Plural |
| 2mp | Second Person Masculine Plural |
| 2fp | Second Person Feminine Plural |
| 3mp | Third Person Masculine Plural |
| 3fp | Third Person Feminine Plural |
| 1ss | First Person Singular Subject |
| 3sms | Third Person Singular Masculine Subject |
| 3sfs | Third Person Singular Feminine Subject |
| 3smo | Third Person Singular Masculine Object |
| 3sfo | Third Person Singular Feminine Object |
| Rel | Relative marker |
| ST | Standard Tigrigna |
| V | Verb |
| WT | Wajerat Tigrigna |

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the comparison of the Wajerat Tigrigna dialect vs. the standard Tigrigna dialect which is used in mass media, as a medium of instruction in schools, etc. It contains five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction; chapter two is a review of the literature; chapter three is part one of the data analysis; chapter four is part two of the data analysis; and the last chapter is a conclusion and recommendation. The study provides phonological, grammatical and other comparisons. It also discusses whether and in what ways Wajerat Tigrigna is nearer to Ge'ez than the Tigrigna dialect that currently serves as standard.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

Languages that lack the prestige of use in the press, in literature, as a medium of instruction in schools or are not recognized as a literary language are often called dialects. Correspondingly, although it can be debated whether any Tigrigna dialect in Ethiopia truly deserves the name 'standard', for the purposes of this study the researcher will take as 'standard' what currently serves as a standard (see sec. 2.2). Thus, the goal of this research is to investigate how the Tigrigna dialect of Wajerat differs from what we hereafter call standard Tigrigna and in what respects it seems more archaic than the standard.

1.1 Background of the study

There is a popular proverb in Tigrigna that says 'Tigrigna was born in Adwa, became sick in Agame, severely sick in Enderta and finally was buried in Raya.' This is just to express metaphorically how the dialects are varied. Moreover in the conference proceedings volume *Mäs'na'ätitat K'ädamay Symposium Tigrigna*, Haile Michael & Gebre Medhin (1994a) discuss briefly some of the dialectal variations of Tigrigna. Tarekegn (2005) states this phenomenon as follows: 'The dialect of Wajerat people differs from those of Tigrigna speakers of Northern and Western part of Tigray region.' Bender et al. (1976:108) also say that 'Tigrigna has several dialects which seem to differ much more among themselves than do the dialects of Amharic.' Sapir (1949:151) confirms this observable fact: 'No language can be spread over a vast territory or even over a considerable area without showing dialectic variation.'

1.2 Language change and the formation of dialects

There is nothing that can resist change, either in the physical universe or in human life. However, language change is not usually perceptible in a single generation. 'Linguistic changes tend to be the result of two equivalent forms coexisting as variants for some time, and one giving way to the other' (Schendl 2001:3). As Holmes (1992:211) suggests, what happens is that speakers and writers make innovations in the language they use, rather than the language changing as an autonomous entity. Hawkins (1984:257) notes that not all speakers alter the sound of a word in a particular language at the same time. The change happens gradually; some speakers may accept it quickly, others later and some may reject it entirely. This kind of uneven distribution of sound difference causes the rise of dialect difference.

Linguistic change takes place at all levels of language: in phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics (Campbell 2004:6-7; Schendl 2001:25). Whenever a change occurs at one level of a language that level also influences another level at the same time. It is through these types of changes that a language diversifies from a single language to different dialects and ultimately to different languages over the course of time.

Linguistic diversification refers to how a single ancestor language (a proto-language) develops dialects which in time through the accumulation of changes become distinct languages (sister languages to one another, daughter languages of the proto-language), and how through continued linguistic change these daughter languages can diversify and split up into daughters of their own (members of a subgroup of the family). (Campbell 2004:211-212)

Interestingly, Hudson (1992:211) explains language variation in three interrelated ways: over time, in physical space, and socially.

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1.3 Language contact

The most frequent type of linguistic borrowing involves loan words, which can enter a language as a result of various political and cultural factors (Schendl 2001). But borrowing goes beyond the limited scope of lexical replacement; it can also involve linguistic elements:

Borrowing, however, is not restricted to just lexical items taken from one language into another; any linguistic material—sounds, phonological rules, grammatical morphemes, syntactic patterns, semantic associations, discourse strategies or whatever—can be borrowed, that is, can be taken over from a foreign language so that it becomes part of the borrowing language (Campbell 2004:64)

Thus Tigrigna was certainly influenced by a Northern Agaw substratum (Hetzron (1972) and Appleyard (2006)). Amharic has also influenced Tigrigna as an adstratum, in that it is the official language of the Ethiopian government (Bender et al. 1976).

1.4 The language and the speech community

The origin of the Tigrigna speech community, like that of Ethio-Semitic in general, is traced back to southwest Asia. Mekonnen (1994:58-59) puts it somewhat differently: 'The Sabaeans, Habashaites and Agazians who came from Southern Arabia during the first millennium B.C. introduced cultural and linguistic influences which created the Semito-Cushitic cultural synthesis and probably accelerated the process of state formation in Northern Ethiopia.' For some scholars there are controversial issues regarding the origin of the Tigrigna-speaking community. Solomon (1994:85-95) opposes the view that the origin of the community is outside Ethiopia, citing Bernal (1988) in his book *Black Athena*. However, most scholars agree that Ethiopia is not the origin of the Ethio-Semitic languages. Lambdin (1978:1) states: 'The Semitic presence in Ethiopia is most plausibly explained as the result of migrations from South Arabia in the form of commercial colonizations

beginning possibly as early as the middle of the first millennium B.C.’ Daniel Mehari (1994:47) shares the same view: ‘A group of south Semites crossed the Red Sea in the early times, settled down in Eritrea and Tigray, mixed with the indigenous people mainly, Cushitic population.’ Tigrigna is one of the modern Ethio-Semitic languages of Ethiopia including Tigre (now in Eritrea), Amharic, Harari, Gurage, Gafat, and Argobba (Moscati et al. 1964). It belongs to the North Ethio-Semitic sub-family.

Tigrigna seems to have first been written down in the 13th century (Keflom et al. 2007), but its major development as a written language began in the 19th century. As Keflom et al. explain, the factors that helped to develop written Tigrigna were:

1. When writers wanted to rewrite the chronicles of the saints, they used to mix Tigrigna with the original material. For instance, Abune Yohannes Debre Tsige’s work was a mixture of Ge’ez and Tigrigna.
2. Religious documents were translated. For example, Abune Samuel Guba zä Eyerusalem (1838) translated *Wängei Yohanes* into Tigrigna, and Debtera Matewous zä Adwa (1864) and produced a gospel translation with the title *Wängelat*.
3. The introduction of the printing press by the Catholic missionaries in Massawa in 1863 and the Swedish missionaries in northern Massawa.

As a result of these factors, Tigrigna written materials increased in the late 19th century; for instance, *Mäs’hafä Təm’harti Krastos* (500 copies) and *Mäs’hafä Fidäl* (1500 copies) were published. The preaching of the clergy, which says that Ge’ez was given to Adam from God, led to the weakening of Tigrigna; the continuing use of Ge’ez as a church and court language reinforced the process (Mekonnen 1994:58-59). In addition,

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Ullendorff (1955:22) says that the main reason that Tigrigna remains as a spoken language only is the dominance of Amharic and Ge'ez.

Starting in the 19th century, missionaries published different religious materials including the Bible and some songs in Tigrigna. For instance, the Catholic mission first published religious books in 1854 at the new printing press established in Keren (now in Eritrea). According to Tesfay Negash (1987) cited by Tesfay Baria Gabir (1994:39), Tigrigna-Italian educational books written by the Catholic mission started to be published in 1912, but these were all direct translations from Italian publications at home with no change in content. As regards literature, there was no further development during the Italian occupation. However, after the British took control of Eritrea in 1948, they opened schools which taught in Tigrigna with materials prepared by Eritreans. On top of that, Tigrigna newspapers began to be published by Eritreans who had been taught by missionaries. These helped the development of Tigrigna literature. Under the British, conditions were better for the development of Tigrigna literature in Eritrea than under the Italians. 28 schools were opened by the British and 58 Eritrean teachers were assigned to them. Conversely, after Eritrea was joined with Ethiopia by federation, the medium of instruction in the schools was changed to Amharic and the development of Tigrigna was retarded. Even so, about 250 religious books, educational books, and others were written in Tigrigna during the federation period. Conditions during the armed struggle of both the Tigray People's Liberation Front and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (17 years in Tigray, 30 years in Eritrea) were again favorable for the renaissance of Tigrigna literature (Solomon 1994:93).

Tigrigna is the national official language of Eritrea and a regional official language in Ethiopia (Tigray region). It has been used as a medium of instruction in primary education both in Tigray and Eritrea since the downfall of the Derg regime. However, Tigrigna is a language with more than one variety that diverges widely from one another, both from one zone to the next and within a single zone. Moreover, Wajerat Tigrigna is quite distinct from the Tigrigna generally spoken within the Wareda where Wajerat itself is found. Wajerat is situated in the southeastern part of Tigray region in the Southern zone, particularly in what is today called hintalo-Wajerat Wareda (Tarekegn 2005). The Wajerat people are heavily dependent on farming. The topography is characterized by rugged terrain intersected by ravines and rivers.



Wajerat teenager in local dress



Wajerat woman in local clothing

1.5 Statement of the problem

Other Tigrigna speakers consider the Wajerat Tigrigna dialect as an odd sort of language. This is because almost every sentence contains many differences as opposed to the standard dialect. But the Wajerat people feel proud of their language. Moreover, they claim that their Tigrigna is the nearest dialect to Ge'ez.

The Wajerat people are unique not only in their own language but also in social, cultural and political practices. They have long been relatively independent and equality is a strong and institutionalized social value. Until the end of Emperor Haile Selassie's regime they had their own form of administration which the whole community respected. Wajerat women also had their own powerful institution, called the *dəḅartä*. The Wajerats held democratic elections every year for every level of administration. No Wajerat person acting on behalf of the community was allowed to accept any present or title, even from the king, without the consent of the community.

Wejerat elders say that a few of the Wajerats originally immigrated from Amhara, Tigray and Agaw. This claim correlates with the names of some places in Wajerat territory like Bet-Amhara, Adi-Qayeh, Ago, etc. The Wajerat people are almost all members of the Orthodox Church and are strong and conservative believers.

There are interesting folk etymologies concerning the name Wajerat. According to Tarekegn (2005) the name Wajerat originated from a combination of the two words *Wajja 'ərat* in which *Wajja* is the name of a place and *'ərat* means dinner in Amharic_ i.e the dinner of people from *Wajja*. Others believe that this name originated from the combination of the two words *Waye 'wow!* and *zarat 'demons'*, yielding *Waye-Zarat* and

thus Wajerat. The present researcher does not accept these views (see chapter three on the etymology of Wajerat).

There exists an old Ge'ez manuscript (*Gädlä Yəm'ata*) which provides early information about Wajerat society. This manuscript, of which the original is thought to have been written by Saint Yared in the 6th century and which is found in Wajerat in the church of *Č'ärk'os Hala*, reads as follows:

...መምህርነ ማር ይምዓታ አምደ ለደብረ ትያጥርን። ንሣእ እምነክ በእንተ
አድንንክን እምፀብአ አጋንንት ወሕማሞሙ ንሣእ ፎዓ ሰንጋ አልህምት
ሰቡሐን ወነዊን አቅርንቲሆሙ ወፎዓ መገላ መዓር ወ ፎን ሙስፈርተ ነገል
እክል ይኩን ለተዝካርክ ንህነኒ ንትአመን በፀሎትክ ንሣእ ዘንተ አምኃ
ወሀብየክ ወይብሎሙ አደቂቅየ ብሩካን ኢይፈቅድ አምንክሙ ለእመ ዘፈቀድ
ክሙ በፈቃደ ርእሰኩሙ ሀቡ ወለእመ ኢፈቀድኩሙ ኢተሃቡ...

Pillar of Mount Tiat'ron, our teacher Master Yəm'ata, because you have saved us from conflict of demons and their diseases, take seventy long-horned fat bulls, seventy 'megela' [about 700 kilo] of honey and seventy 'mesfer' [about 70 quintals] of grain as a gift. Besides, we believe in your prayer. My blessed children, if you are willing, give willingly; if you are not willing, do not give ...

This text, presumably addressed to people living in Wajerat in the 6th century, describes practices which were still common in Wajerat until very recently. Some of the ways the Wajerat people administer themselves, behave with their neighbors and pay their taxes are indicated in this manuscript. Unlike their neighbors the Wajerats used to pay their taxes in kind (honey, bulls and grain) and in the exact amounts specified above, up to the end of the reign of Emperor Haile Sellasie.

Their strong and organized administrative system made the Wajerat united and conservative in culture, and so probably also in language.

This is the social and historical background of the linguistic study which follows. The study focuses on the following questions:

1. What are the special phonological features of Wajerat Tigrigna?
2. What are the morphological features?
3. Are there special syntactic features too?
4. Is Wajerat the dialect nearest to Ge'ez? If so, why?



Wajerat girl

1.6 Methodology

The study was based on a careful selection of localities and informants in Wajerat and the use of linguistic questionnaires, informal interviews, tape recorder and video tape. Although the researcher had already

consulted native speakers who were university students, the informants for the present study were mainly elders who were born in the vicinity and had little or no formal education. The intention was to record speech that is minimally affected by outside pressure or by mass media and other manifestations of contact. Tigrigna, Ge'ez and Amharic dictionaries, textbooks and other documents were used as well. In the analysis of the data I was greatly helped by consultation with two Wajerat speakers at Addis Ababa University, Hagos Abreha of the Linguistics Department (Philology) and Haile Gezae of the Department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature (DELL).

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CHAPTER TWO

2. Review of literature

2.1 Standard and non-standard dialect

Since it is commonplace for a language to be variable, it is also possible to classify this variability depending on specificities like age, sex, and social status of individuals or groups based on geographical, genetic or historical criteria. It is these parameters which create the dialect differences within a single language.

It is important at the outset to consider how linguists view the concept of dialect. Sapir (1949:150) states how dialects are formed: 'Now dialects arise not because of the mere fact of individual variation but because two or more groups of individuals have become sufficiently disconnected to drift apart, or independently, instead of together.' In addition, Chambers and Trudgill (1980:6) say that whenever one moves even a short distance, it is possible to observe greater or lesser differences in the language the people use. It is not only geographically being near or distant that can cause dialect formation, but other states of affairs too. As Schneider (2003:234) states, 'I suppose that New Englishes emerge in characteristic phases that ultimately result in new dialect formation, and that the entire process is driven by identity reconstructions by the parties involved that are to some extent determined by similar parameters of the respective contact situations.' Dialect refers to varieties which are different phonologically, grammatically and lexically from other varieties. In addition, Wardhaugh (1992:37) defines dialect as 'a subordinate variety of language, so that we can say that Texas English and Swiss German are respectively dialects of English and German.'

As far as Tigrigna dialects are concerned, there are two brief early studies of the dialects of Hamasen and Tanbên (Praetorius 1874, Littmann 1908);

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It is important at the outset to consider how linguists view the concept of dialect. Sapir (1949:150) states how dialects are formed: 'Now dialects arise not because of the mere fact of individual variation but because two or more groups of individuals have become sufficiently disconnected to drift apart, or independently, instead of together.' In addition, Chambers and Trudgill (1980:6) say that whenever one moves even a short distance, it is possible to observe greater or lesser differences in the language the people use. It is not only geographically being near or distant that can cause dialect formation, but other states of affairs too. As Schneider (2003:234) states, 'I suppose that New Englishes emerge in characteristic phases that ultimately result in new dialect formation, and that the entire process is driven by identity reconstructions by the parties involved that are to some extent determined by similar parameters of the respective contact situations.' Dialect refers to varieties which are different phonologically, grammatically and lexically from other varieties. In addition, Wardhaugh (1992:37) defines dialect as 'a subordinate variety of language, so that we can say that Texas English and Swiss German are respectively dialects of English and German.'

As far as Tigrigna dialects are concerned, there are two brief early studies of the dialects of Hamasen and Tanbên (Praetorius 1874, Littmann 1908);

neither one is close to Wajerat. Bender et al. (1976) assume that the Tigrigna language has many dialectal varieties. Similarly, Leslau (1941:1) says:

There is no common Tigrigna language; there are many closely related dialect forms. Their differences are phonological, morphological and syntactical as well as lexical, but all those who speak Tigrigna can understand each other.

As far as the researcher's knowledge is concerned, there is no detailed study that states how many Tigrigna varieties exist. Ullendorff (1985:17) writes: 'On the dialectology of Tña I must, unfortunately, remain as impressionistic as I was thirty years ago in my *Semitic Languages of Ethiopia* [p. 27] since little or no serious work on this subject has been carried out in the interval.' Although the present researcher did not see this article until his own research was essentially finished, the May-Č'aw verb as described in Voigt (2006) is very similar to Wajerat in many ways.

Among the Tigrigna dialects, Wajerat Tigrigna seems highly distinctive. Degafi (2009) calls Wajerat Tigrigna *to'u language*. This is because, unlike other dialects of Tigrigna, Wajerats say *to 'u?* meaning, 'what is it?'. Moreover, although Wajerat Tigrigna has a great many words that are identical to other Tigrigna varieties, it is quite different in many ways in its grammatical and phonological system. In his study 'How do we standardize the dialects of Tigrigna?', Daniel Tekle Miriam (1994:267) states in this connection that there is no adequate literature concerning the differences and similarities of dialects of Tigrigna. This is thus a wide-open and virgin field of study. Amanuel (1988:18-20) also says that the Tigrigna used in the eight districts of Tigray region shows visible differences compared to the Tigrigna of the three districts in Eritrea. However, he continues, the Tigrigna used in Wajerat and in Zaemel (=Ofila) has been changed phonetically and morphologically so that it needs special attention. Indeed, my own research has confirmed that the

Tigrigna of Wajerat and of Ofla are very similar. The Wajerat dialect is well-known for its peculiarity in other Tigrigna speakers' view; some people, especially from the extreme north of Tigray and from Eritrea, hardly understand it during their first contact with it. Aba Ya'ək'ob (cited by Asmerom 1994:725-6) divides Tigrigna into three main varieties as follows:

- a. Temben, Keleta Awlaelo, Enderta, part of AkeleGuzay
- b. Raya Azebo, Zaemel, Wajerat, Wagera, Waldeya [in fact, people in Waldeya speak Amharic, not Tigrigna; perhaps he means Alamat'a]
- c. Adwa, Axum, Shire, Seraye, part of AkeleGuzay.

As expected, there are phonological, lexical, morphological, and syntactic differences among the Tigrigna dialects. Daniel lists the following phonological differences between Enderta Tigrigna (Ethiopia), in which Wajerat is found, and Hamassien Tigrigna (Eritrea) in the following table.

| Region | 1 | 2 | 3 | Sound differences |
|-----------|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Hamassien | kullu | kälbi | koχəb | k-χ |
| Enderta | χullu | χälbi | χoχäb | |
| Wajerat | χullu | χalβi | χo χoβ | |
| English | 'all' | 'dog' | 'star' | |
| Hamassien | k'äyyəh | k'ärni | k'orbät | k'-q |
| Enderta | qäyyəh | qärni | qorbät | |
| Wajerat | qayyəh | qarni | qorβät | |
| English | 'red' | 'horn' | 'leather' | |
| Hamassien | has's'ir | has'in | | s'-č' |
| Enderta | hač'č'ir | hač'in | | |
| Wajerat | hač'č'ər | hač'ən | | |
| English | 'short' | 'iron' | | |
| Hamassien | häddiš | harišu | färišu | š-s |
| Enderta | haddis | harisu | färisu | |
| Wajerat | haddəs | harsu | foršu | |
| English | 'new' | 'he ploughed' | 'it was demolished' | |
| Hamassien | mäsəyu | hasiye | hassawi | s-š |
| Enderta | mäšu | hašiye | hašawi | |
| Wajerat | mošu/ mošuyu | haššuwä | haššawi | |
| English | 'became late' | 'I told lies' | 'liar' | |

The Hamassien and Enderta data in the above table are taken from Daniel Tekle Mariam (1994:277), but the Wajerat forms and the glosses have been added in order to see Wajerat's dialectal status within Enderta. In this case we observe that Wajerat *foršu* has š, like the Hamassien (Eritrea) form. However, the non-final *i* vowel which appears in both Enderta (Ethiopia) and Hamassien is changed to ə in Wajerat.

Lexical differences

Ya'ak'ob Gebre Eyesus (1930:6-7, cited by Daniel Tekle Mariam 1994:277) notes that based on the things each particular region has, the speakers may vary in the terms they employ for them. Of course a given expression may not exist if the material or phenomenon does not itself exist.

(NB: Several scholars specify certain points of dialect variation within Tigrigna, but without identifying the relevant dialects. Here and below, in such cases this researcher has often added the dialect name himself, with the notation [!].)

| Eritrea | Enderta [!] | Wajerat | Ge'ez | Gloss |
|-----------|--------------|----------------|------------------------------|-----------|
| s'abbuq | šane | šäggä/č'ällä | sännäyā/t'ällä | 'be pure' |
| s'əbaḥ | naga | nāga | s'əbaḥ/nāgh | 'morning' |
| hizi | χāzi /zāχəti | hāzi/χāzi/hāzi | yə'əze/ke | 'now' |
| rāχābā | 'agnāyā | 'agnāyā | rākābā/'agnāyā ('to humble') | 'obtain' |
| tāzarābā | s'āwāyā | s'āwāyā | s'āwāyā/nāgārā | 'speak' |
| tārāfā | qārāyā | qārāyā /s'ānhā | tārfā/s'ānhā | 'remain' |
| dāk'k'āsā | hārrāsā | hārrāsā | harrāsā/dāqqāsā | 'sleep' |

The data in the 1st and 2nd columns are taken from Daniel Tekle Mariam (1994:277), although the specification of dialect in the second column is sometimes unclear or wrong.

From the above data we can observe that all the dialects are lexically related to Ge'ez, but Eritrean vs. Ethiopian Tigrigna show clear differences in which word they select from Ge'ez (perhaps a reflection of two different dialects of Ge'ez). Note also the relationship of *šane* and *sännäyā*, and *č'ällä* and *t'ällä*. These are cognate words but *s* and *t'* in

Ge'ez have palatalized and become š and č' in these Tigrigna words. *qaräyä* 'remain' is related to Amharic *k'ärrä* 'remain'.

Ya'äk'ob lists some words that have different meanings in different locations. Thus, in Tigray (according to Ya'äk'ob this includes Adwa, Axum and Shire), Enderta, Temben, Agame, Wajerat and Raya, *təkus* means 'hot', which in standard Tigrigna is *rəsun* or *wu'uy*. In Hamassien, Seraye and AkeleGuzay *wu'uy* is the common word for 'hot'; however, in AkeleGuzay it also means 'notorious'. In Tigray, Enderta, Temben, Agame, AkeleGuzay and Seraye *k'uruḥ* means 'wealthy' but in Hamassien it means 'cursed, very poor.' *ruba* in Eritrea means 'river' but in Enderta, Wajerat and Raya the word for 'river' is *gäräβ*, which the Eritreans however use to mean 'tree'. In Ge'ez a river is *wəḥiz*, *fäläg* (Leslau 1987:732). In Wajerat and Raya dialects *mät'ri* (mainly used by young people) means 'anus' but in all other dialects of Tigrigna it is used to mean the female sex organ, which is *ḥəmsi* in both Wajerat and Raya dialects and *ḥəms* in Ge'ez.

Haile Michael & Gebre Medhin (1994a:283-306) mention numerous items that show phonological and lexical dialect variations in Tigrigna as follows:

Grammatical forms

Negative marker

| Standard | Enderta/Raya [!] | Wajerat | Gloss |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 'ay...n | yä...y | 'ay...y | |
| 'ay-mäs'a'ku-n | yä-mäs'a'χu-y | 'ay-mäs'a'χu-y | 'I did not come' |

The authors do not indicate which form represents which dialect, but according to the current researcher, the middle form seems to belong to Enderta and Raya dialects. The researcher has also added the Wajerat

Note that in Enderta the 'to'-form and the relative marker are the same (*b-*), and likewise in Wajerat (*də-*). In Standard Tigrigna, by contrast, the two markers are distinct: *nə-* 'to'-form vs. *zə-* 'relative'.

Another Tigrigna dialect which shows some linguistic similarities with Wajerat is the dialect of Ofla, found in the southern zone of Tigray region. In Ofla Woreda the main language currently in use is Tigrigna, although the western villages that border on Wag speak Agaw and Amharic as well. Although the Tigrigna used in Ofla is not so different from that of central Tigray, yet there is dialectal variation (YekunoAmlak 2007:371). Data from Ofla and Wajerat are compared in the following table. Note in particular the added *y* in the MayMa'edo (Ofla) verb forms cited below.

| Ofla | Wajerat | Others | Gloss |
|------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| dab | da | nab | 'to' |
| 'əssu 'əssa | 'ussu/'əssa | nəssu/ nəssa | 'he/she' |
| 'ahəna | 'ahəna | nəhna | 'we' |
| də- | də- | zə- | 'who' |
| həz | xəzi/həzi/ həzi | həzi, həjji, həyyi | 'now' |
| də'u, də'a, də'atän | dussu, dəssa, dəssatän | nə'ə'u, lə'u, nə'u, nə'atän | 'to him, to her, to them (fpl)' |
| dəyyä, kəyyä | dəyyä, kəyyä | kə-yyäw, də-yyäw | 'there' |
| t'abta | t'ayta | t'ayta | 'injera' |
| nəxa, nəyyä | βäχa βä'ä | 'i χa, 'əyyä | 'you are, I am' |

| Ofla | Wajerat | MayMa'edo (village in Ofla) | Others | Gloss |
|---------|---------------|--------------------------------|---------|------------------|
| bälə'ä | bäl'ä | bäyələ'ä | bäli'ä | 'I ate' |
| s'ägəbä | s'ägβä | s'äyägəbä | s'ägibä | 'I am satisfied' |
| mäs'ə'ä | mäs'ə'ä | mäyəs'ə'ä | mäs'i'ä | 'I came' |
| däəχmä | däχmä/doχmuni | däyəχəmä | däχimä | 'I am tired' |

| Ofla | Wajerat | Others | Gloss |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| 'əš | 'uš | suq | 'quiet' |
| wäzäga | säə' | wägə'i, wärä | 'talk' |
| mamo | mammo | məlač | 'razor' |
| 'əyyal | gäβa'i/bätäsäβ | 'əyyal, sədra | 'family' |
| däläbä | däyäβä | däyäβä | 'he ascended' |
| hawšälä | dämbärä | häwäsä | 'he mixed' |
| käray | käräy/ buzuh | buzuh | 'much or many' |
| 'ənəga-ma | 'əma-χonä-ma | 'ənətä-χonä-ma | 'if it happened' |
| χarfo | χarfo/χordo | gwagwid | 'container of milk' |
| yə'u, yə'a | βu'u, βə'a | 'əyyu, 'əyy'a | 'he is, she is' |
| ya- | 'əla-/'əlla-/la- | 'əna- | 'progressive marker' |
| təgacacərəna | təmagutna | täχati'əna | 'we argued' |
| ka- | ka- | kəša'ə, kəsa'ə | 'until' |
| kambätä | xambätä, wädä'ä, fäs'amä | zazämä, wädä'ä, fäs'amä | 'finished' |
| ašəkətu | ašokutu | fäs'imu | 'completely' |
| yä! (m.) wo! (f.) | yä! (m.) wo! (f.) | 'abəyät! 'yes sir/madam!' | 'yes' |

| Ofla | Wajerat | Others | Gloss |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| 'əš | 'uš | suq | 'quiet' |
| wäzäga | säə' | wägə'i, wärä | 'talk' |
| mamo | mammo | məlač | 'razor' |
| 'əyyal | gäβa'i/bätäsäβ | 'əyyal, sədra | 'family' |
| däläbä | däyäβä | däyäβä | 'he ascended' |
| hawšälä | dämbärä | häwäsä | 'he mixed' |
| käray | käräy/ buzuh | buzuh | 'much or many' |
| 'ənəga-ma | 'əma-χonä-ma | 'ənətä-χonä-ma | 'if it happened' |
| χarfo | χarfo/χordo | gwagwid | 'container of milk' |
| yə'u, yə'a | βu'u, βə'a | 'əyyu, 'əyy'a | 'he is, she is' |
| ya- | 'əla-/ 'əlla-/la- | 'əna- | 'progressive marker' |
| təgacacərəna | təmagutna | täχati'əna | 'we argued' |
| ka- | ka- | kəša'ə, kəsa'ə | 'until' |
| kambätä | xambätä, wädä'ä, fäs'ämä | zazämä, wädä'ä, fäs'ämä | 'finished' |
| ašäkətu | ašokutu | fäs'imu | 'completely' |
| yä! (m.) wo! (f.) | yä! (m.) wo! (f.) | 'abəyät! 'yes sir/madam!' | 'yes' |

Ghelawdewos (1994:702-703), in discussing Tigrigna dialect geography, groups the dialects into isoglosses as follows:

If we discuss Tigrinya in the context of Tigray only, Agame, Kilt-Awlaelo and the Debre-Damo area (which also could be called as the Tihlo culture) are one isogloss; Adwa, Axum, Shire as another isogloss and Enderta with parts of Tembien as yet another isogloss. But if we include the Tigrinya speaking provinces of Eritrea, the first isogloss mentioned above will include the Shumezana and Tsorena areas of Eritrea; the second will encompass up to the Adi-Quala area of Seraye.

Although it is not mentioned in this quote, the extreme south of Tigray including Wajerat, Raya and Ofla could be included in a third, distinct isogloss.

2.2 Standard Tigrigna

Standard language is defined as

generally one which is written, and which has undergone some degree of regularization or codification (for example, in a grammar and a dictionary); it is recognized as a prestigious variety code by a community, and it is used for H [High] functions alongside a diversity of L [Low] varieties. (Holmes 1992:83)

Regarding Tigrigna, Haile Michael & Gebre Medhin (1994b) declare that in order to make Tigrigna the language of communication, literature, science and technology, there must be an explicit developmental scheme. Berhane Achame (1994:625) states that 'Tigrigna is not formal at this time'; by way of explanation he says that formal language is the language that should be used in the mass media. But in fact the Tigrigna that is used by radio and television announcers in Ethiopia is not 'formal': there is no standardized form as regards reading accent, word selection, etc.

Berhane suggests that the ability to read and write formal Tigrigna should be a prerequisite for this type of job. GebreAb et al. (2007:392) state that the Tigrigna currently in use is not standard because official language planners have not been exerting sufficient pressure on teachers and schools, mass media, etc. regarding "proper" vocabulary, grammar and usage. Ghelawdewos (1994:705-707) takes a different perspective:

In some instances, standardization—at least at the initial stage—may alienate the bulk of the masses and could be understood only by a sector of society which is relatively literate and/or highly educated.... [Besides] in standardizing Tigrigna and enriching it, we need not always borrow foreign terms. We might as well adopt words used only in some dialect geography....When Tigrigna is highly standardized one can hardly tell to which dialect geography "the language" belongs.

Ataxelti (2007:225-344) finds, on the basis of interviews, that the attitude of Ethiopian Tigrigna speakers toward their language is becoming less positive. Readers prefer reading Amharic books, Amharic newspapers and the like to reading Tigrigna. One of the factors that make them have this attitude (according to the responses of the speakers) is that they are laughed at when they speak their own non-standard dialects. In addition, the names of private commercial institutions are almost entirely Amharic names. On the role of mass media in language standardization in the case of the Ofla dialect, YekunoAmlak (2007:265-283) states that since there is no superior and inferior language, people should not appreciate one dialect and depreciate another. It is not normal to feel dishonored when using one's own dialect. In Ofla, if somebody wants to interview a student the respondent wants to talk like what is written in his school books and the village leader responds like his political leader talks; the changes (to

standardize the language) that are happening in Ofla are not healthy. Moreover, Texaste (1994:529-530) makes it clear that if there is an adversarial relationship between two dialects, both the suppressor and the suppressed dialects will suffer. Additionally, care should be taken to prevent words of one dialect from being eliminated by another dialect. Rezene (2007:90) suggests using Ge'ez as a source for the development of standard Tigrigna instead of forcing all speakers to be dominated and swallowed up by a single dialect.

Amanuel (1988) remarks on the language of the Tigrigna educational program broadcast from Mekele, which is similar to the Asmara variety and hence can be difficult for Tigray Tigrigna speakers, especially of the southern zone.

Concerning the differences between Asmara and Tigray Tigrigna, Amanuel gives examples; in the following chart, the spelling is reproduced exactly as given in Amanuel, followed in brackets by the present researcher's own transcription corrections where necessary.

Phonology

| Asmara | Tigray | Gloss |
|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| a) kemzi [kämzi] | hemzi [hämzi] | 'like this' |
| b) qelil [qälil] | qhelil [qalil] | 'easy, light' |
| c) senbet [sänbät] | senvet [säñbät] | 'Sunday' |

Morphology

| | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| a) nab'u | lab'u | 'to there' |
| b) zibele [zibälä] | lebele [ləbälä] | 'who said' |
| c) aykonen [ay-kwänän] | yekhoney [yächwänäy] | 'it is not' |
| d) aykewunen [ay-käwənən] | ayyikhewenen [ayy-χäwnən] | 'it won't be' |
| e) etewu [’ätäwu] | etewuta [’ätäwuta] | 'get in (pl.)' |
| f) ezi [’əzi] | ezui [’əzui] | 'this' |

Syntax

| | | |
|------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| məbälə-ku näyerä | kə-bälə' näyrä | 'I would have eaten' |
| manyu negiroka | menma negireka | 'who told you' |

Lexicon

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|------------|
| deqese [dəqäsä] | harese [haräsä] | 'he slept' |
| terefe [täräfä] | qereye [qäräyä] | 'remained' |
| rexebe [räxäbä] | agneye [agnäyä] | 'he found' |
| tezarebe [täzaräbä] | tenagere [tänergärä] | 'he spoke' |
| allo | eniho [əniho] | 'there is' |

The Tigray forms given here are dialect forms, but the variety which currently functions as a standard in Tigray exactly resembles the Asmara variety mentioned in the above data.

This rise to prominence of the Asmara variety happened especially at the time when Eritrea seceded from Ethiopia; Tigrigna-speaking Ethiopians were pressured to use the Asmara variety. Kane (1992:150), in evaluating the Tigrigna used in literature, writes that 'literary works in Tigrigna have been exclusively Eritrean.' He explains (155) that this was the result of a deliberate decision taken by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) to adhere to the written standard of Tigrigna already in use in Eritrea.

And yet, as Haugen (cited in Hudson 1980:32-33) puts it, a standard language has to pass through a process of selection, codification, elaboration and (most important) acceptance. It cannot simply be imposed. Whatever selection mechanism may be used, the typical standard must be accepted by the speech community if it is truly to fulfill a symbolic and unifying role for the state.

As current studies show, Tigrigna language standardization is not in a good position. The studies by Ataxelti (2007) and YekunoAmlak (2007) indicate that some Tigrigna speakers who have a different dialect than the standard typically feel humiliated when using their own variety, and some of them even prefer to use a different language rather than being laughed at.

2.3 Grammar of Tigrigna

Studies on Tigrigna grammar date back at least to the second half of the 19th century. Among these were the Tigrigna grammar published by the German Semitist Franz Praetorius in 1871, the pedagogical Tigrigna grammar by Francesco da Offeio in 1915 and another pedagogical grammar by Mauro da Leonessa in 1928. The best available grammar of Tigrigna is Leslau (1941), written almost 70 years ago. Voigt (1977) is a detailed study of the verbal system of Standard Tigrigna.

Although Tigrigna has the status of an official language of Ethiopia, there is a widespread feeling that it lacks a ‘polished’ grammar (Kassa & Amanuel 2003:4-8). As Adi (1989:1) puts it, ‘We have grammar but few use it.’ According to Sebhatu (1989:11-24) Tigrigna is deteriorating in its formal use and is losing the color of pure Tigrigna, in part due to the influence of Amharic. Among the factors which allegedly “spoil” Tigrigna are the following two representative points:

1. The very frequent and (as he says) incorrect use of *nay* as the result of Amharic influence.

| | | |
|-----------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Incorrect | nay sorya | nay dægaf mǎrgās’i |
| Correct | nə dægaf | mǎrgās’i sorya |
| Gloss | ‘for the support of Sorya’s stand’ | |

2. Frequent vowel change of ə>i (not Amharic influence)

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| kəbǎrti > kibǎrti | ‘respected (fsg)’ |
| zə-gǎzǎfǎ > zi-gǎzǎfǎ | ‘one who is big’ |

CHAPTER THREE

3. Data analysis

3.1 Tigrigna phonemes

Tigrigna according to Girmay (1983) has 29 consonant and 7 vowel sounds. Mohammed (1983) reports 21 consonant and 5 vowel phonemes for Raya Azebo Tigrigna; Raya Azebo borders Wajerat and shares many cultural and linguistic elements, so the phoneme systems might be expected to be similar. But Wajerat Tigrigna according to the present researcher has 24 consonant and 5 (marginally 6) vowel sounds; this excludes consonant sounds which do not exist indigenously.

Consonant chart

| | Bilabial | Labio dental | Dental | Palatal | Velar | Uvular | Pharyngeal | Laryngeal |
|-------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|---------|--------------|--------|------------|-----------|
| Stops | VI Vd Ej b | | t d t' | | k g k' | | | ' |
| Fric | VI Vd Ej | f | s z s' | š | (χ) | q | ħ , | h |
| Affric | VI Vd Ej | | | j č' | | | | |
| Nasals | m | | n | | | | | |
| Lateral | | | l | | | | | |
| Flap | | | r | | | | | |
| Semi vowels | w | | | y | | | | |

The symbol *q* is used here to represent the uvular fricative/approximant of Tigrigna, not an ejective velar; some varieties of Tigrigna use the stop

k', others use the fricative/approximant q. I have also included the sound χ in the chart, although it is clearly an allophone of k. The sounds *p*, *p'*, *č*, and *ñ* will not be considered as consonant phonemes in Wajerat Tigrigna since they are used only in loan words and/or ideophones.

Vowel chart

| | front | central | back |
|------|-------|---------|------|
| high | i(?) | ə | u |
| mid | | ä | o |
| low | | a | |

High front vowel sounds (*i* and *e*) do not exist in Wajerat Tigrigna in non-final position, but become the central vowels *ə* and *ä* respectively. The vowel *e* does not occur at all. The vowel *i* does occur in final position (probably as a helping vowel), as in all other dialects of Tigrigna. Look at the following examples:

| ST | WT | gloss |
|------------------------|---------|----------------------|
| e>ä | | |
| mes | mäs | 'beer made of honey' |
| s'äwi'e | s'äwi'ä | 'I called' |
| i>ə | | |
| hisab | həsəβ | 'maths' |
| mizan | məzan | 'balance' |
| But in final position: | | |
| həlmi | həlmi | 'dream' |
| lahmi | lahmi | 'cow' |

3.2 Wajerat Tigrigna dialect and other languages

Considering other languages is not the focus of this study. But the researcher does want to point out features that Wajerat Tigrigna shares with other languages. Such sharing results from Tigrigna's genetic relationship with Semitic and from contact with Cushitic languages. Since this has an impact on the current Wajerat dialect, a few examples are provided from each of the relevant languages. These are features which are common to Wajerat and the specified language.

Wajerat and Ge'ez (see 3.3.3.)

Wajerat and Tigre

| Wajerat | Tigre | Gloss |
|-------------|-------|-------|
| 'ana | 'ana | 'I' |
| 'aḥəna/həna | ḥəna | 'we' |

The individual forms *'ana* and *'aḥəna/həna* occur separately in other Ethiopian languages, but the cooccurrence of these two first person pronouns (singular and plural) is apparently found in Wajerat and Tigre only.

Wajerat and Cushitic

| Wajerat | Gloss | Agaw | Gloss |
|---------|----------------------|---------|------------|
| 'agāna | 'outside' | 'akän | 'place' |
| šəmbra | 'chickpea' | šəmbri | 'chickpea' |
| gär | 'a place for cattle' | gär | 'calf' |
| gwumč'a | 'cheek' | k'wəmši | 'cheek' |

| Wajerat | Gloss | Afar | Gloss |
|---------|---------------------------|---------|---------------------------|
| χordo | 'milking jug' | hordo | 'milking jug' |
| hurra | 'kind of singing/dancing' | hurra | 'kind of singing/dancing' |
| 'aläyta | 'stone' | 'aläyta | 'stone' |

| Wajerat | Gloss | Oromo | Gloss |
|---------|-------------------------|---------|-------------------------|
| 'afaro | 'hair decoration' | 'afaro | 'hair decoration' |
| magal | 'black' | magal | 'black' |
| muč'a | 'child' | muč'a | 'child' |
| sanga | 'castrated male animal' | sanga | 'castrated male animal' |
| sarβa | 'calf (muscle)' | sarba | 'calf (muscle)' |
| dəβartä | 'women's institution' | duβärti | 'women' |

(For Agaw, my information is from Appleyard 2006; for Afar and Oromo, the information is from oral sources.)

3.3 Wajerat Tigrigna dialect, standard Tigrigna and Ge'ez

3.3.1 The etymology of Wajerat

As mentioned in chapter one, two etymological suggestions have been made for the term 'Wajerat' as a combination of two words: 1. *Wajja 'arat* and 2. *Way-Zarat*. The first, which posits that the name Wajerat comes from *Wajja 'arat* 'dinner of people from *Wajja*', does not seem plausible:

1. The place in question does not seem to have been settled for very long. According to oral sources, the age of *Wajja* village does not exceed fifty-five years. As a result, it can hardly be the source for the name Wajerat.
2. Even so, how could a single short-lived occasion of a dinner plausibly become the source for the name of such a large area?

The second hypothetical assumption is equally groundless as a source for the name Wajerat. The elders associate it with the preaching and prayers of Abune Yəm'ata (who converted the Wajerat people in the 6th century). According to the elders, when the Abune was casting out the demons through prayer, the attendants at the ceremony said *Way zarat!* 'Wow demons!' Since then the place has been named Wajerat.

This hypothesis is based on an oral tradition concerning what we read in a Ge'ez manuscript (*Gädlä yäm'ata*), as follows:

...አውፅኦሙ ወሰደደሙ ኣጋንንት ውስተ ሀገረ ራያ ወዘበሉ ወደጎኑ
ሰብኣ ወጀራት እምፀብኣ ኣጋንንት በጎይለ መስቀሉ ለኣቡነ ይምዓታ።

Abune Yäm'ata cast out the demons and sent them to the places called Raya and Zabul with the power of his cross, and the people of Wajerat became healed and free from conflicts of demons.

This is obviously a folk etymology. What make it even more implausible are the names Raya and Zabul, which are in the Oromo language. These place names therefore presumably originated after the Oromo migration in the 16th century.

Rather, the name Wajerat, in so far as this researcher is concerned, probably comes from the people's history of battle in defending themselves and the country. The location of their settlements is highly appropriate for military strategy. Almost all Wajerat villages are found at the top of hills and the like. As we will see, this is very likely relevant to the etymology of the word.

If we look at Ge'ez, we find a word which is very similar to Wajerat, namely *wägärä* and its derived forms. Leslau (1987:608) explains the word *wägärä* as follows:

Wagara (*yəwgar*, *yəgar*), *waggara* ወገረ 'throw, stone, cast, shoot, fire, (T) hit, strike'; *wagara* 'ət'āna 'fumigate, perfume with incense' (lit. 'throw incense'); *wagara madfə'a* 'discharge a cannon'; *tawagara*, *tawaggara* 'be stoned'; *tawāgara* 'throw stones at one another'; *wägäri*, act. part. of *wagara*; *wəgur*, (*Gr*) *wəgwr*, pass. part. of *wagara*; *wagr* (pl. 'awgar, 'awgarāt) 'heap, mound, hill, mountain,

high place (of worship), altar'; *wəgrat* 'throwing, stoning, casting';
məwgār. mugār 'stone's throw, throw'; *mogar* 'fumigations';
 ('*ət'āna mogar*, type of Geez poem consisting of nine couplets);
mogart 'sling, catapult... means of having something
 ascend'

Based on this, we can venture two guesses as to the etymology: from the perspective of the culture (less likely) or the political and military history of the Wajerat people.

1. The culture: Wajerat women give special attention to their beauty. Among the means which they use for beautification is smoking themselves in a specially prepared apparatus called *mə't'an*. In the *mə't'an*, aromatic wet wood is set on fire and the woman sits there with butter on the top of her head. This is just like taking a steam bath. This process, like the apparatus, is called *mə't'an*. This is done twice a day. No woman should miss these chances; otherwise she will not be considered as a woman or she will be thought to have some defect. Wajerat girls never get married (except to a deacon) without undergoing such smoke fumigation for at least six months. Thus, if we recall Leslau's explanation above – *wagara 'ət'āna* 'fumigate, perfume with incense' (lit. 'throw incense') – might not this be a possible source for the name Wajerat?

2. The political and military history. This is the opinion which the present researcher prefers as the reason behind the naming of Wajerat. As oral and written sources relate, the Wajerat people have been constantly engaged in war and conflicts against enemies both within and outside of the country. In these conflicts, they made good strategic use of their hilly and mountainous land (see Leslau's definition of *wagr*, plural '*awgər, 'awgərāt* 'hill'). Equally well, their mode of fighting surely involved the launching of stones, bullets, etc. (see Leslau's definition of *wagara*). Therefore, the researcher is

convinced that Wajerat was named based on the military history of the people.

Why then did the *g* of *wägärä* change to *j*? Very plausibly, this was done for the sake of euphemistic avoidance. In Tigrigna, *wägärät* closely resembles the word *wägärä* 'he made love to' or *wəgərät* 'process of making love'. Articulating this word is prohibited, especially by women. So as to avoid such a tabooed word, the women may have euphemistically changed *wəgərät* into *wäjərat*. Indeed, there are two similar cases of euphemism among Wajerat women:

1. There is a place called *Wäggarä*, which can mean 'sexy male' in Tigrigna. Men call it *Wäggarä*, as is, but women change the *r* into *y* and call it *wəgayä*.
2. There is also another place. Men call it *šollah kārən* 'penis-like hill' but women call it *mot'əmwat' kārən* 'stick-out hill'.

These examples show that 'vulgar-sounding' words can indeed be changed in Wajerat. Here, the euphemistic change happened through palatalization (*g > j*).

3.3.2 Local place-names

There are numerous Ge'ez place-names in Wajerat, second numerically only to Tigrigna place-names. The Ge'ez names are related semantically to the military history of the Wajerats but the Tigrigna names are semantically quite different. A few examples are given below:

| Ge'ez name | Gloss | Tigrigna name | Gloss |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 1. <i>sänə'alä</i> | 'peace' | 'Adi-qayəh | 'home of the red' |
| 2. <i>s'ahəfälam</i> | 'one who registers cows' | <i>säbäβära</i> | 'people from Borra' |
| 3. <i>s'ähafti</i> | 'writers' | 'adi-bati | 'home of Bati' |
| 4. <i>mamə'ät</i> | 'be terrified' | 'adi-mosno | 'home of irrigation' |
| 5. <i>wäggarä</i> | 'throw, hit, strike' | | |

Discussion of the Ge'ez names:

1. Leslau (1987:504-5) presents the definitions: *sən'*, *sən'ā* 'peace, unanimity, agreement, harmony; man of peace, peaceable, like-minded';...*tasən'ala* 'ask permission to leave' [root *san'ala*].
Sänə'alä is a large village in the eastern part of Wajerat which is at the border of the volatile Afar region. Plausibly, this would have been a place where the Afar and Wajerat people would have come together to make peace after a period of fighting, as was (and is) the custom. Hence, *Sänə'alä* ሰንአለ would be an appropriate name for this place. Note that there is an apparent phonological problem: the Ge'ez word has *alif*, whereas the place name has pharyngeal *ayin*, which are clearly distinct sounds in Tigrigna. However, there are cases in Tigrigna where *alif* can be pronounced *ayin*, e.g. *nə'ay~nə'ay* 'to me'.
2. According to the Wajerat elders, *s'ahəfālam* comes from a compound word *s'ähəfe-lahəm*, literally *s'ähəfe* 'writer' + *lahəm* 'cow'. They say that the place is believed to have been a location where government tax collectors used to collect taxes in kind (cattle). The order of elements in this compound (Head-Dependent) shows that the language is neither Tigrigna nor Amharic but Ge'ez. This points to a continuing familiarity with Ge'ez.
3. *S'ähəfti* is a place which many years back used to be a command post for the government authorities. According to my informants, the authorities are generally called *s'ähəfti* 'writers'.
4. In the researcher's opinion the village *Mamə'ät* reflects the Ge'ez *mämə'ä* 'be terrified' (Leslau 1989). Presumably this would refer to the terror felt by the enemies of the Wajerat.
5. *Wäggärä* (*wägayä* by women) is found in eastern Wajerat bordering the Afar region. According to the Wajerat elders, it was a battlefield between Wajerat and Afar. (See also sec.3.3.1.)

3.3.3 Grammatical elements

It is instructive to compare the forms of a number of grammatical elements in standard Tigrigna, Ge'ez, and Wajerat:

| | Standard Tigrigna | | Ge'ez | | Wajerat Tigrigna | |
|---|---------------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 'əyyu 3msg | 'is' | wə'ətu 3msg | 'he' | βo'u 3msg | 'is' |
| | 'əyyä 3fsg | 'is' | yə'əti 3fsg | 'she' | βə'a 3fsg | 'is' |
| | 'əyom 3mp | 'are' | wə'ətomu 3mp | 'they' | βə'atom 3mp | 'are' |
| | 'əyyän 3fp | 'are' | wə'əton 3fp | 'they' | βə'atän 3fp | 'are' |
| 2 | män interrogative pronoun | 'who' | männu | 'who' | monnu | 'who' |
| 3 | χə'a, dəmma adverb | 'again' | lällä | 'every' | lälä | 'again' |
| 4 | 'əwwä interjection | 'yes' | gwa | 'yes' | 'əwwa | 'yes' |
| 5 | wäyyo conjunction | 'but' | 'alla | 'but' | 'alla | 'but' |
| 6 | 'ənn/i | 'assoc.pl' | 'əllä | 'those of' | 'əlli- | 'assoc.pl' |
| 7 | ħansab | 'once' | mə'ər | 'once' | mə'əri | 'this much' |

This comparison shows that in many respects, Wajerat is closer to Ge'ez than to standard Tigrigna. Let us discuss these similarities briefly.

When we examine the 3rd-person copula forms of ST and WT, as compared to the 3rd-person independent pronouns of Ge'ez, it is evident that Ge'ez and Wajerat exhibit almost identical elements. The functional change from pronoun (Ge'ez) to copula (WT) is a very

common grammaticalization path. By contrast, Standard Tigrigna has a very different form from both Ge'ez and Wajerat; in ST the pronoun base is *nəss-* and the copula base is *'əy-*. With regard to number 2, Ge'ez *ä>o* in Wajerat. Number 3, geminated in Ge'ez > degeminated in Wajerat. 4, Standard Tigrigna and Ge'ez are each more similar to Wajerat dialect than to each other, but in different ways. Concerning 5, 6 and 7 Ge'ez and Wajerat are almost identical while standard Tigrigna is quite different. In number 6, the associative-plural element shows an *-l-* in both WT and Ge'ez *'əllä* "those of", as opposed to ST with *n*. In 5, the conjunction *'alla* 'but' is identical in Wajerat and Ge'ez; but it becomes *wälla* in the northwestern part of Wajerat, occurs as *wäyya* in the neighboring villages just outside Wajerat, and lastly it is *wäyyo* in standard Tigrigna. This isogloss shows us *'alla* in most parts of Wajerat and in Ge'ez, and *wälla > wäyya > wäyyo* as we proceed northward toward standard Tigrigna. This phonological process involves first labialization then palatalization, as follows:

1. *'a>wa*
2. *ll>yy*
3. finally, *a>o*.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Analysis of grammatical elements

The dialectal features of Wajerat Tigrigna are sorted out and analyzed below; including some discussion of how such differences came into being. The data are presented in the order Standard Tigrigna (ST) followed by Wajerat Tigrigna (WT), but this order (ST>WT or WT>ST) means nothing. If there is any finding that implies a change ST>WT or vice versa, it will clearly be stated which one changes into which.

4.1 Object

The following sentences illustrate the marking of direct and indirect objects in ST and WT.

4.1.1 Direct object (accusative)

ST *nə-säβäyt-u* *ħagiz-u*

WT *də-soβoyt-u* *ħaguz-u*

to wife his helped he

'He helped to/ for his wife.'

nə > də 'to, for'

4.1.2 Indirect object (dative)

ST *Mulu kara nə-Kasa hiβa-ta*

WT *Mulu kăra də-Kasa həβa-ta*

Mulu knife to Kasa she.gave her

'Mulu gave Kasa a knife'

Discussion

Kasa is the indirect object, so here *nə/də* 'to' is dative marker. The prepositions *nə/də* 'to, for' are used to indicate either the direct or the indirect object when prefixed to the noun. Leslau, in his discussion of ST (1941:42), notes that *nə-* is used with definite direct objects but not indefinite; the behavior appears to be similar for WT *də-*. Indirect objects in ST take *nə-* regardless of definiteness; again, WT appears to show similar behavior.

4.2 Possession

ST *nay* Lāmlām mäs'ħaf tā-qādid-u

WT *na* Lāmlām mäs'ħaf tə-qadd-u
of Lāmlām book was.torn

'Lemlems' book was torn.'

nay > *na* 'my'

y > Ø

Possessive *nay* and *na* indicate possession in ST and WT respectively. However, final *y* is deleted in WT. This deletion of post-vocalic syllable-final *y* occurs in other morphemes and contexts in WT, though not universally. For example:

| | | | |
|---|--|------------|--------------------|
| ST | | WT | |
| mäs'əħaf-ay | | mäs'əħaf-ä | 'my book' |
| χoyn-u | | χon-u | 'he was/he became' |
| k/ χäyda | | χäda | 'she went' |
| But not in the negative prefix <i>ay-</i> : | | | |
| ay- käyyəd-ən | | ay- χädəy | 'I will not go' |

4.3 Pronouns

4.3.1 Personal pronouns

| Type | Person | ST | | WT | |
|--------|--------|------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | | Subject | Object | Subject | Object |
| sing | 1 | anä | nə'ay | ana | də-'ana |
| pl | 1 | nəhəna | nə'ana | 'ahəna | də-(a)həna |
| sing | 2m | nəssəχa | nə'aya | 'əssəχa | də-ssəχa |
| | 2f | nəssəχi | nə'axi | 'əssəχi | də-ssəχi |
| pl | 2m | nəssəχum, nəssatkum | nə'axum | 'əssatχum | də-ssatχum |
| | 2f | nəssəχən, nəssatkən | nə'axən | 'əssatχən | də-ssatχən |
| polite | 2m | nəssom | nə'ə'om | 'əssuχum | də-ssuχum |
| | 2f | nəssän | nə'a'än | 'əssəχən | də-ssəχən |
| sing | 3m | nəssu | nə'ə'u | 'ussu | d-ussu |
| | 3f | nə'ssa | nə'a'a | 'əssa | də-əssa |
| pl | 3m | nəssatom | nə'ə'atom | 'əssatom | də-ssatom |
| | 3f | nəssatän | nə'a'tän | 'əssatän | də-ssatän |
| polite | 3m | nəssom | nə'ə'om | 'əssom | də-ssom |
| | 3f | nəssän | nə'a'än | 'əssän | də-ssän |

According to Leslau's analysis of the independent pronouns in ST, the subject and object forms are built on different bases and are not structurally parallel. The subject pronouns in the 1st person are *anä*, *nəħəna*, and are not further analyzable. The subject pronouns in the 2nd and 3rd person are built on a base *nəss-* which Leslau (1941:44) derives from *näfs-* (grammaticalization). The object pronouns, by contrast, are all built on the different base *nə'a-* (1941:43), which is similar to the dative preposition *nə-*. The picture in WT is very different, and much simpler. Here the object pronouns are all *derived* from the subject pronouns, by prefixing *də-* 'to' (the WT equivalent of ST *nə-*). This is the same process which in WT derives the (definite) object form of nouns from the subject form:

| | subject | object | gloss |
|---------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| noun | mäs'ħaf | də-mäs'ħaf | 'book' |
| pronoun | 'ussu | d-ussu | 'he/him' |

In addition, in WT the 2ms and 2fs have special polite alternatives *'əssuxum / 'əssəχən* that are not found in ST (which uses the same form for 2nd person as for 3rd person). Regarding the polite form of WT, unlike ST, its use is based mainly on age and the personal relationship individuals have, not on social, economic or political status; equality (*qanč'i*) is an important principle in Wajerat, and the use of the polite pronouns reflects this.

The use of the polite-form pronouns in WT is particularly interesting. Even among children, children who are friends will address each other with the polite form, as is also the case with older friends. Adults will address children with the 2sg, and children who are not friends will use the 2sg. But if someone uses the 2sg in addressing an adult, it is usually

a mark of disrespect. Unlike ST, 3rd-person pronouns are never used in WT as a polite 2nd-person equivalent.

Like ST, WT also has special 2nd-person vocative forms of the personal pronouns ('You!'): 2ms 'ata, 2fs 'ati, 2mpl 'atum, 2fpl 'atən. These are almost identical to the ST forms except for lack of gemination: (ST) 2ms 'anta or 'atta, etc.

4.3.2 Possessive pronouns

The possessive pronouns in ST and WT follow, with the Enderta forms added for contrast. These forms are used both as pronouns and adjectives, in all dialects.

| | ST | Enderta | WT | Gloss |
|---------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Sg | | | | |
| 1st | natäy | nayä | natä | 'my/mine' |
| 2ms | natça | nayça | natça | 'your(s)' |
| 2fs | natçi | nayçi | natçi | 'your(s)' |
| 2ms Pol | natom | nayom | natçum | 'your(s)' |
| 2fs Pol | natän | nayän | natçən | 'your(s)' |
| 3fs | nata | naya | nata | 'her(s)' |
| 3ms | natu | nayu | natu | 'his' |
| Pl | | | | |
| 1pl | natna | nayna | natna | 'our(s)' |
| 2mpl | natkum/natatəkum | nayçum/ nayçatkum | natçum/natatçum | 'your(s)' |
| 2fpl | natkən/natatəkən | nayçnə/ nayçatkən | natçən/natatçən | 'your(s)' |
| 3mp | natatom | nayatom | natatom | 'their(s)' |
| 3fp | natatän | nayatän | natatän | 'their(s)' |

Here we can observe that in ST and WT all the possessive pronouns are identical except in the 1sg (where y is deleted in WT) and in the 2sg Polite. What is noteworthy here is that ST and WT are geographically far apart but unlike the intermediate dialect Enderta they are near-identical.

Of course to the south of WT there is the Raya dialect, which is similar to WT in its possessive pronouns.

4.3.3 Demonstrative pronouns

| Gender | Number | Near | Far |
|--------|--------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| ST | | | |
| m | sg | 'əzi/'əzu/ 'əzuy | 'əti/ 'ətuy |
| f | sg | 'əza/'əzi'a | 'əti'a |
| WT | | | |
| m | sg | 'əzi | 'əti |
| f | sg | 'əza'u | 'əta'u |
| ST | | | |
| m | pl | 'əzom / 'əzi'om/'əzi'atom | 'ətom/'əti'om |
| f | pl | 'əzän/ 'əzi'at än/ 'əzi'än | 'ətän /'əti'än |
| WT | | | |
| m | pl | 'əzatomu/ 'əzomu /zomu | 'ətatomu /'ətomu/tomu |
| f | pl | 'əzatonu /'uzonu /zonu | 'ətatonu / 'ətonu/ tonu |

4.3.4 Indefinite pronouns

| ST | WT | Gloss |
|---------|--------|---------------------|
| gälä | gəza' | 'something' |
| gäli'om | gow'om | 'some of them' 3mpl |
| gäli'än | gow'än | 'some of them' 3fpl |
| k'urub | quruβ | 'some' |

k'>q & b>β

li>wu

Discussion:

gäli'om > *gow'om*

The alternation *gäli'om* ~ *gow'om* can plausibly be seen as the result of sound change. As in Amharic, the sequence *li* has palatalized to *y*, thus *gäli'om* > *gäy'om*. Next, *y* > *w*, that is, *gäy'om* > *gäw'om* by assimilation to the back rounded vowel; finally, we get *gow'om* due to vowel harmony. Thus, the form became *gow'om*.

4.3.5 Interrogative pronouns

| ST | WT | Gloss |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| män | monnu | 'who?' |
| 'äni-män | 'äll-monnu | 'who (pl)?' |
| män-ä-män | monnuy-monnuy | 'who and who?' |
| 'äntay | to | 'what?' |
| 'äntawot | tot | 'what (pl)?' |
| nä-män | dä-monnu | 'to whom?' |
| nä-män-ä-män | dä-'äll-monnu /dä- monnuy-monnuy | 'for who and who?' |
| nay-män | na monnu | 'whose?' |
| nay-män-ä-män | näll-monnu/na monnuy-monnuy | 'whose and whose?' |
| män 'äyu | monnu βo'u | 'who is it?' |
| 'äyänay | 'äyänä | 'who (one?)' |
| män 'äyu zä-bälä-ka | monnu βu'u dä-βälä-ka | 'who is it who said it for you?' |

The above data shows numerous differences between ST and WT, but perhaps the most interesting is the 'associative plural' prefix *'äll-* (in *'äll-monnu*). The prefix, when used with nouns, means 'x and his associates'; with pronouns it functions simply as a pluralizer. Forms like *'äll-* and *'änn-* appear in different Ethiosemitic languages, but the original form was Ge'ez *'ällä* 'those of'. In WT this element has an *-l-*, like Ge'ez *'ällä*,

but unlike the 'ännä/ə/i of ST (Leslau 1941:60). Thus it is surely an archaism.

4.3.6 Relative marker

Whereas ST uses an element *zə-* as relative marker, villages near WT instead use *lə-*; WT uses *də-*.

Thus:

| | |
|---------|------------|
| ST | <i>zə-</i> |
| Near WT | <i>lə-</i> |
| WT | <i>də-</i> |

(Recall the preposition “to, for” for comparison:

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| ST | <i>nə</i> |
| Near WT | <i>lə</i> |
| WT | <i>də</i> .) |

Examples: “the dog that you heard”

| | | |
|---------|----------------------|--------------|
| ST | <i>zə-säma'ka-yo</i> | <i>kälbi</i> |
| Near WT | <i>lə-säma'χa-yo</i> | <i>χalβi</i> |
| WT | <i>də-säma'χa-yo</i> | <i>χalβi</i> |
| | Rel-you.heard-it | dog |

“the one who stood first last year”

| | | | | |
|----|------------|------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| ST | 'ami | <i>k'äddamay</i> | <i>was'iu</i> | <i>zə-näbärä</i> |
| WT | 'ami | <i>qaddomäy</i> | <i>wos'u</i> | <i>də-s'änh-ä</i> |
| | last. year | first | stood | Rel-was |

The relative marker shows an alternation ST *zə* ~ WT *də-*. Here it is ST which is more similar to Ge'ez (*zä-*). Note also that WT uses the marker *də-* both as a relative marker and as the preposition and object marker (= ST *nə-*), as already remarked in Sec. 2.1 above; this is in contrast to

Ge'ez, which clearly distinguishes the preposition *lä-* 'to' from the relative marker *zä-*.

4.4 Verbs

4.4.1 The verb 'to be'

Let us consider the forms of the verb *to be* (i.e. the verb *be present, exist*) in four Tigrigna varieties including WT.

| ST | Enderta | near Wajerat | WT | Gloss |
|---------|------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| alläxu | (ə)ni'äxu | (ə)nə'ä/häxu | (ə)na'axu | 'I am' |
| alläna | (ə)ni'äna | (ə)nəhäna | (ə)na'ana | 'We are' |
| alläxa | (ə)ni'äxa | (ə)nə'ä/häxa | (ə)na'axa | 'You are (2ms)' |
| alläxi | (ə)ni'äxi | (ə)nə'ä/häxi | (ə)na'axi | 'You are (2fs)' |
| alläxum | (ə)ni'äxum | (ə)nə'ä/häxum | (ə)na'axum | 'You are (2mpl)' |
| alläxən | (ə)ni'äxən | (ə)nə'ä/häxən | (ə)na'axən | 'You are (2fpl)' |
| allo | (ə)ni'o | (ə)nəho | (ə)no'o | 'He is' |
| alla | (ə)ni'a | (ə)nəha | (ə)nə'ät / nə'äta | 'She is' |
| alläwu | (ə)ni'äwu | (ə)nəhäwu | (ə)na'awu | 'They are (3mpl)' |
| alläwa | (ə)ni'äwa | (ə)nəhäwa | (ə)na'awa | 'They are (3fpl)' |

The verb base takes the following form in the 4 dialects:

| ST | Enderta | near Wajerat | WT |
|-------|---------|--------------|--------|
| allä- | (ə)ni- | (ə)nə- | (ə)na- |

Note that in villages near Wajerat, forms having medial *-h-* can sometimes alternate (freely?) with forms having medial *-'*. In Wajerat itself this alternation is not found. Rather, the internal vowels change from *ə'ä* to *a'a*. Thus:

Near Wajerat

(ʼə)nəhəχu ~ (ʼə)nəʼäχu (1sg)

-əhə-

-əʼä-

Wajerat

(ʼə) naʼäχu

-aʼa-

The 3fsg form (ʼə)nəʼät in Wajerat deviates from this pattern of -aʼa-; the 3msg ʼnoʼo could be explained as vowel harmony.

The endings are displayed in the following table:

| ST | Enderta | near Wajerat | WT | Gloss |
|------|---------|--------------|---------|--------|
| -χu | -ʼäχu | -ʼ ä/häχu | -ʼäχu | (1sg) |
| -na | -ʼäna | -häna | -ʼana | (1pl) |
| -χα | -ʼäχα | -ʼä/häχα | -ʼa χα | (2ms) |
| -χι | -ʼäχι | -ʼä/häχι | -ʼa χι | (2fs) |
| -χum | -ʼäχum | -ʼ ä/häχum | -ʼäχum | (2mpl) |
| -χən | -ʼäχən | -ʼ ä/häχən | -aχən | (2fpl) |
| -o | -ʼo | -ho | -ʼo | (3ms) |
| -a | -ʼa | -ha | -ʼät(a) | (3fs) |
| -wu | -ʼäwu | -häwu | -ʼawu | (3mpl) |
| -wa | -ʼäwa | -häwa | -ʼawa | (3fpl) |

4.4.2 Verb tense

4.4.3 Past

As in ST, the normal way to express past time in WT is to use the gerund (and not the perfect); for example, "I ate" is expressed in WT as

| | SG | PL |
|----|----------|-----------|
| 1 | bälʼ-ä | bäləʼ-na |
| 2m | bäləʼ-χα | boluʼ-χum |
| 2f | bäləʼ-χι | bäləʼ-χən |
| 3m | bol ʼ-u | bol ʼ-om |
| 3f | bäl ʼ-a | bäl ʼ-än |

The 1st-person ending *-ä* makes it clear that this is not the perfect (which would be *-χu*). The change of stem-vowel (*ä > o*) is due to vowel harmony. The identity of the past and the gerund can be seen clearly in the paradigm of a sentence like “Having come in, I ate/ you ate/ etc.”, where the first verb is clearly a gerund and the second verb expresses past time.

| | SG | PL | Gloss |
|------|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 1sg | <i>gäβ'ä</i> | <i>bäl'ä</i> | ‘Having come in, I ate’ |
| 2msg | <i>gäβ'əχa</i> | <i>bälə'χa</i> | ‘Having come in, you ate’ |
| etc. | <i>come.in</i> | <i>eat</i> | |

In the entire paradigm, the main verb (“I ate”) is expressed by the same form as the gerund (“I having come in”).

The old Ethiosemitic Perfect can be used to express strong emphasis; for example, “I ate meat” (during fasting) in WT is:

| | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| <i>səga - ko</i> | <i>bäla' - χu</i> |
| meat - EMP | eat.PERF- 1sg |

When object suffixes are added to the Past, they are added to the gerund, with one exception: if the verb is 1sg, then a unique form appears, for example, “I saw”:

| ST | | WT | | Gloss |
|-------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Plain | 2msg Obj | plain | 2msg Obj | |
| 1sg | <i>rə'yä</i> | <i>rə'yä</i> | <i>ru'yoχu-ka</i> | ‘I saw you’ |
| 1pl | <i>rə'ina</i> | <i>rə'əna</i> | <i>rə'əna-ka</i> | ‘we saw you’ |

This Wajerat form *ru'yoχu-ka* is different from all the others. The *-χu* ending (only in 1sg above) looks like the Perfect 1sg ending; but the real Perfect form (emphatic) in the 1sg is *ro'oχu*. The presence of the *-y-* in the form *ru'yoχu-ka* indicates that this form should be a gerund. The form thus seems to resemble both the 1sg Perfect and the 1sg Gerund.

4.4.4 Imperfect: Gemination and prefixes

In Ge'ez, all verb forms in the Imperfect geminate the second radical, in all persons and numbers. In ST the rule is different: the second radical is geminated if there is no person/number suffix, but is not geminated if there is such a suffix (-i, -u, -a). WT follows the pattern of Ge'ez, not ST: all persons and numbers have gemination, regardless of the presence or absence of suffixes. (This is identical to the pattern described by Voigt for May-Ĉ'äw Tigrigna (2006:883).) This would seem to be an archaic feature of WT compared to ST. Here is the Imperfect paradigm (omitting the auxiliary *all-*)

| | Ge'ez | ST | WT | Gloss |
|-------|-------------|------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1sg | 'ə-bäkki | 'ə-bäkki | bäkki | 'I weep, cry' |
| 2msg | tə- bākki | tə-bäkki | tə-bäkki | |
| fsg | tə-bäkkəy-i | tə-bäχəy-i | tə-bäkkəy-i | |
| 3msg | yə-bäkk-i | yə-bäkk-i | bäkk-i | |
| fsg | tə-bäkk-i | tə-bäkk-i | tə-bäkk-i | |
| 1 pl | nə- bākki | nə- bākk-i | bäkk-i | |
| 2 mpl | tə-bäkkəy-u | tə-bäχəy-u | tə-bäkkəy-u | |
| fpl | tə-bäkkəy-a | tə-bäχəy-a | tə-bäkkəy-a | |
| 3 mpl | yə-bäkkəy-u | yə-bäχəy-u | bäkkəy-u | |
| fpl | yə-bäkkəy-a | yə-bäχəy-a | bäkkəy-a | |

In WT, the prefixes 'ə- (1sg), yə- (3 person), and nə- (1pl) of ST do not appear but are replaced by zero, as in the above paradigm. (This, too, matches Voigt's description of May-Ĉ'äw.) The tə- prefix survives. This is very probably because /t/ is a 'stronger' consonant than /', y, n/. Note that in the Jussive the 3sg prefix yə- is not deleted in WT: yə-βχä 'let him cry.' I am uncertain about 1sg 'ə- in the Jussive.

4.4.5 Simple present

WT differs from ST in the way it expresses the simple (non-progressive) present. ST continues the “Imperfect” pattern from Ge’ez, combined with a copula:

’anä ’əwässəd ’əyyä “I take”, etc.
I I.take COP

In WT, the equivalent tense is expressed with the agent noun form CäCaCi, which behaves like an adjective and inflects for gender and number but not person.

1sg: ’anä wosadi βä’ä “I take” (lit. I am a taker)

Similarly:

WT

2msg: ’əssəχa wosadi βäχa

2fsg: ’əssəχi wosadət βäχi

2mpl: ’əssəχatum/’əssəχatχum wosado/wäsäditi βoχum

3msg: ’əssu wosadi βo’u

3fsg: ’əssa wosadit βä’a

3mpl: ’əssatom wosado βo’om

(In most of the examples, CäCaCi→CoCaCi by assimilation to the w.)

4.4.6 Past progressive (subordinate clause)

ST nəssu yəwässəd näyru
he he.takes he.was

ST nəssu ’ənda-wäsädä näyru
he while-he.took he.was

WT ’ussu (’ə)la-wäsädä s’onhu
he while- he.took he.was

‘(while) he was taking’

IMPF/ ’ənda+PERF/ la+PERF)

In this case, in ST there are two alternatives; but in WT there is only one alternative, which also differs from ST in the following way:

| | | |
|------------|-----------|---------------|
| ST | Agame | WT |
| 'anda+PERF | 'ana+PERF | ('əl)la +PERF |

Historically, perhaps *'anda* dropped the *d* and became *'ana*, as is found in Agame Tigrigna; in WT the *n* or *nd* would have changed to *l* and become *'alla*.

4.4.7 Present progressive

As in ST, the present continuous ('I am coming, etc.') is formed by Imperfect + *all-*. Interestingly, however, in WT (unlike ST) the auxiliary *all-* is not the same element as the verb 'to be' (*'ana-*), cf. sec. 4.4.1 ; May-Ĉ'äw shows the same pattern (Voigt 2006). The paradigms in ST and WT are essentially the same, except for differences noted elsewhere: the deletion of 1sg 'ə- and 3 person yə-, and vowel changes due to vowel harmony (sec.4.10.2). There is one interesting difference, however. Compare the 3fsg forms:

ST tə-mäs's'ə 'all-a

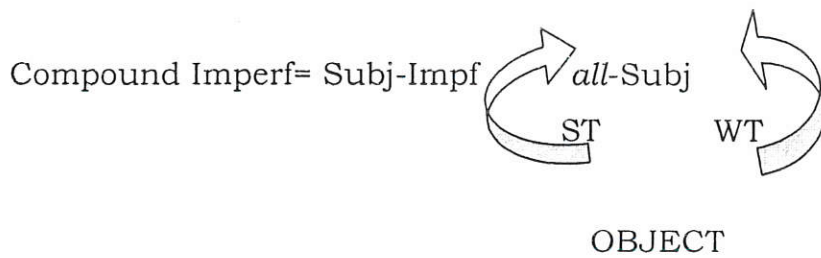
WT tə-mäs's' ə-lä-t(a)

'She is coming.'

The lack of final *-t* in the ST form of *'all-a* (3fsg) is surprising (cf. ST 3fsg *säbär-ät*). Here WT apparently preserves the expected *-t*.

4.5 Placement of object markers

One of the most interesting features of the compound Imperfect (Impf+*all-*) in WT is the placement of the pronominal object suffixes. In ST, as in Amharic, the object pronoun occurs between the Imperfect and the following helping verb *all-*. In WT, by contrast, the object pronoun occurs at the end of the entire compound verb form. This can be represented in a diagram:



For example:

ST nə- rə'əy- **än** allä-na 'We see them (fpl.)'
 we see **them** BE-we

WT rə'ə-llä-na-**yyän**
 see BE-we **them**

Here ST, like Amharic, represents the older pattern. The helping verb has not (yet) fully fused with the main verb; the object is thus suffixed to the main verb, and the helping verb is added to the combination. In WT, the combination of 'main verb+ helping verb' has become an uninterruptable, fused unit (univerbated). The combination has become lexicalized, and according to the 'principle of lexical integrity' a lexical word is not normally interruptable. The object suffix now appears at the end; it cannot interrupt the verb-form by appearing in the middle. (Again, the same pattern is described for May-Ĉ'aw Tigrigna by Voigt.)

4.6 Negation

Verbal negation follows a 'double negation' pattern: NEG-VERB-NEG. But the two-part negation element has a different form in ST, near WT, and WT:

| | |
|---------|-----------|
| ST | ay-Verb-n |
| WT | ay-Verb-y |
| near WT | yä-Verb-y |

For example, “You (2mpl) will not break”

ST: ay- tāsābr-u-n
WT ay-təšobbur-u-y
near WT yā-təšäβər-u-y

(The ‘near WT’ pattern corresponds to what Voigt describes for May-Č’äw.)

The origin of the different suffixes *-n* vs. *-y* is not clear. A sound change *n>y* or *y>n* would seem unlikely. But note also the conjunction “and” which shows the same alternation:

ST: -n ... -n
WT -y ...-y
near WT -y ...-y

The final element (*-n*, *-y*) apparently occurs in main clauses but not subordinate clauses; I have not checked this in detail, however.

4.7 Interrogative

In Tigrigna, yes/no questions are expressed by the question particle *do*. The particle *do* is suffixed to whatever word is emphasized in the question (Leslau 1941:151). There is one difference in WT, however. In the present continuous (compound Imperfect), in ST, *do* can either follow the entire verb complex or it can separate the main verb and *all-*. The reason is the same as the reason for the positioning of the object pronoun: in WT, the complex ‘main verb + *all-*’ is a fused unit and cannot be interrupted.

In WT **do** must appear at the end of the verb complex. Thus:

ST 'anä 'ə-bällə' **do** 'allä-χu
 or ST 'anä 'ə-bällə' 'allä-χu **do**
 WT 'ana bolu'u lo-χu **do**.
 Gloss 'Am I eating?'

4.8 Prepositions

There are interesting differences in prepositions between ST and WT. The following table shows most of these, including a comparison with villages near Wajerat:

| ST | near WT | WT | Gloss |
|-------------------------------|------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| nab | la | da | 'to' (place) |
| kab | kaβ/ka | ka | 'from' |
| kab... 'əskab/ kab...kəsa' | ka...kəša' | ka... 'əška' / kəša' | 'from...to' |
| 'ab | 'aβ | də | 'at' |
| nə | lə | də- | 'to/for' (person) |
| nay | na | na | 'of' |

The following points are of special interest.

- 1) In all three dialects, the prepositions for 'to' (place) and 'to/for' (person) show a systematic difference in vowels: *a* vs. *ə*.
- 2) Both prepositions for "to" show a consistent difference across the dialects: ST *n*, near WT *l*, WT *d*.
- 3) The preposition "from" is interesting and puzzling. On the one hand, a progression kab>kaβ>ka would be a natural case of stepwise consonant weakening. On the other hand, *kä* "from" also exists in Amharic, where it (presumably) does not come from *kab*.
- 4) The second element in the preposition pair "from ...to" shows changes in all 3 dialects. This preposition surely is connected to

Ge'ez *'aska* "until". In ST, a *b* has been added, probably by analogy to the *b* in *kab*. In WT (and near WT), an ' is added and *s>š*, for reasons that are not clear. Finally, in dialects near WT, there has been a metathesis:

'əška' → kəša'

5) In WT only, the prepositions meaning 'at' and 'to/for' (person) have collapsed into a single preposition *də*.

4.9 Conjunctions

| ST | WT | Gloss |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>kəsab/ kəšs'a'</i> | <i>kaddə/ əška' / kəšs'a'</i> | 'until' |
| <i>'əntä</i> | <i>ham/ 'əmma</i> | 'if' |
| <i>'əmmo</i> | <i>həmma/ 'əmma</i> | 'what about' |
| <i>zäy-konä</i> | <i>däy-χonä</i> | 'not that' |
| <i>käy-</i> | <i>täy-</i> | 'before' (temporal) |
| <i>məs</i> | <i>bəd</i> | 'after' (temporal) |
| <i>'əkwa</i> | <i>wala/ əkwa'ə(ni)</i> | 'though' |
| <i>kä'a/ kə'a</i> | <i>lälä</i> | 'again, also' |
| <i>dəmma</i> | <i>lälä</i> | 'again, also' |
| <i>käm</i> | <i>ham</i> | 'like' |
| <i>'əwən</i> | <i>lä</i> | 'also' |
| <i>'əntäiay</i> | <i>källä</i> | 'also' |
| <i>-n...-n</i> | <i>-y...-y</i> | 'both...and' |
| <i>də'a</i> | <i>ma</i> | 'emphatic expression' |
| <i>'əmbär</i> | <i>da'am/ də'ami</i> | 'emphatic expression' |
| <i>gədda</i> | <i>həššan</i> | 'would rather' |

Some examples:

ST *bərhänä-n gərəmay-n 'aḥəwat 'əyy-om*

WT *bərhänä-y-(wa) gərəmay-y 'aḥwat wo-'om*

'Bərhane and Gərmay are brothers.'

ST 'əti 'anbässa **kä'a** bə-qut' 'a nə'arä
 WT 'əti 'anbässa **lä** bə-qut' 'ä šädänä
 'The lion also roared due to anger.'

4.10 Phonology

4.10.1 Consonant lenition

In the Tigrigna of Wajerat (and of Raya), consonants seem to undergo lenition (stops become fricatives) more often than in ST, although I have not studied exactly where. (Note, however, that the reverse sometimes occurs, as discussed under "Gemination in the Imperfect": WT fails to undergo lenition of the 2nd root consonant in person-number forms for which ST does undergo lenition.)

4.10.2 Vowel harmony and assimilation

In ST, the vowel in a suffix does not affect the pronunciation of the stem vowel. In WT, however, we observe vowel harmony in (many? all?) such cases: specifically, a suffix that contains a back rounded vowel (u,o) causes the stem-vowel of the verb to become rounded. The harmony is regressive, and spreads from the suffix leftwards into the word. For example:

| ST | WT | gloss |
|-----------|-----------|-----------------------|
| gäft'it'u | goft'ut'u | 'he became distended' |
| särihu | sərhu | 'he worked' |
| mäs'i'u | mos'u | 'he came' |
| wäsi'om | wos'om | 'they came out' |

In a similar vowel-harmony process, the presence of the bilabial consonants β and w often causes ä to become the rounded vowel o in WT. I have not examined this in detail, however.

Consonant assimilation also occurs sometimes. If we compare ST *mäs-'u* 'with him' with WT *mussu*, we see that the glottal stop has assimilated: s-' → s-s. (The internal *u* is due to vowel harmony.)

4.10.3 Metathesis

There are irregular scattered cases of metathesis. For example:

| ST | WT | Gloss |
|----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| bärdäg | bädräg | 'stood up immediately' |
| bərəč'k'o | buč'ruk'o | 'glass' (for drinking) |
| dägim | gädəm | 'afterwards' |
| gän'i | ga'ni | 'big pot' |
| kəšša' / kəsa' | əška' / kəšs'a' | 'until' |

In two of these cases ST agrees with Ge'ez (*dägim*, *gün'i*), so it is WT which has undergone metathesis. In one case WT apparently agrees with Ge'ez ('until' = WT 'əška', Ge'ez 'əska), though the final pharyngeal is unclear: if so, ST has metathesized.

4.10.4 Miscellaneous morphophonemic changes

4.10.4.1

The special form of the WT pronoun for 'what' (*to*) is culturally very salient, so much so that WT is sometimes referred to as 'to 'u language'.

The comparative data look like this:

| ST | Enderta | near WT | WT | |
|--------|---------|---------|----|--------|
| 'əntay | tay | ta | to | 'what' |

As elsewhere in this thesis, the data show a dialect progression from region to region. The change from 'əntay → tay involves deletion of 'ən (or possibly addition of 'ən in ST). The change from Enderta *tay* → near WT *ta* deletes the final *y* (a phenomenon we have seen elsewhere, e.g. ST *nay* → WT *na* "of"). The change to WT *to* is less transparent. It looks like vowel harmony; but there is no labial element in the word to trigger the

vowel harmony. But if we look at the entire phrase “What is it?” a labial trigger is present:

ta βo'u → to βo'u.

what it.is

In faster speech this is *to'u* (hence the name of the language, above), and the element *to* “what?” can be separated out from this.

4.10.4.2

As we have mentioned, the form of the compound Imperfect in WT is somewhat different from ST. The change can be displayed this way:

| ST | WT | Gloss |
|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| yə-säbbər-alläwu | šobbur-(u)llo'u | 'they are breaking' |
| 3pers-break-they.are | break-they.are | |

The most obvious change (mentioned already in sec. 4.4.4, 4.4.7) is that WT deletes the person-number marker prefixes *yə-*, *'ə-*. But additionally, the WT form reduces the *a* of ST *-alläwu* to *ə* (and then to short *u* by vowel harmony), which often can barely be heard. This vowel reduction is a typical sign of greater fusion between main verb and helping verb, a point which is important for the positioning of the object pronoun (see sec. 4.5, 4.7).

4.10.4.3

WT also shows special morphophonemic behavior when some of the possessive pronoun suffixes are added to vowel-final nouns. Here it is useful to compare ST, WT, and Enderta (and the adjacent Hulet Awlaelo (HA); see Girmay 1983:67-79). With the 1sg suffix “my”. all three dialects add an epenthetic *-y-*. Thus, for *fät'ari* ‘creator’, we have for “my creator”:

| ST | Enderta/HA | WT |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| fät'ari-y-äy | fät'ari-yy-äy | fät'arə-y-ä 'my creator' |

However, with the 3fsg suffix “her”, there is a difference: for ‘her creator’ we have:

| ST | Enderta/HA | WT | gloss |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|
| fät'ari-'-a | fät'ari-'-a | fät'arə-y-a | 'her creator' |

Thus ST and Enderta add epenthetic glottal stop in 3fsg, but WT adds epenthetic -y. The WT pattern of adding epenthetic -y holds throughout the 3rd person.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

Below is a summary chart of most of the grammatical features where Ge'ez agrees with WT or with ST, including a few other differences between ST and WT where all 3 languages differ.

| | Ge'ez | WT | ST |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------|--|
| delete Impf. <i>yə-</i> , <i>'ə-</i> | No | Yes | No |
| position of obj. pronoun | - | final | medial |
| vowel harmony | No | Yes | No |
| Negative marker | <i>i</i> | <i>ay...y</i> | <i>ay...n</i> |
| 3 rd -pers.pronouns/copulas | <i>wə-</i> (pron.) | <i>βä-</i> (copula) | <i>nəss-</i> (pron.) <i>'əy-</i> (copula) |
| Associative plural | <i>'əlla-</i> | <i>'əll-</i> | <i>'ənni-</i> |
| Relative marker | <i>zə-</i> | <i>də-</i> | <i>zə-</i> |
| Vowels | 7 | 5(6?) | 7 |
| Preservation of -t (3fs) of <i>'all-</i> | Yes | Yes | No |
| Conjunction 'but' | <i>'alla</i> | <i>'alla</i> | <i>wäyyo</i> |
| Gemination throughout Impf | Yes | Yes | No |
| Simple present based on | (Impf) | CäCaCi | (Impf) |

Looking at these data, we can list those aspects where Ge'ez agrees with ST or with WT. In almost (?) all cases, Ge'ez clearly represents the archaic Semitic phenomenon.

Ge'ez and ST

not delete *yə-*, *'ə-*

no vowel harmony

rel pron. *zə*

7 vowels

Ge'ez and WT

3pers.pron./copula: *w/βə-*

assoc.pl. *'əll-*

gemination throughout Impf

conjunction *'alla*

-t in 3fs of *'all-*

These data, then, show that WT is not ‘more archaic’ than ST. But ST is also not ‘more archaic’ than WT. Each dialect has its own set of innovations and retentions, which are often not the same. A valuable lesson from these data is that it is a mistake simply to equate ‘Tigrigna’ with ‘standard Tigrigna’; WT is often more archaic than ST.

As for lexical differences between ST and WT, they are numerous. But this has not been the focus of this thesis.

In several features, WT shows phonological reduction compared to ST; see e.g. sec. 4.2, 4.10.4.1, 4.10.4.2. This behavior is very frequent for a dialect compared to “standard language”.

Several phenomena show a progression in space as one proceeds geographically from north to south. Such progressions are typical of a dialect continuum. Proceeding dialectally from north (ST) to south (WT), we have:

| Region | ST | Agame | Enderta | near Wajerat | WT |
|------------------|------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| while | 'ənda+PERF | 'əna+PERF | (ʼə)la +PERF | (ʼə)lɛ +PERF | 'ə)la +PERF |
| The verb ‘to be’ | 'allä- | 'allä- | (ʼə)ni'- | (ʼə)nə- | (ʼə)na- |
| Possession | nay | nay | na | na | na |
| “what” | 'əntay | 'əntay | tay | ta | to |
| “from” | kab | kab | kaβ | kaβ/ka | ka |
| “to” (final -b) | nab | nab | laβ | laβ/la | da |

However, the distribution of the element 'alla 'but' shows a reverse progression, from south (WT) to north (ST):

| | | | | | |
|-------|-------|--------------|---------|-------|-------|
| Ge'ez | WT | near Wajerat | Enderta | Agame | ST |
| 'alla | 'alla | 'alla /wälla | wäyya | wäyyo | wäyyo |

And the distribution of the Negation marker is geographically puzzling:

| Region | ST | Agame | Enderta | near Wajerat | WT |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|----------|
| Negation | ay... -n | ay ...-n | yä ...-y | yä ...-y | ay... -y |

Similarly puzzling is the distribution of 'my':

| Region | ST | Agame | Enderta | near Wajerat | WT |
|--------|-------|-------|---------|--------------|------|
| 'my' | natäy | natäy | nayyā | nayä | natä |

Finally, the 1st-person pronouns in WT disagree with both Ge'ez and ST, but surprisingly agree with far-off Tigre.

| | | |
|-------|------|---------|
| | 1sg | 1pl |
| Ge'ez | 'anä | nəhna |
| ST | 'anä | nəhna |
| WT | 'ana | (a)həna |
| Tigre | 'ana | həna |

5.2 Recommendation

Despite the strong in-group consciousness that has always characterized Wajerat, the dialect WT can be considered as endangered today. Hence it is wise to register the endangered linguistic elements of this dialect as soon as possible.

Moreover, consideration of the dialects is not only important for Tigrigna standardization development in Ethiopia but will also help prevent misunderstanding and resentment among the speakers of different dialects which might be triggered by the perceived 'imposition' of a standard language.

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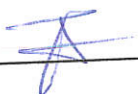
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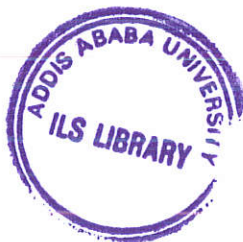
DECLARATIN

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has to not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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