

**TENSE, ASPECT AND MOOD IN MESQAN**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS**

**PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS**

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**SEPTEMBER 2012**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This study takes Mesqan as its target language. The researcher has taken over the task of describing the tense, aspect and mood system of Mesqan verbs. Besides, the researcher seeks to achieve the following specific objectives.*

- i. Describe the distinction between tense and aspect.*
- ii Identify the grammatical markers of tense, aspect and mood of the language.*
- ii. Analyze whether Mesqan is primarily a tense or aspect language.*

*Mesqan verbs are primarily marked for aspect, i.e. they have distinct grammatical base forms for the perfective and imperfective aspects. In addition to this, subject agreement markers are distinct for the two aspects. In this language tense is expressed by means of auxiliaries: past by the auxiliary bannä and non-past by the auxiliary -u. besides, the perfective and the imperfective verb forms may or may not appear with visible tense markers. If there is no visible tense marker the perfective form is associated with past reading and the imperfective with non -past and/or habitual meanings. If there is visible tense marker, the progressive reading is obtained by the combination of the imperfective form of the verb and the non-past auxiliary -u; whereas the habitual reading is obtained by the imperfective form of the verb and the past auxiliary bannä.*

*Mesqan verbs are also marked for mood. There are distinct grammatical base forms for the jussive/imperative mood. Besides, obligation and ability are expressed by periphrastic constructions.*

*In addition, the perfective form can be combined with the converb marker -m to denote a reading of present perfect and with the past auxiliary bannä to denote a reading of past perfect.*

*With regard to the third objective, Mesqan is an aspect based language. In this language tense is secondary and it is mostly based on imperfective aspect.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and for most, I thank the almighty God for granting me tolerance and strength so that I accomplish this study.

Secondly, my deepest gratitude goes to my advisor Dr. Ronny Meyer, who gave me constructive criticisms and invaluable comments on each sections of the thesis starting from the proposal until its completion.

I am also highly grateful to Professor Orin Gensler, whose lectures on linguistic typology and African linguistics, prepared the ground on which this thesis is built.

I am also extremely grateful to my Mesqan informants: Kedir Hussen, Mesfin Abera and Melesech Belay.

I am also highly grateful to my mother Mulu Getachew, my brother Elias Eshetu and Getnet Eshetu for their moral and financial support and encouragement throughout my study. Similarly I would like to extend my gratitude to Fikir Arega who typed the paper and Assefa Tadesse.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to my friends.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

1, 2, 3	Person
AUX	Auxiliary verb
CNV	Converb marker
C	Consonant
COP	Copula
IPV	Imperfective
JUS	Jussive or imperative
NEG	Negative
NP	Non-past tense
OBL	Obligation
P	Plural
PAST	Past tense
PF	Plural feminine
PM	Plural masculine
PRE	Present tense
PROS	prospective
PV	Perfective aspect
S	Singular
SF	Singular feminine
SM	Singular masculine
V	Vowel
VN	Verbal noun
*	Ungrammatical expression/form
∅	Zero morpheme
→	Become

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

The major topic of this paper is concerned with the tense, aspect and mood system in Mesqan. This chapter provides background information regarding the people and their language. It also contains the statement of the problem, the objective, the significance and the scope of the study.

### *The People*

The Mesqan people live southwest of Addis Ababa in the Gurage Zone of the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS). The Gurage Zone is surrounded by Oromo speakers in the north, northeast and northwest; Yemsa speakers in the west; and Hadiyya speakers in the south and southwest. The Mesqan have their own Woreda in the Gurage Zone, which comprises around forty-one principle villages. The Mesqan Woreda is situated approximately 137 km to the south of Addis Ababa. Quite a large number of Mesqan people live outside their home villages in Ethiopian towns due to their trading activities.

According to the population and housing census (Central Statistical Agency 2007: 59), the total number of Gurage is 1,280,483 of which 179,737 are Mesqan. Among them 88,062 are females and 91,675 are males.<sup>1</sup>

The people of Mesqan earn their livelihood by cultivating different plants, like maize, wheat, barley and beans and by breeding animals. As with most of the Gurage people, *ässät* ‘false banana’ provides the staple food in Mesqan. Besides their native language, most Mesqan people can also speak one or more other Gurage languages and Amharic. The Mesqan are predominantly followers of the Islamic faith. Only some Mesqan are Orthodox Christians and a very few are Protestants.

### *Genetic Classification of Mesqan*

Mesqan is a member of the Gurage languages that belong to the South Ethio-Semitic branch of the Ethio-Semitic language group. Within South Ethio-Semitic, Mesqan belongs to the Western Gurage branch of Outer South Ethio-Semitic (see Figure 1 below). The Mesqan-speaking area is bordered by Dobbi speakers in the north, by Wolane and Muher speakers in the west, by Mareqo speakers in the east, and by Silt’e speakers in the south. Mesqan is not a written language but only serves for oral communication.

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<sup>1</sup> Getu (2012:9) provides a similar figure based on the 2010 Housing and Population Census. However, according to Lewis (2009:126), the number of Mesqan speakers only amounts to 25,000 people, which is probably a mistake.

There are various classifications of the Gurage languages among which Hetzron (1972) is the most profound until today. Hetzron (1972: 7-8, but also 1977) divides the Gurage languages into two main typological groups, namely Gunnän-Gurage encompassing the Northern and Western Gurage languages vs. Eastern Gurage. Eastern Gurage comprises Zay, Silt'e and Wolane. Gunnän-Gurage is further subdivided into two branches: Northern Gurage (basically also a typological unit) and Western Gurage. In genetic terms, Northern Gurage consists only of Kistane, Dobbi and probably the extinct Gälila. In typological terms, Muher is also subsumed under Northern Gurage because all these languages possess a special set of morphemes that are added to the verb in affirmative indicative main clauses. The Western Gurage group, a genetic unit, includes Mesqan versus Central and Peripheral Western Gurage. The Central Western Gurage group comprises Chaha, Gumer, Ezha and Gura whereas the Peripheral Western Gurage group consists of Gyeto, Inor, Ener and Endegagn. The varieties within Central and Peripheral Western Gurage are usually considered to be dialects belonging to two different languages. Hetzron's (1972: 119) classification of Ethio-Semitic languages with some modifications regarding the Gurage languages by Meyer (2011: 1222) is shown in the following figure.

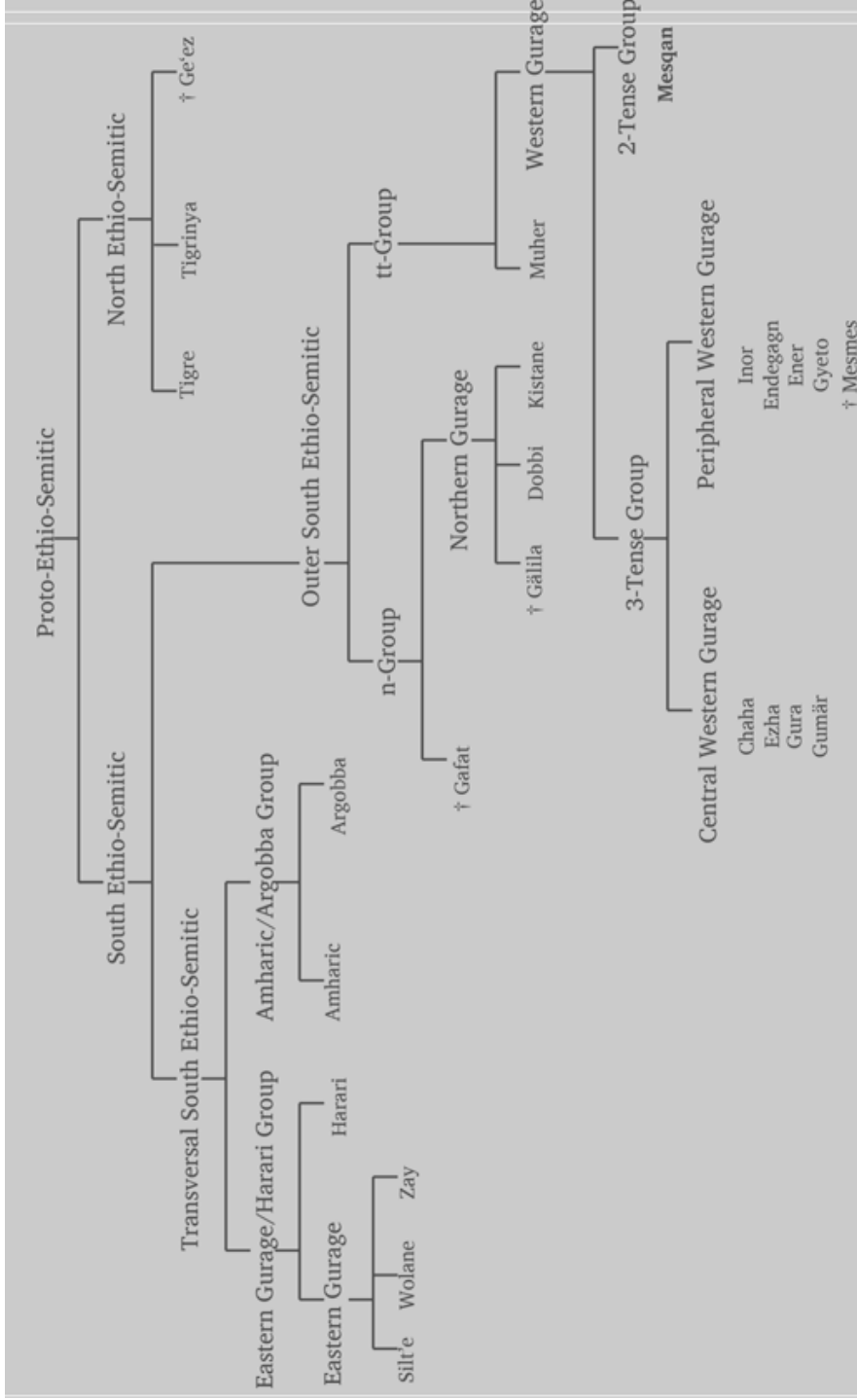


Figure 1: Classification of Ethio-Semitic Languages (Adapted from Hetzron 1972 and Meyer 2011)

Leslau (1992a: 226), on the other hand, classifies the various Gurage varieties as follows: Silt'e, Wolane, Zay belong to Eastern Gurage; Chaha, Gyeto, Ezha, Inor and Endegagn are grouped together as Western Gurage while Northern Gurage is represented only by Kistane. Leslau (1992a) further states that Muher, Mesqan and Dobbi might form a separate subdivision within Western Gurage.

Already Hetzron (1969: 19-20) and later also Hetzron/Bender (1976: 28) suggest that the Gurage languages are not a homogeneous group from a linguistic point of view because Northern Gurage, i.e., Kistane and Dobbi (and Gälila), form a unit within Outer South Ethio-Semitic which is closer to Gafat than to other Gurage language. The same applies to Eastern Gurage as a sub-branch of Transversal South Ethio-Semitic. Within this branch, Eastern Gurage is closer to Harari than to any other Gurage language. Therefore, Hetzron (1969 and passim) suggests that the term Gurage is not a meaningful linguistic term; it rather refers to a collection of Semitic-speaking people who are surrounded by Cushitic-speaking people to the southwest of Addis Ababa.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Even though tense, aspect and mood (TAM) are major topics in linguistics, comprehensive studies that deal with these three categories are not available for Mesqan. This does not mean that there is no work on the TAM system of Mesqan. There are comparative studies, like Hetzron (1972, 1977) and Leslau (1992a/b). However, when we look at these works and try to apply the findings on TAM

provided, for instance, by general typological works, like Comrie (1976) or Bybee et al. (1994), we understand that they are not comprehensive. Considering this gap, the present study focuses on the detailed description of tense, aspect and mood in Mesqan from a typological point of view mainly based on Comrie (1976) and Bybee et al. (1994).

### *Objective of the Study*

The general objective of this study is to describe the tense, aspect and mood system of Mesqan verbs. The study has the following specific objectives to:

- Describe the distinction between tense and aspect.
- Identify the grammatical markers of tense, aspect and mood of the language,
- Analyze whether Mesqan is primarily a tense or an aspect language.

### *Significance of the Study*

Since the study represents basic research, it has the following significances:

- It provides a detailed linguistic description about tense, aspect and mood in Mesqan.
- It contributes to the comparative study of Semitic languages and to linguistic typology in general.

- It can serve as a launching pad for further research on Mesqan.

### *Scope of the Study*

A complete descriptive analysis of a language requires the phonological, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic description of that language. However, this study limits itself to the description of tense, aspect and mood, neglecting other parts of the grammar. Within the realm of verb morphology, the study focuses on tri radical verbs in the basic or simplex stem and neglects derived stems.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The first part of this section defines the categories tense, aspect and mood, and deals with the distinction between tense and aspect from a typological point of view. Many scholars contributed to the cross-linguistic study of TAM. The most prominent are certainly Comrie (1976, 1985), Dahl (1985) and Bybee et al. (1994), among others. The second part of this section reviews previous works on Mesqan from a general perspective focusing on topics that seem to be of relevance for the description of the TAM system.

#### *Review of Tense, Aspect and Mood from a Typological Perspective*

##### 2.1.1 Verb Semantics and Its Interaction with Aspect and Tense

Verbs in general are either stative or dynamic according to their inherent semantics. Comrie (1976: 13) states in this regard:

“States are static, i.e. continue as before unless changed, whereas events and processes are dynamic, i.e. require a continual input energy if they are not to come to an end; events are dynamic situations viewed as a complete whole (perfectively), whereas processes are dynamic situations viewed in progress, from within (imperfectively).”

Stative verbs express a situation that has no different phases or changes between phases, whereas dynamic verbs express a situation that has different phases. However, there is a problem in distinguishing between stative and dynamic

situations. Some stative verbs may also involve an initial change of affairs. For instance, the stative verb *stand*, i.e. getting or being in a standing position, in English may or may not involve change. Therefore, it is possible to say that dynamic verbs involve change, whereas stative verbs may or may not involve change (Comrie 1976: 13). The main difference between the two is that stative verbs describe a situation without an endpoint, whereas dynamic verbs describe a situation that has an inherent endpoint.

The distinction between dynamic and stative verbs also has an effect on the description of tense and aspect. Saeed (1997: 133) states that inherent features of a verb's meaning may be compatible with the meaning of certain tense and aspect forms but not with others. Thus, the distinction between dynamic and stative verbs can make a difference in the time implications for verbal events, whereas the phrase *verbal event* encompasses both stative and dynamic verbs. For instance, by using the perfective aspect of dynamic verbs, the speaker commonly implies that an action was accomplished before the moment of speech, but by using the perfective aspect of stative verbs, the speaker usually implies that a state occurs simultaneously with the moment of speech. Similarly, Bybee et al. (1994: 95) point out that one of the differences between tense and aspect is that perfective with stative verbs has the effect of signaling a present state, whereas the past tense has only past reading, regardless of the inherent verb semantics.

The time implication with stative verbs will be taken as main diagnostics to distinguish between past tense and perfectivity, and consequently between tense

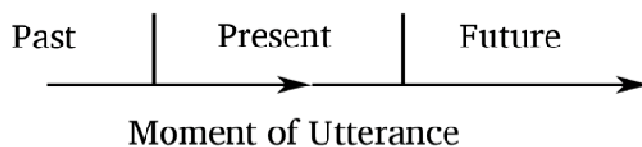
and aspect. Whether a verb has a stative semantics will be tested by using it in the progressive (see section 2.1.3). As progressivity is restricted to dynamic verbs, the combination of a stative verb and a grammatical marker for progressivity should yield ungrammatical situations.

## 2.1.2 Definition of Tense and Aspect

### 2.1.2.1 Tense

Tense is a grammaticalized category that indicates the time at which a verbal event takes place (Comrie 1985: 9). Based on this definition, tense only exists in languages that express location in time by means of grammatical categories. Comrie (1985: 5) states that, tense is a deictic category; it locates a verbal event relative to some reference point in time, mostly to the time of utterance.

*Figure 2: Basic Tense Distinctions*

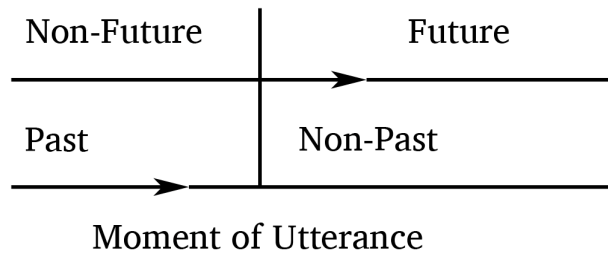


(Adapted from Payne 1997:239)

According to Comrie (1976: 2) the commonest tenses that are found in the languages of the world are past, present and future (see also Payne 1997: 236). Therefore, the concept of tense is commonly represented, as in Figure 2. This

conceptual notion can be further divided into a bipartite tense distinction in individual languages, namely past vs. non-past or future vs. non-future, as shown in Figure 3.

*Figure 3: Bipartite Representation of Tense*



(Adapted from Payne 1997: 239)

#### 2.1.2.2 Aspect

According to Comrie (1976: 3), “aspects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation.” Thus, aspect is associated with the internal temporal structure of events or states. Sasse (2006: 535), furthermore, defines aspect in terms of boundaries, i.e. whether the situation has a starting point and/or an endpoint. If the situation has a temporal right boundary, i.e., an endpoint, it can be viewed as perfective and if it is without boundaries, it is considered as imperfective. Let us illustrate this idea by the following examples:

- (1) a. *He came.*  
b. *He is coming.*

In (1a), the situation is presented as a single analyzable whole with an inherent beginning, middle, and end phase that make up the action of coming. The second sentence, (1b), does not present the situation in this way. It rather makes explicit reference to the middle phase only. In this example, there is no explicit reference to the beginning or to the end of coming.

There are two major aspectual categories in the languages of the world: perfective and imperfective. Perfective describes a situation as a single whole, without distinction of the various separate phase that make up that situation. The imperfective, in contrast, focuses on the internal structure of the situation. Comrie (1976: 4) states, “perfective looks at the situation from outside, without necessarily distinguishing any of the internal structure of the situation from inside, and as such is crucially concerned with the internal structure of the situation.” On the other hand, Payne (2003: 239) states, “in the imperfective aspect the situation is viewed from ‘inside’, as an ongoing process.” Thus, the perfective presents the situation as having boundaries, as being a single unified, discrete situation, whereas the imperfective presents the situation as having continuity without boundaries.

Bybee et al. (1994: 52-57) point out that completive, perfective and simple past basically denote a completed situation. However, they are different in specific respects: perfective refers to a situation as a bounded whole, while past tense refers

to a situation which existed prior to the moment of speaking, and completive refers to a situation which is completed.

Comrie (1976: 26) observes that there are a number of languages which have an imperfective form with progressive and habitual reading. This situation is also true for Mesqan. Habituality describes a situation which occurred within an unlimited period of time (Comrie 1976: 64, but see also Bybee et al. 1994: 28 and Payne 1997: 240). Thus habituality expresses a situation which is fulfilled over an extended period of time.

### 2.1.2.3 Distinction between Tense and Aspect

The categories tense and aspect differ with regard to their reference system. Tense is a deictic category which relates the verbal action or state with regard to a reference point, usually the moment of utterance but as Lyons (1968: 315) states, “aspect is not however a deictic category, it does not locate a situation relative to some reference point in time.” Therefore, the main difference between tense and aspect is that tense is a deictic category but aspect is not.

Comrie (1976: 5) makes a difference between tense and aspect based on their relation with time; aspect is situation-internal time but tense is situation-external time. Similarly, Kearns (2000: 148) states, “tense locates the event or situation on the time line, in the past, present or future. Aspect does not locate an event in time, but concerns the internal temporal structure of the event itself.”

Another difference between tense and aspect is concerned with their interaction with the inherent lexical semantics of verbs. That is, aspect interacts with the lexical semantics of verbs but tense does not. Bybee et al. (1994: 92) states in this regard:

“Perfective offers a particular perspective on the action described by the verb and thus interacts with a verb’s inherent semantics, while the past has scope over the whole proposition, which it locates in time with respect to the moment of speech, but without imposing any special perspective on the structure of the situation.”

The third difference relies on the degree of grammaticalization of tense and aspect. According to Bybee et al. (1994: 92), tense is more grammaticalized than aspect, i.e. tense may be implied by aspectual constructions; however tense markers do not develop into aspect markers. Bybee et al. (1994: 92) further point out that past tense is more generalized than perfective aspect and, thus, regardless of the verb semantics it always denotes an action or state prior to the moment of utterance.

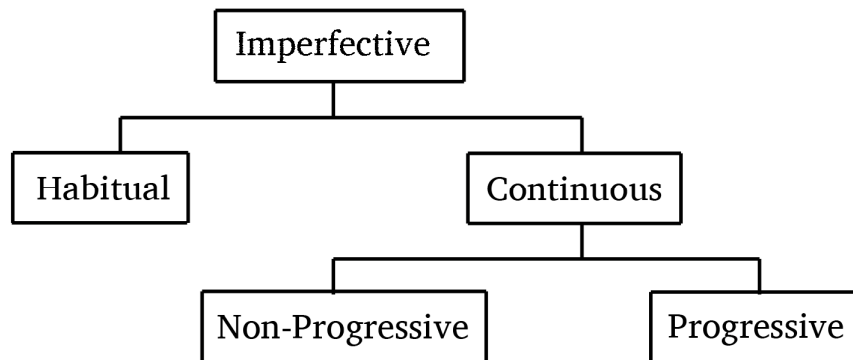
### 2.1.3 Sub-Classifications of Aspectual Categories

A number of languages make an explicit morphological or morphosyntactic distinction between different aspectual oppositions. Comrie (1976: 25) states:

“while many languages do have a single category to express imperfective, there are other languages where imperfective is subdivided into a number of distinct categories, and yet others where there is some category that corresponds to part only of the meaning of imperfective.”

The most common sub-divisions of the imperfective aspect are presented in Figure 4.

*Figure 4: Semantic Sub-Classifications in the Imperfective Aspect*



(Adapted from Comrie 1976: 25)

The hierarchical organization of Fig 4- shows imperfective to be the broadest ranging category, with habitual and continuous dividing up the imperfective range, continuous as divisible in to progressive (for dynamic verbs) and non progressive (for statives). Fig 4- suggests that a progressive would become a continuous by generalizing to apply to static verbs as well as dynamic ones.

These semantic sub-types in the imperfective aspect (and related constructions) are also called aktionsart(en). According to Comrie (1976: 6-7), aktionsart is a German word meaning 'kinds of action'. He makes a distinction between aspect and aktionsart: aspect is the grammaticalization of situations, while aktionsart is the lexicalization of situations. Thus, situations which express a certain grammatical form are said to be a grammatical aspect whereas situations which are encoded by

the lexical semantics of verbs are considered as aktionsart. According to Sasse (2006: 535), this traditional definition of aktionsart is misleading. In addition to the lexical semantics of verbs, their argument frame also has to be considered.

The present study uses the term aktionsart in the sense of Sasse (2006) to refer to the semantic sub-types of main aspects (perfective and imperfective) which are expressed by both periphrastic constructions and lexical semantics of verbs. For the description of the Mesqan verbal system, two aktionsarten are of special importance, namely progressive and prospective.

The progressive describes an ongoing action (Bybee et al. 1994: 128). This definition implies that progressivity does combine with dynamic verbs rather than stative verbs. Saeed (2003: 127) states:

“progressives are used with dynamic situations rather than states and provide a way of describing processes as being extended through time without any implication of completion.”

Some tense/aspect forms of verbs may fit with some situation types but not with others. Progressivity, for instance, does combine with dynamic verbs rather than stative ones. Comrie (1976: 35) defines progressivity as a combination of progressive meaning and non-stative meaning. Thus, inherent features of a verb's meaning can be combined with the meaning of certain verb forms, like progressivity, which tend to be restricted to dynamic verbs.



### 2.1.5 Mood

Mood is not related with time or the internal constituency of a situation but with the speakers' attitude:

“A definition often proposed is that modality is the grammaticization of speakers' (subjective) attitudes and opinions” (Bybee et al. 1994: 176).

Concerning the meaning distinction between mood and modality, Bybee et al. (1994: 181) point out that “modality is the conceptual domain and mood is its inflectional expression.”

Bybee et al. (1994: 177) identified four types of modality. These are agent-oriented, speaker-oriented, epistemic, and subordinating modalities. These main types can further be sub-divided into specific semantic notions, like necessity, ability, obligation, imperative, jussive, prohibitive, operative, admonitive, etc. Obligation indicates that the agent of the clause is obliged to perform the action of the verb; ability gives information about the internal capacity of performing an action by the agent; jussive (hortative) expresses the speaker's encouragement to make someone to enter into action; imperative is used to issue a direct command to a second person; admonitive is used to express a warning, and optative is used in expressing the wish or hope of the speaker. Both the jussive and the imperative moods are used to issue a command; the jussive expresses an order or instruction in the first and the third person whereas the imperative expresses a command in the

second person. In the present study, the focus is only on agent-oriented and speaker-oriented moods.

### *Review of Previous Works on Mesqan*

This section has four sub-sections: general typological information about Mesqan, Mesqan phonology, and verb morphology, and other works on Mesqan.

#### 2.1.6 General Typological Information about Mesqan

According to Meyer (2007), the basic order of constituents in Mesqan is S(subject)–O(bject)–V(erb); adjectives, genitives, and relative clauses precede their head noun. Mesqan is a nominative-accusative language, whereas the accusative case is only marked with definite direct objects. Mesqan has complex verb morphology. Several verb bases are distinguished by non-linear morphology in which a certain vocalization and gemination pattern is put onto a lexical root, typically consisting of three or four consonants. Subjects are obligatorily marked by affixes on the verb, whereby the marking of the direct object or adjuncts is optional.

#### 2.1.7 Phonology

Abduljebar (1988) identifies a phoneme inventory of thirty consonants and seven vowel phonemes. His phonemic inventory of consonants includes eight stops /b, b<sup>w</sup>, t, d, k, k<sup>w</sup>, g, g<sup>w</sup>/, eight fricatives /f, f<sup>w</sup>, s, z, ʒ, ʃ, h, h<sup>w</sup>/, two affricates /tʃ, ɟʒ/, four ejectives /kʔ, k<sup>w</sup>ʔ, tʔ, tʃʔ/, three nasals /m, m<sup>w</sup>, n/, two liquids /l, r/ and two

approximants /w, y/. The vowel phonemes are /i, e, ä, a, o, u, i/. He also states that consonant gemination is phonemic in Mesqan.

Hetzron (1977) and its shorter version in Hetzron (1997) offer a general and comprehensive introduction of the phonological, morphological and syntactic properties of all Gunnän Gurage languages among which Mesqan is one. Hetzron (1977: 34) discovers 32 consonant phonemes for Mesqan, including the palatal stops /g<sup>y</sup>/ and /k<sup>y</sup>/, as opposed to Abduljebar (1989) who claims that Mesqan has only thirty consonant phonemes. According to Abduljebar (1989), /g<sup>y</sup>/ and /k<sup>y</sup>/ are only allophonic variants of their non-palatal counterparts.

This study has adopted the above consonant and vowel phonemes in transcribing the data and uses the vowel /i/ as an epenthetic vowel.

### 2.1.8 Verb Morphology

Hetzron (1969: 16) points out that Mesqan is the only Western Gurage language to have a past, a present perfect and an imperfective, i.e., past *säbbärä* ‘he broke’, present perfect *säbbäräm* ‘he has broken’, and imperfective *yisäbir* ‘he breaks/he will break’. In the present study, however, *säbbärä* is considered as an aspectual form, i.e., as perfective.

Hetzron (1977: 94) deals with converbs of Mesqan by comparing it with other Gurage languages. For Mesqan, he identifies an *m*-converb which consists of the perfective, imperfective, jussive/imperative or infinitive followed by the converb marker *-m*, like:

(3) a. **PERFECTIVE + -m**

*säbbäräm wärä*  
säbbär-ä-m                      wär-ä  
break.PV-3SM-CNV    go.PV-3SM  
'He broke and went.'

b. **IMPERFECTIVE + -m**

*yisäbirm yar*  
y-säbir-ø-m                      y-ar-ø  
3-break.IPV-SM-CNV 3-go.IPV-SM  
'He breaks and goes'

c. **JUSSIVE + -m**

*yisäbirm yäwär*  
y-säbir-ø-m                      yä-wär-ø  
3-break.IPV-SM-CNV    3-go.JUS-3SM  
'Let him break and go!'

d. **IMPERATIVE + -m**

*sibirim wär*  
sibir-ø-m                      wär  
break.JUS.2SM-CNV    go.JUS.2SM  
'Break and go!'

(Hetzron 1977: 94)

Hetzron (1972: 60) further states that Mesqan is different from other Western Gurage languages by lacking a distinct paradigm for the future tense and, consequently, for using the imperfective form of the verb for both present and future meanings.

Hetzron (1972: 58) describes a present perfect for Mesqan that consists of the perfective form of a verb followed by the suffix *-m* (see also Hetzron 1977: 84). This suffix forms the present perfect and the *m-* converb; they can only be distinguished by their position on a clause. In the converbal construction, the verb

marked by the suffix *-m* occurs in a non-final position in the clause, but with the present perfect, the verb marked by *-m* takes the clause-final position.

Hetzron (1972: 81) states that the singular third person masculine present copula in Mesqan and Central Western Gurage is the suffix *-u*, which denotes 3SM. The suffix *-u* can *also be* use as a temporal auxiliary indicating the non-past tense (see also section 4.3).

Another work on Mesqan is Getu (1989) who deals with verb inflectional affixes. Regarding verb inflection, he shows that agreement affixes do not separately indicate person, number and gender in the perfective aspect. In the imperfective aspect, however, they are indicated separately except for the third person singular. Furthermore, Getu (1989) classifies Mesqan verbs into type A, type B and type C based on their gemination of the penultimate radical. Leslau (2004), however, adds another type D (see section 0 for further details). Getu (1989: 21-33) also presents verbal paradigms that he classifies regarding tense, aspect and mood. He states that the past tense is marked by the auxiliary *bannä* whereas the non-past tense is indicated by the imperfective form of the verb. However, as far as the present researcher is concerned, the imperfective form of the verb cannot be a marker of tense. Furthermore, in Getu's (1989) analysis, tense and aspect are considered as one and the same. In the present study however, they are treated as different categories.

Hetzron (1977: 84 and also 1997: 544) argues that all Gunnän Gurage languages have a past perfect which is formed from the perfective verb plus the past-tense auxiliary verb. However, as we shall see in section 0, Hetzron's analysis is inappropriate with respect to Mesqan. Furthermore, in his use of the terms tense and aspect is unclear. For instance, he considers *säbbärä* 'he broke' as a past tense construction. In the present study, however, it is considered as a pure aspectual construction.

Hetzron (1997: 544) considers the perfective and the imperfective forms of verbs as past and non-past forms, respectively, as in the following example:

- (3) a. *bännam wärä* 'He ate and left.'  
 b. *yibäram yar* 'He eats and leaves/He will eat and leave.'  
 (Hetzron 1997: 544)

In (3), Hetzron considers *wärä* and *yar* as verbs in past or non-past tense, respectively. But as far as the present researcher is concerned, tense in Mesqan is marked by auxiliaries but not by the perfective and the imperfective form of a verb.

Leslau (1992b) deals with the jussive for type A verbs in Mesqan by comparing it with Muher. Regarding the jussive, Leslau (1992b: 539) points out that Mesqan and Muher have three patterns:  $yä-C_1C_2\ddot{a}C_3^-$ ,  $yä-C_1C_2\dot{i}C_3^-$ , and  $yä-C_1\dot{i}C_2C_3^-$ . He further states that the pattern  $yä-C_1C_2\ddot{a}C_3^-$  is found with intransitive verbs, while the other two are found with transitive verbs.

Leslau (2004: 31) describes basic and derived verbal inflection in Mesqan with reference to other Gunnän-Gurage languages. Beside the basic stem, he deals with the t-stem, the a-stem and the at-stem and their functions. He also discusses verbs with weak radicals. Leslau (2004: 112) notes that the verbs *wärä* 'go', *hänä* 'be (become)', *fä* 'search, seek' are isolated verbs because they do not fit into any regular pattern.

### 2.1.9 Other Works

Leslau (1992a) describes some properties of the phonology and morphology of Mesqan as well as lexical features to establish its internal relationship to Muher, Dobbi and Chaha. As a result of this comparison, he classifies Muher, Dobbi and Mesqan as a sub-branch of Western Gurage. Hetzron (1977: 184-196) presents various Mesqan texts with glossing and translation and the present study uses his texts to compliment the elicited data. Leslau (1979: 751-830) contains a vocabulary of Mesqan with more than 1500 entries.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.1 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study is qualitative and empirical in nature and it is mainly relies on primary linguistic data which is elicited through interview with three native speakers of Meaqan in Meaqan wereda in the village of Beresa. The secondary data include written materials on Mesqan, like Leslau (2004) and Hetzron (1977).

Since the researcher is not a speaker of Mesqan, native speakers of the language were consulted. The data were gathered from three native speakers of Mesqan during three fieldworks from 09 December 2011 until 02 January 2012, 10 May 2012 until 18 May 2012 and 13 June 2012 until 21 June 2012 in Mesqan Woreda. The three language informants were Kedir Hussen (born in 1981 E.C.), Mesfin Abera (born in 1975 E.C.), and Melesech Belay (born in 1980 E.C.). They all are native speakers of the language and were born within the speech community of Mesqan where they also obtained their primary and secondary school education. Besides their native language, they speak Amharic and English.

The elicitation of data on TAM in Mesqan is based on a questionnaire prepared in Amharic as Meta language (cf. Appendix). To compliment the data one text was recorded. The questionnaire includes example sentences focusing on possible distinctions between aspect and tense, as well as moods. All gathered data were phonetically transcribed. The phonetic data were later transformed into a broader

phonemic transcription and, translated, and analyzed in the light of descriptive approach.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### STRUCTURE OF THE VERB IN MESQAN

#### *4.1 Overview on Mesqan Verb Morphology*

Mesqan verb bases are formed by non-linear morphology. According to McCarty as cited in Asher (1994: 2599), non-linear or non-concatenate morphology is also known as root-and-pattern morphology. This type of morphology is very common in Semitic languages. In non-concatenate morphology, words are formed by entering vowel melodies on fixed consonantal roots. In non-linear morphology, there are two unpronounceable morphemes: a pure skeletal morpheme and a pure melodic morpheme. Both are incomplete and cannot occur alone. In order to make them a pronounceable element, they must be combined. This situation also occurs in Mesqan. Non-linear morphology is very productive in the lexicalization of verbs in Mesqan. For example, the verb *fäkkätä* ‘he worked’ is a combination of the root morpheme  $\sqrt{fkt}$  with the lexical meaning ‘work’ and the vowel melody *ä-ä*. The two are arranged according to the pattern  $C_1VC_2C_2VC_3$ , which marks the perfective aspect.

A verb in Mesqan occurs in three bases, namely, perfective, imperfective and jussive. The former two are clearly ascribed an aspectual meaning, while the later denote a modal meaning.

Table 1: Conjugational Patterns

	LEXICAL ROOT	GLOSS	ASPECT/MOOD	PATTERN	BASE
a.	$\sqrt{kt'r}$	'kill'	Perfective	$C_1\ddot{a}C_2C_2\ddot{a}C_3$	→ $k'ät't'är-$
			Imperfective	$C_1\ddot{a}C_2C_3$	→ $-k'ät'ir-$
			Jussive	$C_1C_2C_3$	→ $-k't'ir-$
b.	$\sqrt{ngs}$	'reign'	Perfective	$C_1\ddot{a}C_2C\ddot{a}C_3$	→ $näggäs-$
			Imperfective	$C_1\ddot{a}C_2C_3$	→ $-nägs-$
			Jussive	$C_1C_2\ddot{a}C_3$	→ $-ngäs-$
c.	$\sqrt{fkt}$	'work'	Perfective	$C_1\ddot{a}C_2C_2\ddot{a}C_3$	→ $fäkkät-$
			Imperfective	$C_1\ddot{a}C_2C_2C_3$	→ $-fäkkit-$
			Jussive	$C_1\ddot{a}C_2C_2C_3$	→ $-fäkkit-$

The above patterns in Table 1 occur only with regular tri-consonantal roots, whereas  $C_1$  represents the root-initial consonant,  $C_3$  represents the root-final consonant and  $C_2$  represents the root-medial consonant, which is the only consonant which can be geminated or not. Generally, lexical roots of basic stems in Mesqan consist of one, two, three or four consonants (see Leslau 2004). Bi-consonantal roots are considered to originate from tri-consonantal roots (Hetzron 1977: 76). Baye (2000: 44-54) also points out that the basic radicals of Ethio-Semitic languages are tri-radicals. Non tri-radical verbs are formed by root reduction. Thus, mono- and bi-radical verbs are results of reduction of original their radicals.

The combination of lexical root and vowel melody according to specific patterns derives a grammatical base form of the verb, which is a pronounceable but still a

dependent element. In order to form a complete verb, i.e., an independent word, a subject agreement marker must be attached to the base, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: 3SM Subject Agreement on Verb Bases

ASPECT/MOOD	TEMPLATE	BASE	3SM SUBJECT	LEXICAL WORD	GLOSS
a. Perfective	C <sub>1</sub> äC <sub>2</sub> C <sub>2</sub> äC <sub>3</sub>	k'ät't'är-	-ä	kätt'ärä	'he killed'
b. Imperfective	C <sub>1</sub> äC <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub>	-k'ät'ir-	y-... ø	yik'ät'ir	'he kills/will kill'
c. Jussive	C <sub>1</sub> C <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub>	-k't'ir-	yä-... ø	yäk't'ir	'Let him kill!'

Perfective verbs use a suffix set for subject agreement, but imperfective and jussive verbs use a combination of prefixes and suffixes (see section 0, Table 5 for a detailed list of the subject markers). Imperfective and jussive verbs use almost the same set of affixes with two major differences. First, 1S subjects are marked by interchangeable by the prefix *ä-* or *n-* with affirmative imperfective verbs but only with the prefix *n-* on jussive or negated imperfective verbs:

- (4) a. *nī-k'ät'ir-ø* or *ä-k'ät'ir-ø*  
 1-kill.IPV-S      1-kill.IPV-S  
 'I kill/will kill.'
- b. *nīk't'ir*  
*nī-k't'ir-ø*  
 1-kill.JUS-S  
 'Let me kill!'
- c. *annīk'ät'ir*  
*an-nī-k'ät'ir-ø*  
 NEG-1-kill.IPV-S  
 'I will not kill'

Second, the third person subjects, except the 3SF, are marked by the prefix *y-* on imperfective verbs, but by *yä-* on jussive verbs.

#### 4.1.1 Verb Types

Mesqan verbs can be classified into four types based on gemination of a root consonant and the quality of the vowel following the first consonants of a root: type A, type B, type C and type D. In verbs of type A, gemination only occurs in the perfective aspect and is characterized by the vowel *ä* following the first consonant in the affirmative perfective but by zero in the jussive. In verbs of type B, gemination occurs in all three bases. The vowel following the first consonant is *ä* in the jussive but *ä* or *e* in the perfective and imperfective (see Hetzron 1977: 71; Leslau 2004: 16). Verbs in type C geminate their second root consonant in the perfective and imperfective aspect but not in the jussive. The vowel after the first consonant is *a* in all bases (see Hetzron 1977: 71, Leslau 2004: 23). In verbs

following type D, gemination is consistent with type C, but they are different in the vowel following the first radical that is *o* in all three bases (Leslau 2004: 24).

*Table 3: Verb Types and Their Patterns in the Three Bases*

	PERFECTIVE	IMPERFECTIVE	JUSSIVE
Type A	<i>säbbärä</i>	<i>yisäbîr</i>	<i>yäsîr</i>
Type B	<i>bettänä</i>	<i>yîbettîn</i>	<i>yäbättîn</i>
Type C	<i>marrähä</i>	<i>yîmarrîh</i>	<i>yämarh</i>
Type D	<i>sommänä</i>	<i>yîsommîn</i>	<i>yäsommîn</i>

Verb types are purely lexical not grammatical in character.

#### *4.1.2 Auxiliary Verbs and Copulas*

The verb *bannä* in Mesqan is used as past-tense auxiliary verb and as past-tense copula. The two occur in distinct syntactic positions. The past-tense copula occurs in nominal clauses expressing location or ascription of qualities, and shows subject agreement by the suffixes attached to perfective verbs. However, when *bannä* occurs with another verb, it functions as a temporal auxiliary indicating past tense and does not show subject agreement but occurs in the invariant form *bannä*. The auxiliary *bannä* is juxtaposed to bare imperfective verbs to express a continuous/durative or habitual verbal event in the past, but does as such not occur with bare perfective verbs (but see the formation of the past perfect in section 5.5).

- (5) a. *astämari bannäh<sup>w</sup>*  
 astämari bannä-h<sup>w</sup>  
 teacher COP.PAST-1S  
 ‘I was a teacher.’
- b. *yitfäjñ bannä*  
 y-tfäjñ-ø bannä  
 3-come.IPV-MS AUX.PAST  
 ‘He was used to come.’

When *bannä* functions as an auxiliary verb, subject agreement is indicated at the main verb, as in (6b).

The non-past tense auxiliary *-u* is used to express present or future time (see also 5.3). Unlike the past auxiliary, it is dependent morpheme which is suffixed to an imperfective main verb. The non-past tense auxiliary can also be used as a copulative verb when it occurs with nominal predicates to express location or ascription of qualities, as in (8b). When *-u* functions as an auxiliary verb, subject agreement is indicated at the main verb. The non-past tense auxiliary *-u* is used in a periphrastic constructions in which it is suffixed to an affirmative bare imperfective verb to express progressivity (see also section 5.4.1) and an imperfective verb marked by *-e* to express the prospective aktionsart (see also section 5.4). However, the main function of the auxiliary *-u* is to indicate tense.

- (7) *yisäbru*  
 y-säbr-Ø-u  
 3-break.IPV-MS-AUX.NP  
 ‘He is breaking.’

Hetzron (1977: 106) also identifies the present-tense copula *-ya* for 3SF, inflected *-n* for all subjects and *-u* for 3SM. In addition, Mesqan has the existential copula *nänä*, which inflect with the suffixes for perfective verbs, but has an inherent present-tense meaning.

- (8) a. *astämarih<sup>w</sup>*  
 astämari-n-h<sup>w</sup>  
 teacher-COP.NP-1S  
 ‘I am a teacher.’
- b. *astämariw*  
 astämari-u  
 teacher-COP.NP.3SM  
 ‘He is a teacher.’
- c. *astämariya*  
 astämari-ya  
 teacher-COP.NP.3SF  
 ‘She is a teacher.’

### 4.1.3 Negation

The negative marker is the invariable prefix *an-* for perfective verbs (cf. Leslau 2004:4), as in (6).

- (6) *ansäkkäth<sup>w</sup>*  
 an-säkkät-h<sup>w</sup>  
 Neg-work.NEG.PV-1s  
 ‘I did not work’

A verb in the imperfective aspect or in the jussive/imperative mood has three distinct negative markers. In both cases the alternations are based on person. The negative prefix *an-* occurs with the first person, the prefix *at-* with the second person or the 3SF and the prefix *e-* with the third person, except 3SF.

*Table 4: Negation of Verbs in the Imperfective Aspect*

PERSON	VERB	GLOSS
1S	<i>anninägs</i> an-ni-nägs- $\emptyset$ NEG-1-reign.IPV-S	‘I will not reign.’
2SM	<i>attinägs</i> at-t-nägs- $\emptyset$ NEG-2 reign.IPV-MS	‘You will not reign.’
2SF	<i>attinägf</i> at-t-nägs-i NEG-2-reign.IPV-FS	‘You will not reign.’
3SM	<i>enägs</i> e-nägs- $\emptyset$ NEG.3-reign.IPV-MS	‘He will not reign.’
3SF	<i>attinägs</i> at-t-nägs- $\emptyset$ NEG-3-reign. IPV-FS	‘She will not reign.’
1P	<i>anninägsnä</i> an-ni-nägs-nä NEG-1-reign.IPV-P	‘We will not reign.’
2PM	<i>attinägsö</i>	‘You will not reign.’

PERSON	VERB	GLOSS
	at-t-nägs-o NEG-2-reign.IPV-PM	
2PF	<i>attinägsäma</i> at-t-nägs-äma NEG-2-reign.IPV-PF	‘You will not reign.’
3PM	<i>enägso</i> e-nägs-o NEG.3-reign.IPV-PM	‘They will not reign.’
3PF	<i>enägsäma</i> e-nägs-äma NEG.3-reign.IPV-PF	‘They will not reign.’

Note that, the negative prefix *-e* is portmanteau morpheme which indicates both negation and person, as shown in Table 4.

The past-tense auxiliary verb *bannä* is negated by the negative perfective of the verb *näbbärä* ‘live’, i.e., *an-näbär-ä* (NEG-live.NEG.PV-3SM) ‘he was not’, while the existential copula *nänä* ‘he/it exists’ is negated by the suppletive negative existential verb *ennä* ‘he/it does not exist’. The two negative forms show subject agreement by the person suffixes attached to perfective verbs.

The present-tense copula is negated by the negative form of the verb *hänä* ‘be (come)’, i.e., *an-kän-*, which also shows subject agreement by the person suffixes attached to perfective verbs. However, the non-past tense auxiliary *-u* is never attached to negated verbs.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.1 TENSE, ASPECT, AKTIONSART AND MOOD IN MESQAN

In this chapter, the tense, aspect and mood system of Mesqan verbs is described. The perfective and imperfective aspect, the progressive and prospective aktionsart, past and the non-pat tense, as well as the jussive, imperative and other additional mood categories are briefly discussed and examined.

#### *5.1.1 Distinction between Tense and Aspect in Mesqan*

The present section focuses on the distinctions between tense and aspect. Verb semantics and their interaction with aspect/tense morphemes, irregular use of certain perfective verbs and the use of some adverbs are the main diagnostics to distinguish between tense and aspect in Mesqan.

The main question is whether the base forms of verbs that were labeled as perfective vs. imperfective in section 0 are the grammatical encodings for aspect or rather tense as frequently indicated in the previous literature on Mesqan. Consider the following example:

- (7) a. *huti säb k'ätt'ärä*  
 hutı säb k'ätt'är-ä  
 he person kill.PV-3SM  
 'He killed people.'
- b. *huti säb yik'üt'ir*  
 hutı säb y-k'ät'r-ø  
 he person 3-kill.IPV-SM  
 'He kills/will kill people.'

In (7), the situation can be viewed from two perspectives: the internal constituency of the situation or the time of an action. In (7a), the action is completed and at the same time it can be interpreted as referring to the past time, i.e., the action of killing was performed prior to the moment of speech. In (7b), in contrast, the situation has internal continuity and also non-past reading. Thus based on the above data, it is possible to say that a past-time implication is related to the perfective aspect, while a non-past implication is related to the imperfective aspect.

However, aspect morphemes interact with the lexical semantics of the verb, while tense morphemes do not. Tense is rather interacting with the whole proposition with respect to the moment of speech. This idea is realized in the time implications of stative and dynamic verbs, as illustrated below:

- (8) *tägäddärä*  
 tägäddär-ä  
 sleep.PV-3sm  
 'He sleeps.'

As can be seen in (8), the stative verb *tägäddär-* 'sleep' occurs in the base of the perfective aspect and is marked for 3SM subject agreement by the suffix *-ä*.

However, without additional context, the state of affairs implied in (8) occurs simultaneously to the moment of speech, i.e., it is implied that a certain individual is still sleeping at the time of speaking.

On the other hand, by using the perfective form of dynamic verbs, the speaker implies that the action occurred before the moment of speech. The following example shows this fact:

- (9) *zäynu birttjik'o säbbärä*  
zäynu birttjik'o säbbär-ä  
Zeynu glass break.PV-3sm  
'Zeynu broke a glass.'

As can be seen in (9), the dynamic verb *säbbärä* 'break' occurs in the perfective aspect. In this case, the agent of the clause has performed the action of breaking prior to the moment of speech.

The different time implications of stative and dynamic verbs in the perfective aspect are a typical feature of an aspect morpheme but not of a tense marker as tense is more generalized than aspect and, thus, does not interact with the verb semantics (see section 2.1.2.3), as in the following example:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See also Meyer (2006: 117) for a similar situation in Wolane.

- (10) a. *zäynu yidgäddär bannä*  
 zäynu y-dgäddär-ø bannä  
 Zeynu 3-sleep.IPV-MS AUX.PAST  
 i. ‘Zeynu was sleeping.’ (continuous)  
 ii. ‘Zeynu used to sleep.’ (habitual)
- b. *huti säb yik’ät’ir bannä*  
 huti säb y-k’ät’r-ø bannä  
 he person 3-kill.IPV-SM AUX.PAST  
 i. ‘He was killing people.’ (process)  
 ii. ‘He used to kill people.’ (habitual)

Example (10a) contains the stative imperfective verb *yidgäddär* ‘sleep’ followed by the past-tense auxiliary *bannä* which has scope over the whole sentence. It does not interact with the inherent verb semantics, as was the case in (8), but simply encodes that the state of sleeping was completed in the past, i.e., prior to the moment of utterance. Similarly, the dynamic verb *yik’ät’ir* followed by the past-tense auxiliary in (10b) refer to a verbal event in the past. However, (10a/b) can occur in two readings in the past, i.e., either a simple past reading (10i) or a past habitual (10ii).

In addition to perfective aspect, different readings can be seen in the way that imperfectives apply to stative and dynamic verbs. Consider the following examples.

- (14) *migi yibära*  
 m<sup>igi</sup> y-bära- $\emptyset$   
 food 3-eat.IPV-MS  
 i. 'He eats food.' (He always eats food.)  
 ii. 'He will eat food.'

As can be seen from the above example, the dynamic verb *yibära* 'eat' occurs in the imperfective aspect. In this case the situation can have three different readings: present and future (non-past) and habitual. However when we apply imperfective aspect to some stative verbs, the effect is only to signal a future state, not non-past and/or habitual, as in (14). Consider the following example.

- (15) *astämari yihän*  
 astämari y-hän- $\emptyset$   
 teacher 3-be(come).IPV-3SM  
 'He will be a teacher.'

Thus, based on the facts illustrated in the above examples (8) to (10), it is possible to conclude that the base forms of the verbs are pure aspectual constructions that interact with the lexical semantics of verbs. Past tense is encoded by the auxiliary *bannä* that co-occurs with a main verb in the imperfective aspect.

Another diagnostic for an aspect system is the occurrence of the imperfective form of a verb in different tenses, as in (16).

- (16) a. *yisäbru*  
 y-säbr-ø-u  
 3-break.IPV-SM-AUX.NP  
 ‘He is breaking’
- b. *yisäbir bannä*  
 y-säbr-ø                      bannä  
 3-break.IPV.SM              AUX.PAST
- i. ‘He was breaking’  
 ii. ‘He used to break’

As can be seen in (16) above, the main verb is in the imperfective aspect and two different tense markers, for non-past and past, can be attached to it. In (16a) the situation is simultaneous with the present moment; in (16b), the situation occurred prior to the moment of utterance. Thus, a verb in the imperfective aspect can be used with different tense markers, which is another strong evidence for an aspect system rather than a tense system.

Furthermore, a few verbs in the perfective aspect can occur in an ‘irregular’ use of to expresses future time. This fact is shown in (17) below.

- (17) a. *tʃäɲɲähu – k’äyä*  
 tʃäɲɲä-hu      k’äyä  
 come.PV-1s    wait.JUS.2sm  
 ‘Wait, I will come (immediately).’ (lit. I came)
- b. *tʃaw – wärh<sup>w</sup>*  
 tʃaw wär-h<sup>w</sup>  
 ciao go.PV-1s  
 ‘Ciao, I will go (immediately).’ (lit. I went.)’

In (17a), the speaker did not finish the action of coming prior to the moment of utterance. Rather he is very certain that he will fulfill the action of coming in the

near future. Similarly, the perfective verb in (17b) implies that the action of going will be performed in the immediate future. However, this use of the perfective aspect seems to be restricted to these two motion verbs only. In any case, were these verbs marked for past tense, such a reading would be impossible.

In addition, the use of adverbs is another diagnostics. Hence, the adverb ‘always’ is restricted to imperfective aspect, and, thus it cannot go with perfectivity. Therefore, the combination of the perfective aspect and the adverb ‘always’ will be ungrammatical. Consider the following example.

- (18) a. *zäynu ininge ambässa yik’ät’ir*  
           *zäynu ininge anbässa y-k’ät’ir-ø*  
           Zeynu always lion 3-work.IPV-SM  
           ‘Zeynu always kills a lion.’
- b. \* *zäynu ininge ambässa k’ätt’rä*  
           *zäynu ininge anbässa k’ätt’r-ä*  
           Zeynu always lion work.PV-3SM  
           ‘Zeynu always killed a lion.’

As can be seen from (18), imperfective aspect can be combined with the adverb ‘always’ but perfectivity is incompatible with it because perfective aspect is used in describing situations that must inherently last for a certain period of time. However, the adverb ‘always’ is used in expressing a situation that does not last in time. Thus, this is another evidence for that the base forms of the verbs are pure aspectual constructions.

To sum up, the discussion until now has shown that Mesqan verbs are primarily marked for aspect but not for tense.

### 5.1.2 Aspect in Mesqan

The perfective aspect is commonly used for expressing a situation that has a right boundary or an endpoint, as shown in (19).

- (19) *tirama birttʃik'o säbbärä*  
tirama birttʃik'o säbbär-ä  
yesterday glass break.PV-3SM  
'He broke a glass yesterday.'

As can be seen in the above example, the main verb is in the perfective aspect. This sentence simply states that the action of breaking is considered to be completed, i.e., it is assumed that the agent of the clause performed the action breaking prior to the moment of utterance. There is no grammatical expression of time on the verb.

The imperfective aspect is used to express a situation as having continuity, as in (20).

- (20) *nägä tägäbe yar*  
nägä tä-gäbe y-ar-ø  
tomorrow to-market 3-go.IPV-SM  
'He will go to the market tomorrow.'

Sentence (20) denotes an action which is still not completed or without a temporal boundary, i.e. the subject of the clause did not complete the action of going to the

market, rather the situation has internal continuity. The imperfective form of a verb may also have a habitual reading in Mesqan, as in (21).

- (21) *zäynu yifäkkit*  
zäynu y-fäkkit- $\emptyset$   
Zeynu 3-work.IPV-SM  
i. 'Zeynu works.' (habitual)  
ii. 'Zeynu will work.'

As we can see in (21), continuity or habituality is both possible readings of an imperfective verb. In order to distinguish between the two readings, adverb can be used, like the adverb 'always' in (22) to focus on the habitual reading.

- (22) *zäynu ininge yifäkkit*  
zäynu ininge y-fäkkit- $\emptyset$   
Zeynu always 3-work.IPV-SM  
'Zeynu always works.'

It is also possible to combine an imperfective main verb and the past-tense auxiliary to express a situation which occurred over an extended period of time in the past (past habitual). Consider the following example:

- (23) *huti säb yik'ät'ir bannä*  
huti säb y-k'ät'r- $\emptyset$  bannä  
he person 3-kill.IPV-SM AUX.PAST  
'He used to kill people.'  
'He was killing people.'

Furthermore, Comrie (1976: 19) observes the following:

“In many languages that have a distinction between perfective and imperfective forms, the perfective forms of some verbs, in particular of some stative verbs, can in fact be used to indicate the beginning of a situation (ingressive meaning).”

In Mesqan, too, such kind of reading with stative verbs can be obtained, as shown in (24):

- (24) *astämari hänä*  
astämari hän-ä  
teacher be(come).PV-3SM  
'He became a teacher (i.e., he is a teacher).'

Sentence (24) can indicate the beginning of the situation of being a teacher, i.e. it may focus on the change from a being a student, for instance, to being a teacher. The starting point is emphasized by the grammatical perfective marker. Thus, the perfective form of the verb *hänä* can convey an ingressive meaning and, consequently, a present-tense reading of the verb is implied.

Mesqan has an aspectual opposition between perfective and imperfective. There are distinct verb bases characterized by specific vowel and gemination patterns for the two aspects. In addition, affixes indicating person, number, and gender of the subject also help to distinguish between the two aspects because a perfective verb marks its subject by a set of suffixes while an imperfective verb uses a combination of pre- and suffixes to refer to the subject, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Conjugation of Affirmative Verbs in the Perfective and Imperfective Aspect

	PERFECTIVE	GLOSS	IMPERFECTIVE	GLOSS
1S	<i>fäkkäth<sup>w</sup></i> fäkkät-h <sup>w</sup> work.PV-1S	‘I worked’	<i>äfäkkit</i> ä-fäkktit-ø 1-work.IPV-S	‘I work/will work.’
2SM	<i>fäkkäthä</i> fäkkät-hä work.PV-2SM	‘You worked’	<i>tifäkkit</i> t-fäkkit-ø 2-work. IPV-SM	‘You work/will work.’
2SF	<i>fäkkätf</i> fäkkät-f work.PV-2SF	‘You worked’	<i>tifäkkitf</i> t-fäkkit-i 2-work. IPV-SF	‘You work/will work.’
3SM	<i>fäkkätä</i> fäkkät-ä work.PV-3SM	‘He worked’	<i>yifäkkit</i> y-fäkkit-ø 3-work.IPV-SM	‘He works/will work.’
3SF	<i>fäkkätättf</i> fäkkät-ätff work.PV-3SF	‘She worked’	<i>tifäkkit</i> t-fäkktit-ø 3-work.IPV-fs	‘She works/will work.’
1P	<i>fäkkätinä</i> fäkkät-nä work.PV-1P	‘We worked’	<i>äfäkkitnä</i> ä-fäkkit-nä 1-work.IPV-P	‘We work/will work.’
2PM	<i>fäkkäthu</i> fäkkät-hu work.PV-2PM	‘You worked’	<i>tifäkkito</i> t-fäkkit-o 2-work.IPV-PM	‘You work/will work.’
2PF	<i>fäkkäthima</i> fäkkät-hima work.PV-2PF	‘You worked’	<i>tifäkktitäma</i> t-fäkkit-äma 2-work.IPV-PM	‘You work/will work.’
3PM	<i>fäkkäto</i> fäkkät-o work.PV-3PM	‘They worked’	<i>yifäkkito</i> y-fäkkit-o 3-work. IPV-PM	‘They work/will work.’
3PF	<i>fäkkätäma</i> fäkkät-äma work.PV-3PF	‘They worked’	<i>yifäkkitäma</i> y-fäkkit-äma 3-work.IPV-PF	‘They work/will work.’

In tri-radical verbs of Mesqan, there are two general grammatical shapes for the two aspects:  $c_1vc_2c_2\ddot{a}c_3$ - for the perfective and  $-c_1vc_2(c_2)c_3$ - for the imperfective. The penultimate radical ( $c_2$ ) which is found in the imperfective aspect indicates that the root-medial consonant can be geminated or not, i.e. gemination is optional in the imperfective aspect while in the perfective it is obligatory. Table (6) shows this fact.

Table 6: Aspectual templates of perfective and imperfective aspects

TYPES	ASPECT	TEMPLATE	BASE	3SM	LEXICAL	GLOSS
				SUBJECT	WORD	
A	Perfective	$C_1\ddot{a}C_2C_2\ddot{a}C_3$	<i>näggäs-</i>	-ä	<i>näggäsä</i>	'He reigned.'
B	perfective	$C_1eC_2C_2\ddot{a}C_3$	<i>bettän-</i>	-ä	<i>bettänä</i>	'He dispersed.'
C	Perfective	$C_1aC_2C_2\ddot{a}C_3$	<i>marräh-</i>	-ä	<i>marrähä</i>	'He took a prisoner.'
D	perfective	$C_1oC_2C_2\ddot{a}C_3$	<i>sommän-</i>	-ä	<i>sommänä</i>	'He fasted.'
A	Imperfective	$C_1\ddot{a}C_2C_3$	<i>-nägs-</i>	$y...ø$	<i>yinägs</i>	'He reigns/ will reign.'
B	Imperfective	$C_1eC_2C_2C_3$	<i>-bettän-</i>	$y...ø$	<i>yibettän</i>	'He disperses/ will disperse.'
C	Imperfective	$C_1aC_2C_2C_3$	<i>-marräh-</i>	$y...ø$	<i>yimarräh</i>	'He takes/ will take a prisoner.'
D	Imperfective	$C_1oC_2C_2C_3$	<i>-sommän-</i>	$y...ø$	<i>yisommän</i>	'He fasts/ will fast.'

As already mention in section 0, the imperfective verb in Mesqan can occur either in the past or the non-past tense. Past tense with an imperfective verb is expressed by the auxiliary *bannä* which follows the imperfective verb:

- (25) *yar bannä*  
y-ar-∅            bannä  
3-go.IPV-SM    AUX.PAST  
'He used to go.'

To focus on the present tense with an imperfective verb, the non-past tense auxiliary *-u* is attached to it:

- (26) *yisäbru*  
y-säbr-∅-u  
3-break.IPV-SM-AUX.NP  
'He is breaking.'

As can be seen from the above sentence, the imperfective form of the verb plus the non-past tense auxiliary has a progressive reading (see also section 0).

A bare imperfective verb in Mesqan is usually interpreted as referring to the non-past in general, i.e., it can denote continuity at the moment of utterance or afterwards or denote a habitual action:

- (27) *yizäbbir*  
y-zäbbir-∅  
3-reply.IPV-MS  
'He replies/will reply.'

As can be seen from the above example, in Mesqan tense is not obligatory to be indicated with affirmative imperfective verbs in main clauses.

A dynamic verb in the perfective aspect is usually interpreted as referring to the past time in Mesqan. Consider the following example:

- (28) *zäbbärä*  
zäbbär-ä  
reply.PV-3SM  
'He replied.'

The perfective form of a verb expresses the completion of the situation which is the reason for its past time implication, or as Bybee et al. (1994: 54) put it, “perfective is often used to refer to situations that occurred in the past.”

### *5.1.3 Tense in Mesqan*

Mesqan distinguishes between past and non-past tense by means of auxiliary verbs that commonly co-occur with imperfective verbs. The past-tense auxiliary *bannä* can also combine with the converb form of a perfective verb to form a past perfect (see section 0).

Past tense refers to a situation that took place prior to the time of speaking (Bybee et al. 1994:55). In Mesqan, the past tense is marked by the invariable auxiliary *bannä*:

- (29) a. *zäynu menna yifäkkit bannä*  
 zäynu menna yi-fäkkit-ø bannä  
 Zeynu work 3-work.IPV-SM AUX.PAST  
 i. ‘Zeynu was doing work.’  
 ii. ‘Zeynu used to do work.’
- b. *wäräm bannä*  
 wär-ä-m bannä  
 go.PV-3SM-CNV AUX.PAST  
 ‘He had gone.’

The past-tense auxiliary can also co-occur with the imperfective verb marked by the suffix *-e* to express a situation which was intended to be fulfilled in the past (see section 0). Consider the following example:

- (30) *yifäkkite bannä*  
 y-fäkkit-ø-e bannä  
 3-work.IPV-SM-PROS AUX.PAST  
 ‘He had intended to work.’

As can be seen in the above examples, the past-tense auxiliary is the invariable independent word *bannä* that is simply juxtaposed to the main verb to explicitly refer to the time before the moment of speech.

In Mesqan, the non-past tense is marked by the invariable *-u* to refer to the time just at/after the moment of speech. The non-past tense auxiliary only co-occurs with imperfective verbs. Consider the following example:

- (31) *zäynu tägäbe yaru*  
 zäynu tä-gäbe y-ar-ø-u  
 Zeynu to-market 3-go.IPV-SM-AUX.NP  
 ‘Zeynu is going to the market.’

Future time can be expressed by the combination of the prospective aktionsart of the imperfective marked by the suffix *-e* (see section 0) followed by the invariable non-past tense auxiliary *-u*:

- (32) *täk’una amät ifte yinägsew*  
 tä-k’una amät ifte y-nägs-ø-e-u  
 from-single year after 3-reign.IPV-SM-PROS-AUX.NP  
 ‘He intends to reign after one year.’

In this case, the verbal event has the reading that it is about to take place in the future and the future implication is comes from the composition of the imperfective main verb *-nägs-* plus the morpheme *-e* followed by the non past auxiliary *-u*. Furthermore, the present tense can be expressed by zero morpheme in the present perfect construction (see also section 5.5).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Dahl (1985: 19) says that “a grammatical opposition consists of a zero marked member with less specific interpretation which is opposed to an overtly marked member with more specific interpretation.”

### *5.1.4 Aktionsart*

Mesqan possesses two aktionsarten in main clauses that are formed by periphrastic constructions, namely the progressive and the prospective.

#### 5.1.4.1 Progressive

The progressive is used to denote an action that is just in process. In Mesqan, the most frequent form of the progressive is a periphrastic construction consisting of the imperfective form of a verb and the invariable non-past tense auxiliary *-u*, as shown in the following table:

Table 7: Progressive Conjugation

	PROGRESSIVE CONSTRUCTION	GLOSS
1S	<i>iyya ambässa äk'ät'ru</i> iyya anbässa ä-k'ät'r-ø-u I lion 1-kill.IPV-S-AUX.NP	'I am killing a lion.'
2SM	<i>ahä ambässa tik'ät'ru</i> ahä anbässa t-k'ät'r-ø-u you lion 2-kill.IPV-SM-AUX.NP	'You are killing a lion.'
2SF	<i>afi ambässa tik'ät'iw</i> afi anbässa t-k'ät'r-i-u you lion 2-kill.IPV-SF-AUX.NP	'You are killing a lion.'
3SM	<i>huti ambässa yik'ät'ru</i> hiti anbässa y-k'ät'r-ø-u he lion 3-kill.IPV-SM-AUX.NP	'He is killing a lion.'
3SF	<i>hiti ambässa tik'ät'ru</i> hiti anbässa t-k'ät'r-ø-u she lion 3-kill.IPV-SF-AUX.NP	'She is killing a lion.'
1P	<i>inna ambässa äk'ät'rnäw</i> inna anbässa ä-k'ät'r-nä-u we lion 1-kill.IPV-P-AUX.NP	'We are killing a lion.'
2PM	<i>ahu ambässa tik'ät'row</i> ahu anbässa t-k'ät'r-o-u you lion 2-kill.IPV-PM-AUX.NP	'You are killing a lion.'
2PF	<i>ahima ambässa tik'ät'rämaw</i> ahima anbässa t-k'ät'r-äma-u you lion 2-kill.IPV-PF-AUX.NP	'You are killing a lion.'
3PM	<i>hinno ambässa yik'ät'row</i> hinno anbässa y-k'ät'r-o-u they lion 3-kill.IPV-SM-AUX.NP	'They are killing a lion.'
3PF	<i>hinnäma ambässa yik'ät'rämaw</i> hinnäma anbässa y-k'ät'r-äma-u they lion 3-kill.IPV-SF-AUX.NP	'They are killing a lion.'

In Mesqan the progressive aktionsart cannot be formed from stative verbs. Therefore, the following example is ungrammatical:

- (33) \**astämari yihänu*  
astämari y-hän-ø-u  
teacher 3-be(come).IPV-SM-AUX.NP  
'He is becoming a teacher.'

In Mesqan, the progressive can also be formed by means of a locative construction in which a verbal noun is preceded by the locative prefix *bä-* and followed by the relational noun *f<sup>w</sup>är* 'top'. This locative construction occurs then as complement to the copula to denote a progressive action:<sup>4</sup>

- (34) *zäynu bäwäsäkkit f<sup>w</sup>äru*  
zäynu bä-wä-säkkit f<sup>w</sup>är-u  
Zeynu LOC-VN-work top-COP.NP.3SM  
'Zeynu is working.'

The subject of the clause is referred to by subject agreement on the copula.

#### 5.1.4.2 Prospective

The prospective denotes an intended action. In Mesqan, it is expressed by an imperfective verb marked by the suffix *-e* followed by the invariable non-past tense auxiliary *-u*, as in (35), or with the invariable past-tense auxiliary *bannä*, as in (36).

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<sup>4</sup> Comrie (1976: 98) states that the progressive aspect can be expressed cross-linguistically by a locative construction in which a verbal noun is preceded by a locative preposition.

(35) *nägä tägäbe yarew*  
 nägä      tä-gäbe    y-ar-ø-e-u  
 tomorrow to-market 3-go.IPV-SM-PROS-AUX.NP  
 ‘He intends to go to market tomorrow.’

(36) *tirama tägäbe yare bannä*  
 tirama    tä-gäbe    y-ar-ø-e                      bannä  
 yesterday to-market 3-go.IPV-SM-PROS      AUX.PAST  
 ‘He was intending to go to market yesterday.’

In sentence (35), the prospective aktionsart composed of the imperfective main verb *-ar-* plus the morpheme *-e* with the prefixed and suffixed personal pronouns *y... ø*. The tense is expressed with the non-past auxiliary *-u*. The same form can be expressed in past simply by changing the present auxiliary to the past auxiliary *bannä*, as in (36).

### 5.1.5 Perfect

In addition to the perfective and imperfective aspects, Mesqan further possesses a perfect formed from the converb of a perfective verb. Thus, the present perfect is formed by a perfective form followed by *-m*, as in (37).

(37) *zäynu marrähäm*  
 zäynu      marrähä-m-ø  
 Zeynu      take prisoner.PV.3SM-CNV-PRES  
 ‘Zeynu has taken a prisoner.’

The perfective form of the verb expresses a situation which is completed but the converb marker *-m* relates the situation to the moment of utterance. In this case,

the present tense is zero marked. In addition, present perfect in stative verbs can have a present continuous reading, as in (38).

- (38) *zäynu tägäddäräm*  
zäynu tägäddärä-m-ø  
Zeynu sleep.PV.3sm-CNV-PRES  
'Zeynu is sleeping.'

In (37), a situation started in the past but still continues at the moment of utterance. The reason for the two different English translations, in (37) and (38) is the inherent semantics of the verbs involved. While (37) is formed from a dynamic verb, (38) contains a stative verb. Thus, as it was the case with the perfective aspect, the use of either stative or dynamic verbs also yields different readings in the perfect construction.

The past perfect, subsequently, is expressed by a perfective converb followed by the past-tense auxiliary *bannä*, as in (39)

- (39) *marrähäm bannä*  
marrähä-m bannä  
take prisoner.PV.3SM-CNV AUX. PAST  
'He had taken a prisoner.'

## 5.1.6 Mood in Mesqan

### 5.1.6.1 Agent-Oriented Mood

The agent-oriented moods are jussive and imperative which both are formed by the same verb bases.

#### 5.1.6.1.1 Jussive

The jussive expresses a command for the first and third persons. In Mesqan, the jussive is expressed by distinct conjugational templates. Leslau (1992b:539) claims that the jussive in type A tri-consonantal verbs of Mesqan has three patterns: -C<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>äC<sub>3</sub>- for intransitive verbs, and -C<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub>- or -C<sub>1</sub>iC<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub>- for transitive verbs. However, the researcher of this study came across only two patterns, namely -C<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>äC<sub>3</sub>- and -C<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub>- for intransitive and transitive verbs, respectively, which is consistent with Leslau (1992b). Table 8 shows the inflection of type A intransitive verbs in the jussive mood:

Table 8: Jussive Conjugation of an Intransitive type A Verbs

	JUSSIVE	GLOSS
1S	<i>iyya ningäs</i> iyya n-ngäs-Ø I 1-reign.JUS-S	'Let me reign!'
3SM	<i>huti yängäs</i> huti yä-ngäs-Ø he 3-reign.JUS.SM	'Let him reign!'
3SF	<i>hiti tingäs</i> hiti t-ngäs-Ø she 3-reign.JUS.SF	'Let her reign!'
1P	<i>inna ningäsnä</i> inna n-ngäs-nä we 1-reign.JUS-P	'Let us reign!'
3PM	<i>hinno yängäso</i> hinno yä-ngäs-o they 3-reign.JUS-PM	'Let them reign!'
3PF	<i>hinnäma yängäsäma</i> hinnäma yä-ngäs-äma they 3-reign.JUS-PF	'Let them reign!'

Transitive verbs of type A verbs in Mesqan have the jussive pattern  $-C_1C_2C_3-$ , as shown below:

- (40) a. *yäk'bir*  
yäk-k'bir-Ø  
3-bury.JUS-SM  
'Let him bury!'

b. *yänkis*

yä-nkis-∅

3-bite.JUS-SM

'Let him bite!'

c. *yäsbir*

yä-sbir-∅

3-break.JUS-SM

'Let him break!'

d. *yänk'il*

yä-nk'il-∅

3-dig\_out.JUS-SM

'Let him dig out!'

e. *yäkfit*

yä-kfit-∅

3-open.JUS-SM

'Let him open!'

Unlike in type A, in the other three types (type B, type C and type D) tri-consonantal verbs, there are no distinct grammatical base forms for the transitive and intransitive verbs. Both of them are expressed by the same base forms. The jussive stem pattern for type B tri-consonantal verbs is  $-c_1\ddot{a}c_2c_3-$  and  $-c_1ac_2c_3-$ ,  $-c_1oc_2c_3-$  for type C and type D tri-consonantal verbs, respectively. Table (9) shows this fact.

Table 9: Jussive Conjugation of type B, type C and type D Verbs

TYPES	JUSSIVE	GLOSS
Type	<i>iyya nīmārrik'</i>	'Let me bless!'
B	<i>iyya</i> n-mārrik'- $\emptyset$ I 1-bless.JUS-S	
Type	<i>yābättit</i>	'Let it be wide!'
B	<i>yā-bättit</i> - $\emptyset$ 3-be wide.JUS.SM	
Type	<i>hiti tībalk'</i>	'Let her be old!'
C	<i>hiti</i> t-balk'- $\emptyset$ she 3-be oldJUS.SF	
Type	<i>inna nīmark</i>	'Let us take a prisoner!'
C	<i>inna</i> n-mark-nä we 1-take prisoner.JUS-P	
Type	<i>hinno yāsomino</i>	'Let them fast!'
D	<i>hinno</i> yā-somin-o they 3-fast.JUS-PM	
Type	<i>hinnāma yāk'ofirāma</i>	'Let them dig!'
D	<i>hinnāma</i> yā-k'ofir-āma they 3-digJUS-PF	

### 5.1.6.1.2 Imperative

Verbs in the imperative denote an order given to the addressee. Although the imperative and the jussive have the same grammatical bases, imperative verbs use only a suffix set for subject agreement to distinguish between male and female gender, and singular and plural number whereby the 2SM is zero marked:

Table 10: Imperative Conjugation of type A verbs

	IMPERATIVE	GLOSS
2SM	<i>gɪrf</i> gɪrf-∅ hit.JUS-2SM	‘Hit!’
2SF	<i>nɪgäf</i> nɪgäs-i reign.JUS-2SF	‘Reign!’
2PM	<i>nɪgäso</i> nɪgas-o reign.JUS-2PM	‘Reign!’
2PF	<i>nɪgäsäma</i> nɪgäs-äma reign.JUS.3PF	‘Reign!’

Table 11: Imperative Conjugation of type B, type C and type D verbs

	IMPERATIVE	GLOSS
2SM	<i>märrik’</i> märrik’-∅ bless.JUS-2SM	‘Bless!’
2SF	<i>marki</i> mark-i bless.JUS-2SF	‘Take prisoner!’
2PM	<i>somino</i> somino-o fast.JUS-2PM	‘Reign!’
2PF	<i>k’ofiräma</i> k’ofir-äma dig.JUS.3PF	‘Dig!’

### 5.1.6.1.3 Negative Jussive and Imperative

The negative jussive and the affirmative jussive use the same grammatical base forms and subject agreement markers with one major difference: The third persons are marked by *e-* with verbs in the negated jussive but by *yä-* with verbs in the affirmative jussive.

Table 12: Conjugation of Negative Jussive of type A verbs

	NEGATIVE JUSSIVE	GLOSS
1S	<i>säb annik't'ir</i> säb     an-n-k't'ir-ø person NEG-1-kill.JUS-S	'Let me not kill a person!'
3SM	<i>säb ek't'ir</i> säb     e-k't'ir-ø person NEG.3-kill.JUS-SM	'Let him not kill a person!'
3SF	<i>attingäs</i> at-t-ngäs-ø NEG-3-reign.JUS-SF	'Let her not reign!'
1P	<i>anningäsnä</i> an-n-ngäs-ø NEG-1-reignJUS-P	'Let us not reign!'
3PM	<i>hinno engäso</i> hinno   e-ngäs-o they    NEG.3-reign.JUS-PM	'Let them not reign!'
3PF	<i>hinnäma engäsäma</i> hinnäma   e-ngäs-äma they        NEG.3-reign.JUS-PF	'Let them not reign!'

The imperative is negated by attaching the prefix *at-* to the affirmative forms. The *t* of the prefix is the marker for second person subjects.

Table 13: Negative Imperative Conjugation of type A verbs

	NEGATIVE IMPERATIVE	GLOSS
2SM	<i>attigrif</i> at-t-grif- $\emptyset$ NEG-2-hit.JUS-2SM	'Don't hit!'
2SF	<i>attingäf</i> at-t-ngäs-i NEG-2-reign.JUS-2SF	'Don't reign!'
2PM	<i>attingäso</i> at-t-ngas-o NEG-2-reign.JUS-2PM	'Don't reign!'
2PF	<i>attingäsäma</i> at-t-ngäs-äma reign.JUS.3PF	'Don't reign!'

Table 14: Negative Imperative Conjugation of type B, type C and type D verbs

	IMPERATIVE	GLOSS
2SM	<i>attimärrik'</i> at-t-märrik'- $\emptyset$ NEG-2-bless.JUS-2SM	'Don't bless!'
2SF	<i>attimarki</i> at-t-mark-i NEG-2-bless.JUS-2SF	'Don't take a prisoner!'
2PM	<i>attisomino</i> at-t-somino-o NEG-2-fast.JUS-2PM	'Don't fast!'
2PF	<i>attik'ofiräma</i> at-t-k'ofir-äma NEG-2-dig.JUS.3PF	'Don't dig!'

## 5.1.6.2 Speaker-Oriented Mood

### 5.1.6.2.1 Obligation

Obligation is expressed by a periphrastic construction consisting of a verbal noun, which denotes the obligatory action, as complement to the existential copula *nänä* with invariable 3SM subject:

- (41) *wäwär nänäbe*  
wä-wär    nänä-b-e  
VN-go    exist.PV.3SM-OBL-O1S  
'I have to go.'

The existential copula in (41) is followed by the malefactive morpheme *-b* plus object suffixes referring to the individual who has to fulfill the verbal action.

### 5.1.6.2.2 Ability

The ability to fulfill a verbal action is expressed by a periphrastic construction consisting of the verbal noun, denoting the action in consideration, plus the imperfective verb *-hir-* 'know, be able' whose subject refers to the individual who is able to fulfill the verbal action:

- (42) a. *amariṇṇa wäzäng' yihir*  
amariṇṇa    wä-zäng'    yi-hir-ø  
Amharic    VN-speak    3-know.IPV-SM  
'He can speak Amharic.'
- b. *git'im wäs'af yihir*  
git'im    wä-s'af    yi-hir-ø  
poem    VN-write    3-know.IPV-MS  
'He knows how to write a poem.'

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes and concludes the discussion from the previous chapters on tense, aspect and mood in Mesqan. It was shown that the tense, aspect and mood system of Mesqan has not been well studied. Thus the major aim of this study was to present a detailed descriptive account of these categories in Mesqan, which includes describing the distinction between tense and aspect, identifying the grammatical markers of tense, aspect and mood and identifying whether Mesqan is primarily a tense or an aspect language.

To this effect the study is divided into six chapters that with specific roles. The first chapter contains introductory remarks about the Mesqan people and their language, as well as the statement of the problem, the objective of the study, the significance, and its scope. Chapter Two reviews the typological literature for the study of tense, aspect and mood as well as previous works on Mesqan. In this chapter, I attempted to define the concept of tense, aspect and mood, and provide a method for distinguishing between tense and aspect in which Mesqan verbs are primarily marked for aspect but not for tense. Further, I briefly discuss the concepts of aktionsarten and perfect. In Chapter three, the methodology of the study was presented.

In the fourth chapter, I provided an overview of Mesqan verbs. I explained that the formation of Mesqan verbs is ruled by non-linear morphology. A verb in Mesqan

has a grammatical base form to denote aspect or mood. In addition to these, I attempt to highlight related issues of verbs, i.e. verb types, negation, copulas and auxiliaries.

In the fifth chapter, I particularly dealt with the tense, aspect and mood system in Mesqan. In doing so, I applied the criteria to identify whether a verb is aspect- or tense-marked from Chapter 2 to the Mesqan case. Besides, the aktionsarten, i.e., sub-types of the imperfective aspect, which are expressed by verb semantics and periphrastic constructions were discussed in this chapter.

Based on the findings of the present study, the following conclusions can be forwarded:

Concerning the distinction between tense and aspect, Mesqan verbs are primarily marked for aspect but not for tense.

In Mesqan, aspect as a grammatical category is expressed by distinct grammatical base forms of verbs. Mesqan has two main aspects: perfective and imperfective. The distinction between these two aspects is easily traceable from its morphology, i.e. there are distinct grammatical base forms for the aspects. Thus the perfective aspect has a general grammatical base form  $C_1VC_2C_2\ddot{a}C_3$ - and for the imperfective -  $C_1VC_2(C_2)C_3$ - In addition, subject agreement markers are distinct for the two aspects. The perfective aspect uses a suffix set, while the imperfective aspect uses pre- and suffixes. The perfective and the imperfective verb forms may or may not appear with additional tense markers. If there is no tense marker, the perfective

has a past reading with dynamic verbs but a present reading with stative verbs, while a bare verb in the imperfective aspect has a non-past and/or a habitual meaning. Beside, Mesqan further encodes two aktionsarten by periphrastic constructions, namely the progressive and the prospective.

Tense in Mesqan is expressed by auxiliary verbs. Mesqan distinguishes between two tenses: past and non-past, i.e. present and/or future. The past tense is expressed by the auxiliary *bannä* while the non-past tense is expressed by the auxiliary *-u* or zero in the present tense construction. Tense as a grammatical category can only occur with the imperfective aspect while verbs in the perfective aspect must be transformed into a converb to combine with a tense marker. The non-past tense auxiliary *-u* only occurs with verbs in the imperfective aspect. In the perfective aspect, there is no special marker for tense. The past meaning which is usually found in this aspect is semantically implied.

In addition, Mesqan further can form a present or past perfect. The perfect in Mesqan is expressed by a periphrastic construction. The perfective form of a verb plus converb marker *-m* combine with the past-tense auxiliary *bannä* to form the past perfect, or with no tense marker to form the present perfect.

Regarding mood, in type A verbs there are two distinct grammatical base forms for the jussive/imperative mood distinguishing between transitive and intransitive verbs:  $-c_1c_2c_3-$  and  $-c_1äc_2c_3-$ . Unlike in type A, in the other three types (type B, type C and type D) tri-consonantal verbs, there are no distinct grammatical base forms

for the transitive and intransitive verbs. Both of them are expressed by the same base forms. The jussive stem pattern for type B tri-consonantal verbs is  $-c_1\ddot{a}c_2c_3-$  and  $-c_1ac_2c_3-$ ,  $-c_1oc_2c_3-$  for type C and type D tri-consonantal verbs, respectively.

In addition, obligation and ability can be overtly expressed by periphrastic construction.

To conclude, based on the results obtained from the analysis of tense and aspect, Mesqan is an aspect-based language in which tense is a secondary category which is delimited to verbs in the imperfective aspect and converb form.

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## APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE ON TAM IN MESQAN

<i>SENTENCES</i>	<i>GLOSS</i>
1. issu ambässa gäddälä	‘he killed a lion.’
2. issu astämari honä	‘he became a teacher.’
3. issu täñña	‘he sleeps.’
4. issu tilantina wädä gäbäya hedä	‘he went to market yesterday.’
7. issu tilantina wädä gäbäyä yihed näbär	‘he was going to the market yesterday.’
8. issu wädä gäbäya yəhedäl	‘he goes/will go to the market.’
9. issu astämari yəhonal	‘he will be a teacher.’
10. issu mark <sup>w</sup> al	‘he has taken a prisoner.’
11. issu täñnto <sup>w</sup> al	‘he is sleeping.’
12. issu säbro näbbär	‘he had broken.’
13. issu täñnto näbbär	‘he had slept.’
14. issu kand amät bäfit birtf’k’o səbro <sup>w</sup> al	‘he has broken a mirror a year ago.’
15. issu təlantəna birtf’k’o säbro näbbär	‘he had broken a mirror yesterday.’

16. issu ambbässa iyyägäddälä näw	'he is killing a lion.'
17. issu wädägäbäya lihed näw	'he intends to go.'
18. mätt'hu t'äbk'änn	'I will come(immediately),wait!'
19. tʃaw hedku	'ciao, I will go (immediately).'
20. issu yingäs	'let him reign.'
21. issu yik'bär	'let him bury.'
22. giräf	'hit'
23. nigäs	'reign'
24. mähed alläbbijñ	'I have to go.'
25. amarijña männagär yitʃlal	'he can speak Amharic'
26. bäft'inät märot' yitʃlal	'he can run fast.'

*DYNAMIC VERBS*

*GLOSS*

1. säbbärä	'he broke.'
2. gäddälä	'he killed.'
3. mälläsä	'he replied.'
4. hedä	'he went.'
5. ʃät'ä	'he sold'
6. särä	'he worked'

- |            |                       |
|------------|-----------------------|
| 7. ɕämmärä | 'he began'            |
| 8. mätt'a  | 'he came.'            |
| 9. marräkä | 'he took a prisoner.' |

<i>STATIVE VERBS</i>	<i>GLOSS</i>
----------------------	--------------

- |            |                     |
|------------|---------------------|
| 1. täjña   | 'he slept.'         |
| 2. honä    | 'he became.'        |
| 3. näggäsä | 'he became a king.' |

<i>NOUNS</i>	<i>GLOSS</i>
--------------	--------------

- |              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| 1. säw       | 'person'  |
| 2. gäbäya    | 'market'  |
| 4. astämari  | 'teacher' |
| 5. birtʃ'k'o | 'glass'   |

<i>TIME ADVERBS</i>	<i>GLOSS</i>
---------------------	--------------

- |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. tilantina          | 'yesterday'        |
| 2. ahun               | 'now'              |
| 3. nägä               | 'tomorrow'         |
| 4. kä and amät bäfit  | 'a year ago'       |
| 5. kä haya amät bäfit | 'twenty years ago' |

6. kä and amät bäh<sup>w</sup>ala ‘one year later’

7. kähaya amät bäh<sup>w</sup>ala ‘twenty years later’

#### ASPECTUAL ADVERBS

1. zäwätir ‘always’

2. likk ‘just’

#### *PERSONAL PRONOUNS AS A SUBJECT CASE*

ine ‘I’

antä ‘you (SM)’

antji ‘you (SF)’

isu ‘he’

ijna ‘we’

iss<sup>w</sup>a ‘she’

innantä ‘you’ (F/M)

innäsu ‘they’ (F/M)

#### TEXT: RABBIT AND TORTOISE

1. att känä awraɲɲann a eli yäruɲɲɲa wudidɲir k’ärräsäma. ‘One day rabbit and tortoise began a running competition.’

2. awraɲɲanna bät’am fätt’an r<sup>w</sup>ɲft’ tittihän eli gin bäk’ässta tırramäd insisaya. ‘The rabbit is fast runner, but the tortoise is slow.’

3. awraɲɲannam zi huneta bawāhar “ eli bāt’am k’āsästāɲɲaya, iyyama bāt’am fätt’an r<sup>w</sup>aft’nh<sup>w</sup> bawābār essäbäftft. ‘The rabbit understands that she is faster than the tortoise.’
4. bāzi giz’ä awraɲɲa k’una k’är assäbäftft “eli gāna bāruk’iya mādāriya, silāzih hiti ziya tisālasinn iyya bāzaf t’ilel m<sup>w</sup>rā af<sup>w</sup>äy barräftft. ‘In this time, the rabbit thought one thing “the tortoise is so far from me so that I can take a rest under the tree until she arrives here.”’
5. bāzank’ä bāzafi t’ilel m<sup>w</sup>ärā baf<sup>w</sup>äɲɲäftft ank’ä wānnet wässädānna. ‘After she got some rest she slept.’
6. bāzank’ä eli bāk’āssta wārut’ k’ärräsäftft. ‘Then the tortoise continues running slowly.’
7. bāzank’ä yāwudiddir malāk’iya mādār bāwāsla k’ämmäftft. ‘Then she arrived in the last place of the running competition.’
8. awraɲɲa bāwānnet tittināssa eli bārruft’yi wāk’imetta harräftft. ‘When the rabbit wake up, she knows that the tortoise is the winner.’
9. bāzi giz’ä awraɲɲa bādrigiteta tādādädäftft. ‘At this time, the tortoise got angry.’