

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

**LANGUAGE CHANGE IN TIGRINYA: A
HISTORICAL STUDY BASED ON EARLY
TIGRINYA TEXTS**

BY

SOLOMON NIGUSE KEBEDE

NOVEMBER 2010

ADDIS ABABA

**LANGUAGE CHANGE IN TIGRINYA: A HISTORICAL
STUDY BASED ON EARLY TIGRINYA TEXTS**

BY

SOLOMON NIGUSE KEBEDE

NOVEMBER 2010

**LANGUAGE CHANGE IN TIGRINYA: A HISTORICAL
STUDY BASED ON EARLY TIGRINYA TEXTS**

BY

SOLOMON NIGUSE KEBEDE

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

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

NOVEMBER 2010

**LANGUAGE CHANGE IN TIGRINYA: A HISTORICAL STUDY
BASED ON EARLY TIGRINYA TEXTS**

BY

SOLOMON NIGUSE KEBEDE

Approved by Board of Examiners:

Chair, Department Graduate
Committee

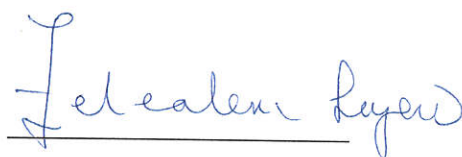
Signature

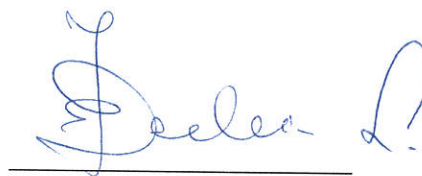
ORIN GENSLER



Advisor

Signature





Examiner

Signature

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of material used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: SOLOMON NIGUSE

Signature: _____

Place: AAU

Date of Submission: NOVEMBER, 2010

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as university advisor.

Confirmed by the advisor:

Prof. Orin Gensler

Signature: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

TO YUMA, NIGUSE AND KEBEDE

ABSTRACT

This study examines some historical linguistic features of early Tigrinya (Ethiosemitic). The aim of this investigation is to analyze and describe sounds, words and phrases of the old forms of the language gathered from early dictionaries, grammar books and manuscripts, mainly from two late nineteenth-century works by Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis, *Tarix ityop'ya* “Ethiopian history” and a travel diary entitled *T'oblahta* “impression”, and to compare them to the present-day language.

Given its scope and objectives, this thesis contains four chapters. The first chapter introduces the study, including the background of the research, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the research, scope of the study, methodology employed for the research, and review of related literature. Chapter two contains a general discussion of semantic change and grammaticalization.

Chapter three presents the main part of the research, the data and data analysis: language change and grammaticalization in Tigrinya. As examples of the findings I can mention, in contrast to the claims of some Ethiosemitists like Hetzron, Ullendorff and others, that the occurrence of palatal sounds in modern Tigrinya words has increased markedly compared to the Tigrinya of Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis. Also spirantized letters appear occasionally (but only occasionally) in the texts: they are explicitly written in the nouns *bəx'wismat* [gloss?], *bəx'əfaf* [gloss?] and *'a'ənax^wi* ‘jewels’; apparently, the change $k > x$ is attested in only one

example: 'axäza 'summer'. In verb forms where spirantization would be expected in the modern language, no spirantization is written in the texts.

The final chapter presents a summary and conclusion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My premier heartfelt gratitude goes to my advisor Professor Orin Gensler for his unreserved academic advice and support which helped me a lot to accomplish this piece of work. This thesis couldn't have been realized without his criticism and help.

I am also indebted to all staff members of the Department of Linguistics and Philology for their helpful warmth during my stay at the university.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all my classmates for the good times we had together.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Contents.....	iv
Symbols & Abbreviations	viii

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 The Language	1
1.3 About the Author of the Books	3
1.4 Statement of the Problem	4
1.5 Objective of the Study.....	4
1.6 Scope of the Study	5
1.7 Significance of the Study	5
1.8 Methods	5
1.9 Review of Related Literature	6

CHAPTER TWO

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	8
2.1 Lexical Change, Semantic Change and Grammaticalization	8
2.1.1 Lexical Change	8
2.1.1.1 Types of Lexical Change	8
2.1.2 Semantic Change in Detail	11
2.1.2.1 Lexical Semantic Change	11
2.1.2.2 Types of Lexical Semantic Change	12
2.2 Grammaticalization	15
2.2.1 Cline or Transcategoriality	17
2.2.2 Unidirectionality	18
2.2.3 Schematicity	18
2.2.4 Phonological Shortening/Oligosegmentality	18

CHAPTER THREE

LANGUAGE CHANGE IN TIGRINYA	19
3.1 Sound Changes in Tigrinya	19
3.1.1 Palatalization	19
3.1.1.1 Palatalization in Ethiosemitic	20

3.1.1.2 Palatalization in Tigrinya	20
3.1.2 Spirantization	25
3.1.3 The Shift from <e> to <ä>	27
3.1.4 Deletion	28
3.1.5 Sporadic Change of Consonant(s)	30
3.1.6 Unexpected Absence of Consonants	31
3.1.7 Metathesis	33
3.1.8 Haplology	34
3.2 Morphological Change in Tigrinya	34
3.3 Lexical Change in Tigrinya	36
3.4 Lexical Semantic Change in Tigrinya	37
3.5 Grammaticalization in Tigrinya	40
3.5.1 Grammaticalization of Morpheme <i>'ənda</i> or <i>da-</i>	41
3.5.1.1 Cline or Transcategoriality	41
3.5.1.2 Unidirectionality	44
3.5.1.3 Schematicity	44
3.5.1.4 Phonological Shortening	45
3.5.2 Meaning Shift of the Morpheme <i>'əya</i>	45

3.5.2.1 Cline of Transcategoriality	45
3.5.2.2 Phonological Shortening/Oligosegmentalization	46
CHAPTER FOUR	
CONCLUSIONS	47
4. Conclusion	47
REFERENCES	51

LINGUISTIC ABBREVIATIONS

HN Head Noun

REL. Relativizer

TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS

ä Central Mid Vowel

ə Central High Vowel

h Voiceless Pharyngeal Fricative

x' Voiced (!) Uvular Fricative

dž (= IPA dʒ) Voiced Palatal Affricate

ʃ Voiceless Palatal Fricative

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Several attempts have been made to explain the linguistic features of the Tigrinya language and to identify its parent language and discuss its connection with Ge'ez. However, as far as my knowledge is concerned, works on historical Tigrinya are all but non-existent. It is this which led me to undertake this piece of work on historical Tigrinya.

1.2 The Language

Tigrinya is one of the major languages of Ethiopia, placed in the north Ethio-Semitic (NES) language subgroup of the Ethiopian Semitic language family which also includes Tigre and Ge'ez.

The language is spoken by around 4.3 million people in Ethiopia (Ethiopian census result: 2007).

Modern written Tigrinya dates back some hundred years; however, there are claims which say that written Tigrinya emerged as early as the 13th century in a text of local laws found in the district of Logosarda, southern Eritrea and

Gulomekheda, northern part of Tigrai. (Haw Solomon Gebrekristos in Wikipedia.com/languages).

According to Ullendorff (1955), “Tigrinya has been a good deal more fortunate than Tigre in the amount of scholarly attention it has received. Among the more important works are the grammars by Praetorius, Mauro da Leonessa, Conti Rossini, and Leslau” (Ullendorff 1955: 23).

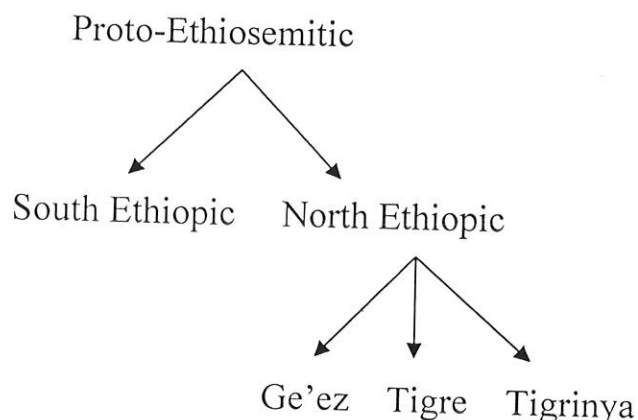
Geographically, according to Kane, “Tigrinya is the language of high Eritrea, namely the province of Hamasien, Akkele Guzay and Serae, collectively known as Kebesa, Tigray province (Agame, Haramat, Geralta, Tembien, Enderta, Wogerat, Shire, and Adiyabo) and the adjoining regions of Gondar province, Woldebba and Tsellemti” (Kane 2000: i).

\

Hetzron in his book *Ethiopian Semitic: Studies in Classification* presented the Tigrinya language position and its relation with other Ethiosemitic languages. And he pointed out that the language enjoys a certain amount of literature (1972: 5).

The Ethiosemitic branch under which the Tigrinya language found can be classified as in the following tree diagram (Hetzron 1977: 17):

Table 1: The position of Tigrinya in Ethiosemitic



With regard to the position of Tigrinya in Ethiosemitic almost all linguists agree with this classification, though there are minor differences about the structure of North Ethiopic.

Regarding the status of the language Kane says “Tigrinya is not standardized, but spoken in a number of mutually intelligible dialects. At present (2000), the Hamasen dialect, which is the dialect used by the Eritrean government and the one in which most publications appear, seems to be on its way to becoming the standard form of Tigrinya. Tigrinya is also the administrative language of Tigray, or Ethiopia’s Region I, but, outside of the biweekly newspaper *ወይን*, few publications in Tigrinya are available” (Kane 2000: ii).

1.3 About the Author of the Books

Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis was born in Yeha, near Adwa, in the central part of Tigray. After completing his religious education in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the sole academic institution in Ethiopia at the time, he went to Rome in the late 19th century to further his academic life, with the intention of studying at the

Istituto Orientale in Naples. At that time he met Professor Francesco Galina, the Amharic and Ge'ez instructor in the university. During their meeting Galina asked Fəssäha-Giyorgis to write a novel in Tigrinya when he became aware that Fəssäha-Giyorgis was a native of Tigrāi. Subsequently during his stay in Rome Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis produced around five manuscripts in Tigrinya; two of them have been translated into Italian and published in Ethiopia with help of the cultural association of Tigrāi. He also translated a volume of Egyptian history from Arabic into Tigrinya (Yaaqob Beyene, introduction to Fəssäha-Giyorgis, 2001). Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis spoke Tigrinya, Ge'ez, Amharic, French, Arabic and a little Italian. Given his achievements and contributions to written Tigrinya, Fəssäha-Giyorgis is considered as the father of modern written Tigrinya.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Despite the efforts that have been made by several scholars to synchronically study and describe the grammatical features of the Tigrinya language, the description of the history of the language is still at an early stage. I hope to contribute to narrowing this gap in the present study.

1.5 Objective of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to identify and describe the major changes in linguistic features that have been occurred during the recorded history of the Tigrinya language with special reference to some early materials such as dictionaries, grammar books and manuscripts. Changes in phonology, morphology, syntax, lexical items and meaning are examined.

Istituto Orientale in Naples. At that time he met Professor Francesco Galina, the Amharic and Ge'ez instructor in the university. During their meeting Galina asked Fəssäha-Giyorgis to write a novel in Tigrinya when he became aware that Fəssäha-Giyorgis was a native of Tigräi. Subsequently during his stay in Rome Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis produced around five manuscripts in Tigrinya; two of them have been translated into Italian and published in Ethiopia with help of the cultural association of Tigräi. He also translated a volume of Egyptian history from Arabic into Tigrinya (Yaaqob Beyene, introduction to Fəssäha-Giyorgis, 2001). Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis spoke Tigrinya, Ge'ez, Amharic, French, Arabic and a little Italian. Given his achievements and contributions to written Tigrinya, Fəssäha-Giyorgis is considered as the father of modern written Tigrinya.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Despite the efforts that have been made by several scholars to synchronically study and describe the grammatical features of the Tigrinya language, the description of the history of the language is still at an early stage. I hope to contribute to narrowing this gap in the present study.

1.5 Objective of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to identify and describe the major changes in linguistic features that have been occurred during the recorded history of the Tigrinya language with special reference to some early materials such as dictionaries, grammar books and manuscripts. Changes in phonology, morphology, syntax, lexical items and meaning are examined.

Istituto Orientale in Naples. At that time he met Professor Francesco Galina, the Amharic and Ge'ez instructor in the university. During their meeting Galina asked Fəssäha-Giyorgis to write a novel in Tigrinya when he became aware that Fəssäha-Giyorgis was a native of Tigräi. Subsequently during his stay in Rome Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis produced around five manuscripts in Tigrinya; two of them have been translated into Italian and published in Ethiopia with help of the cultural association of Tigräi. He also translated a volume of Egyptian history from Arabic into Tigrinya (Yaaqob Beyene, introduction to Fəssäha-Giyorgis, 2001). Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis spoke Tigrinya, Ge'ez, Amharic, French, Arabic and a little Italian. Given his achievements and contributions to written Tigrinya, Fəssäha-Giyorgis is considered as the father of modern written Tigrinya.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Despite the efforts that have been made by several scholars to synchronically study and describe the grammatical features of the Tigrinya language, the description of the history of the language is still at an early stage. I hope to contribute to narrowing this gap in the present study.

1.5 Objective of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to identify and describe the major changes in linguistic features that have been occurred during the recorded history of the Tigrinya language with special reference to some early materials such as dictionaries, grammar books and manuscripts. Changes in phonology, morphology, syntax, lexical items and meaning are examined.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is limited to a diachronic description of some linguistic features of the Tigrinya language based on the corpus from early Tigrinya dictionaries, grammar books and manuscripts, mainly books written by Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis in the late 19th century, one entitled *tarix ityop'ya* “Ethiopian history” and the other a travel diary entitled *t'oblahta* “impression”. These two manuscripts have a total of 180 pages.

1.7 Significance of the Study

In view of the fact that works on historical Tigrinya barely exist, this study has the following importance.

- It provides data and insights into historical Tigrinya, and sometimes into Ethio-Semitic languages in general,
- It can be used as reference material for further studies on historical Tigrinya,
- It will enrich the lexicon of the language by presenting and highlighting additional and alternative lexical items from the past that are not in use in present-day Tigrinya.

1.8 Methods

The methodology employed for this research is to compare a historical linguistic corpus of the older Tigrinya language versus modern Tigrinya. The description

mainly involves lexical items and phrases taken from two 19th-century books by Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis and the recent phrase book of old Tigrinya by Haw Solomon Gebrekristos (1983), analyzing and comparing them to equivalent data from the present-day language, as represented by Thomas Kane's large dictionary (2000) and my own native-speaker competence. Fəssäha-Giyorgis' handwriting is very clear throughout the manuscript, so there is no problem in identifying exactly which fidals he is using. The transcription which is used in this thesis is basically a graphic transliteration which is meant to reflect the original fidal, insofar as possible; only schwa and gemination have been added as necessary, as is common in transcribing Ethiosemitic languages.

1.9 Review of Related Literature

Related works on historical Tigrinya are limited in number. The most important is Franz Praetorius' grammar book of 1871, entitled *Grammatik der Tigrīnasprache*. This is earlier than Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis' writings. However, Praetorius' analysis is based purely on a Bible translation, which raises doubts about the naturalness of its language.

A master's thesis by Shimelis Mazengia in 2005, entitled "Phonological reconstruction: the genetic position of Ge'ez vis-à-vis Tigrinya and Tigre", is a phonological comparative study of the three languages; it discusses the phonological features of the Tigrinya language in relation to the other two North Ethio-Semitic languages.

Ullendorff (1955) presents a comparative phonology of Ethiosemitic languages; but he says almost nothing about morphology, and his discussion of palatalization needs revision (see sec. 3.1.1 below).

Hetzron (1972) presented the position of Tigrinya within Ethiosemitic based on linguistic features.

Synchronic grammars by Leslau (1941), Daniel Tekhlu (2004) and Tesfay Tewelde (2000) can be taken into consideration as earlier and later works on the language. Kogan (1997) presents a brief but thorough grammatical sketch of Tigrinya. Voigt (1977) is a detailed study of the Tigrinya verb system.

There is also an article by Charles Ferguson on Tigrinya in Bender, *Language in Ethiopia* (1976), which examines the grammar and phonological features of the language.

A large *Tigrinya-English Dictionary* by Thomas Kane (2000) (which incorporates material from older dictionaries) and a *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez* (1987) by Leslau are among the major lexical sources for the language.

CHAPTER TWO

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter different views, facts, theories and ideas gathered from several books, journals and web sites that are related to lexical change, semantic change and grammaticalization will be discussed. In particular, I have made use of internet sources which did not give the name of the author or the article.

2.1 Lexical Change, Semantic Change and Grammaticalization

2.1.1 Lexical Change

Lexical change as opposed to phonological or grammatical change is the most obvious way that an earlier stage of a language can differ from its later materials.

Of the various types of lexical change, lexical semantic change is one aspect and this is the primary aspect that will be examined in this work. Below we will examine briefly all the types of lexical change.

2.1.1.1 Types of Lexical Change

For convenience, lexical change can be divided into three categories:

A) Loss of Lexical Items

Due to internal and external factors, words can be lost entirely or replaced by other words. '*Homonymic clash*': Homonyms are words which have the same phonemic structure but different meanings, like 'bank'. The existence of homonyms need not lead to word loss. It only does so if the homonyms crop up in the same context and cause confusion, as in the homonymic clash between Old English *leten* (to permit) and *latten* (to hinder). It is out of those homonyms that the single English word 'let' was developed.

Dworkin (1993) explains the role that near-homonymy can play in lexical loss. Coates (1968: 468) defines near-homonymy as “two or more words with similar phonemic shapes and, usually, different meanings.” He goes on to note that the concept of “similar phonetic shape” is language specific.

B) Creation of New Lexical Items

New lexical items arise by external borrowing and internal innovation. English has borrowed from French words like 'crown', 'power', 'state', etc., from Arabic words like 'zero', 'zenith', 'alchemy', etc. These are examples of external borrowings. A major subtype of internal innovation is internal borrowings, which are “borrowings” from one register of a language to another register of the same language. They frequently start out as slang, which later becomes accepted, as in 'snob', 'squabble', and 'hard up'. 'Bird', now becoming acceptable in the meaning of 'girl', is perhaps borrowed from the word 'bride'.

C) Semantic Change

There are many causes, 'linguistic', 'historical', 'environmental', 'psychological', etc., that can yield a change in meaning. For example the word 'persona', which in of Roman drama meant 'mask', then came to mean 'a character indicated by a mask', then a character or a 'role in a play'.

D) Change of Phonological Form

The study of sound change has enjoyed a longer period of investigation and a more thorough study than other areas of language change (see Campbell 2004: 4). And mechanisms like the comparative method in historical linguistics basically developed from the findings of the study of sound change. Sound change or phonetic change is a historical process of language change consisting in the replacement of one speech sound or, more generally, one phonetic feature by another in a given phonological environment. Over the last two centuries a large repertory of familiar sound changes has been established by investigation of many languages or language families which are attested over a long time period. The change from Ge'ez to Tigrinya (and to the other modern Ethiosemitic languages) is just such a case, analogous to the change from Latin to the modern Romance languages.

Various types of concrete phonological change in Tigrinya will be discussed in sec. 3.1 below. In principle, sound change should be regular, i.e. it should operate exceptionlessly according to a rule. In real life this ideal is not always found. The sound changes seen in Tigrinya are not always exceptionless.

Note that much of historical linguistics is concerned with methods for language comparison and reconstruction of proto-languages and the prehistory of whole

language families. As the present study is not comparative but focuses only on a single language, this methodology (the Comparative Method) is not relevant.

2.1.2 Semantic Change in Detail

One of the most exciting aspects of language change is semantic change. Diachronic semantics studies semantic change, whereas synchronic semantics accounts for semantic relationships like antonymy, synonymy, polysemy, hyponymy etc. Semantic change is caused by linguistic, historical, environmental, psychological causes and by foreign influences and the need for a new name.

2.1.2.1 Lexical Semantic Change

This is semantic change at the word level. Meanings of words are changed to a related meaning.

“Innovations which change the lexical meaning rather than the grammatical function of a form, are classed as *change of meaning* or *semantic change*” (Bloomfield 1933: 425).

It has been common to talk about semantic change as though it involved an abrupt mutation of meaning from one time to the next. Jeffers and Lehiste (1979:62) define semantic change as ‘a change in the set of contexts in which a given word might occur’, and since their conception of meaning is ‘the set of contexts in which a word occurs’, this definition of change implies that the original meaning (M1)

abruptly shifts to (M2) (Wilkins 1996:268). Wilkins and other writers oppose this, noting that an intermediate stage of polysemy (M1 &M2) is necessary.

2.1.2.2 Types of Lexical Semantic Change

Here I will discuss several of the most common types of lexical semantic change. Note that several of these changes can occur together when a word changes its meaning.

A) Widening/Extension

The range of meanings of a word increases so that the word can be used in more contexts than were appropriate before the change. For instance in English, *dog* was used for a specific powerful breed of dog and was extended to all breeds or races of dog. *Cupboard* used to refer to a table upon which cups or vessels were placed, a piece of furniture to display plates, but now its meaning range has widened to closet or storage cabinet with shelves for keeping cups and dishes (wikipedia.com).

B) Narrowing (specialization, restriction)

The range of meaning is decreased so that a word can be used appropriately only in fewer contexts than before the change. For example, in Old English words like *meat*, *hound*, *wife* and *girl* had more general meanings but their meaning was narrowed to specific ones.

<u>Modern English</u>	<u>Old English</u>	<u>Old Meaning</u>
meat	meat	'food in general'
hound	hund	'dog in general'

abruptly shifts to (M2) (Wilkins 1996:268). Wilkins and other writers oppose this, noting that an intermediate stage of polysemy (M1 &M2) is necessary.

2.1.2.2 Types of Lexical Semantic Change

Here I will discuss several of the most common types of lexical semantic change. Note that several of these changes can occur together when a word changes its meaning.

A) Widening/Extension

The range of meanings of a word increases so that the word can be used in more contexts than were appropriate before the change. For instance in English, *dog* was used for a specific powerful breed of dog and was extended to all breeds or races of dog. *Cupboard* used to refer to a table upon which cups or vessels were placed, a piece of furniture to display plates, but now its meaning range has widened to closet or storage cabinet with shelves for keeping cups and dishes (wikipedia.com).

B) Narrowing (specialization, restriction)

The range of meaning is decreased so that a word can be used appropriately only in fewer contexts than before the change. For example, in Old English words like *meat*, *hound*, *wife* and *girl* had more general meanings but their meaning was narrowed to specific ones.

<u>Modern English</u>	<u>Old English</u>	<u>Old Meaning</u>
meat	meat	'food in general'
hound	hund	'dog in general'

girl

girl

'child or young person of either sex'

(source: wikipedia.com)

C) Metaphor

Involves relationship of perceived similarity, as in:

*root (of plant) > root of word, root in algebra, source

*stud > 'good-looking sexy man' (slang); from stud 'a male animal used for breeding'

*chill > 'relax, calm down' (slang), from 'to cool' (lower the temperature)

(source: wikipedia.com)

D) Degeneration / Pejoration

Pejoration is the process by which a word's meaning worsens or degenerates, coming to represent something less favorable than it originally did. The sense of a word takes on a more negative evaluation in the minds of the users.

For example:

Modern English

knave

silly

spinster

Old English

cnafa

sælig

spinster

Old Meaning

'boy, male servant'

'blessed'

'a woman who spins'

(Source: wikipedia.com)

E) Elevation /Amelioration

Amelioration is the process by which a word's meaning improves or becomes elevated, coming to represent something more favorable than it originally referred to. For example:

Examples:

<u>Modern English</u>	<u>Old English</u>	<u>Old Meaning</u>
pretty	prættig	'crafty, sly'
knight	cniht	'boy, servant'

(source: wikipedia.com)

F) Metonymy

Metonymy is a meaning change where a word takes on a new meaning which was not originally present but which is closely associated with the word's original meaning.

G) Synecdoche

Kind of metonymy, involves part-to-whole relationship. Wilkins observes: "Interestingly, a number of the polysemies involving parts and wholes in the person-part domain are extremely stable and crosslinguistically widespread. Brown and Witkowski (1983) observe that approximately one-half of the languages of the world have a single term to cover the notions 'eye and 'face' " (Wilkins 1996: 278).

2.2 Grammaticalization

Grammaticalization is an increasingly popular subtype of lexical semantic change which (in its simplest form) has to do with the change from a lexically “full” meaning to a more abstract, grammatical meaning.

In linguistics, grammaticalization (also known as grammatization, grammaticization) is a process by which words representing objects and actions (i.e. nouns and verbs) transform to become grammatical markers (affixes, prepositions, etc.).

“Grammaticalization is a powerful aspect of language, as it creates new function words within language, by separating functions from their original inflectional and bound constructions (i.e. from content words). It is a field of research in historical linguistics, in the wider study of language change, which focuses on a particular process of lexical and grammatical change” (Wikipedia.com/language).

An example of grammaticalization concerns the process in which the lexical cluster *let us*, for example in the sentence "Let us go", is reduced to a single word *let's*, as in the sentence "let's go". The phrase has lost its lexical meaning of "allow us" and has changed into an auxiliary, while the pronoun 'us' was reduced first to a suffix and then to an unanalyzed phoneme (Harris 1997: 4).

Linguists have come up with different definitions of the term 'Grammaticalization'. The following briefly presents two of the best-known approaches to the nature of 'Grammaticalization'.

Jerzy Kurylowicz's (1965) "classical" definition is probably the one most often referred to. "Grammaticalization consists in the increase of the range of a morpheme advancing from a lexical to a grammatical or from a less grammatical to a more grammatical status, e.g. from a derivative formant to an inflectional one" (Kurylowicz 1965:69 quoted in Heine et al. 1991:3).

Heine and Kuteva define grammaticalization as the development from lexical to grammatical forms and from grammatical to even more grammatical forms. They further state that grammaticalization involves four interrelated mechanisms (Heine and Kuteva 2002: 2):

- a. Desemanticization or semantic bleaching
- b. Extension, context generalization or use in new contexts
- c. Decategorization or loss in morphosyntactic of lexical or other less grammatical forms
- d. Erosion, phonetic reduction or loss in phonetic substance

2.2.1 Cline or Transcategoriality

Grammaticalization is basically a process of language change where a certain morpheme changes category from a major word category (nouns, verbs) to a minor word category (auxiliaries, complementizers, etc.). This is what is meant by transcategoriality (Ramat 2001). In Tigre and Tigrinya, for example, the noun *nəway* ‘property’ has changed to *nay* ‘of’, a genitive marker (Rubin 2005:53):

Tigre: *nay ityop’ya ġewografi*
‘geography of Ethiopia’

In this example the criterion of transcategoriality is clearly met: there is a transfer or shift from the primary category of a noun to the secondary category of case marking. The general cline (or pathway) of categoriality is given by Hopper and Traugott (1993: 104) as:

major category (> adjective/adverb) > minor category

Harris notes that “linguists do not agree on the precise definition of a cline or on its precise characteristics in a given instance. It is believed that the exact points on the cline do not always have a fixed position, but may vary. However, Hopper and Traugott's famous pattern for the cline of grammaticalization is commonly accepted as a model in which the different stages of the form is shown as follows” (Harris 1997:5).

Content word > grammatical word > clitic > inflectional affix

2.2.2 Unidirectionality

Unidirectionality has been claimed to be an important universal property of grammaticalization (Lehmann 1995: 16; see also Haspelmath 2004: 22). It has to do with the direction that grammaticalizing items take: is the change always from more concrete to more abstract, or can the reverse occur? The issue has been vigorously debated.

2.2.3 Schematicity

A schematic meaning is general and abstract; a non-schematic meaning is specific and concrete (see also Taylor 2002: 124, 267). Schematicity therefore means an increase in generality of the meaning of a certain grammaticalizing morpheme.

2.2.4 Phonological Shortening/Oligosegmentality

Those lexemes that are eligible for grammaticalization, as well as being relatively more schematic in meaning and more frequent in appearance (notably basic-level terms), are also typically shorter in length (Taylor 2002: 132). The frequency and length of lexemes is interrelated: the more frequent a lexeme, the shorter its length is likely to be. As a result the “most frequent words are monosyllabic” (Crystal 1987: 86).

Oligosegmentality (for the term see Lehmann 1995: 164) concerns the linear size of grammaticalizing morphemes. Oligosegmental morphemes have few segments (hence “oligo-”). When grammaticalized morphemes are compared in length with their lexical source morpheme there is often a significant difference. A lexeme may frequently contain many syllables; this is unlikely for grammatical morphemes.

CHAPTER THREE

LANGUAGE CHANGE IN TIGRINYA

(ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION)

This chapter presents a discussion of the data gathered from two late 19th-century manuscripts of Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis (and other sources) compared with data from the present-day language, as represented by Thomas Kane's large Tigrinya-English dictionary (2000) and my own native-speaker competence.

3.1 Sound Changes in Tigrinya

The following analysis and discussion present major sound changes in the Tigrinya language. Words taken from older Tigrinya are analyzed and described in comparison with their modern counterparts in order to identify and discuss the changes in the language.

3.1.1 Palatalization

Palatalization denotes several processes of assimilation in phonetics and phonology, by which the articulation of a consonant is changed to palatal under the influence of a preceding or following front vowel or glide, a palatal or palatalized consonant.

3.1.1.1 Palatalization in Ethiosemitic

According to Ullendorff, palatalization is an important feature in some of the Ethiopian languages, particularly in the southern group. While it principally occurs in connection with sibilants and dentals, it also affects velar consonants, though in a more limited way (Ullendorff 1955: 66-67). As noted, palatalization is generally considered to be a feature of the southern group, and in particular not of Tigrinya. However, in contrast to the claims of some Ethiosemitists like Hetzron, Ullendorff and others, the occurrence of palatal sounds in modern Tigrinya words has increased markedly, although (unlike Amharic) it plays no role in the morphology.

Kogan reports critically that “palatals in Tigrinya are considered by some scholars to be found only in loanwords from Amharic. The sounds *j* (*ž*) and especially *č*’ and *š* are found, however, in words which obviously cannot be regarded as Amharic loanwords. Dozens of Tigrinya words containing palatals have no cognates in Amharic” (Kogan 1997: 426).

3.1.1.2 Palatalization in Tigrinya

The following data presentation will give us some insight into how the role of palatalization has varied and increased over the history of Tigrinya.

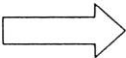
In the two manuscripts of Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis namely *tarix ityop'ya* “Ethiopian history” and *t'oblahta* “impression”, the writer uses the palatal fidals ጬ, ሸ, ዠ and ኘ (apparently not ኘ) in both native Tigrinya words and loan words e.g. ሐሙስት *hamuštä* ‘five’, ደግና *džägna* ‘hero’, መሸለ ባሕሪ *mäšäla baħari* ‘maize’,

ጭቃ *c'ək'k'a* ‘mud’, ፈረንሳዊኛ *färänsawiña* ‘French’, and ገንጽላ *žans’əla* (from Italian) “umbrella”, which clearly indicates the use of *fidal* to represent palatal sounds in older forms of Tigrinya. Therefore we can understand there was no problem in writing palatal sounds for Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis and in this respect he used the complete set of *fidals* which corresponds to the modern writing system of modern Tigrinya (except for the *fidals* *ʁ* and *θ*, which have graphically merged to *θ* in Ethiopian Tigrinya but to *ʁ* in Eritrean Tigrinya). Thus Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis had the tools to write palatalized sounds where modern Tigrinya has palatalized sounds. But did he do so?

A) <-äyna> to <-ña>

In many cases the older derivational morpheme *-äyna* (as found in Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis) has changed to a more palatal form, with the *n* absorbing the palatality of the neighboring *y* so that the ending becomes *-ña* in modern Tigrinya. Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis apparently never writes this ending as *-ña*. On the other hand, the old ending *-äyna* still exists in modern Tigrinya, as in ሓረጎት ትግርይና *ħarägat təgrəyna* ‘Tigrinya Phrases’, ገረወይና *gäräwäyna* ‘container’.

Examples:

<u>Old form</u>		<u>Modern form</u>
1. ገረወይና <i>gäräwäyna</i>		<i>gäräwäña</i> ‘container’, also <i>gäräwäyna</i>
2. ትግርይና <i>təgrəyna</i>		<i>təgrəña</i> ‘Tigrinya’, also <i>təgrəyna</i>
3. ሙፅዓይና <i>mäs’ayna</i>		<i>mäs’aña</i> ‘rope’
4. ሰርጌይና <i>särgeyna</i>		<i>särgäña</i> ‘teff’

central and (surprisingly!) low back vowels. Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis writes the following words with *g*, *d*, *z*; today they are pronounced with a palatal. Thus:

Examples:

	<u>Old forms</u>	→	<u>Modern forms</u>
11.	እንጌራ 'əngera		እንጅራ 'əndžära 'injera'
12.	ጌልባ gelba		ጅልባ džälba 'boat'
13.	ዳሕዳሕታ daħdahta		ጅሕጅሕታ džahdžahta 'waterfall'
14.	ዛሀራይ zahəray		džahəray 'show off'

This palatalization is sporadic in today's Tigrinya, as shown by unpalatalized words like *gila* 'servant' and *dima* 'type of oak'.

D) <s> to <ʃ>

Even though the palatal sound *ʃ* already existed in Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis' Tigrinya, as in ሐምሥት 'five', ስድስት 'six', ስፍራት 'seven' and so on (all attested in Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis), its occurrence in modern forms of the language has significantly increased. Some old words with the alveolar sound *s* (in Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis) have changed their form from alveolar *s* to palatal *ʃ* in their modern counterparts under the influence of a preceding or following front vowel or a palatal or palatalized consonant.

Examples:

	<u>Old forms</u>		<u>Modern forms</u>
15.	ሲይጠ· seyt'u		ʃäyät'u 'he sells'
16.	ጠሪሱ t'ärisu	→	c'ärrifü 'he completed'
17.	ሐዲስ haddis		hadduf 'new'
18.	ገይሱ gäysu		gäyəfu 'he traveled'
19.	ኩሉ ሳዕ k'wilusaʃə		kuluʃaʃə 'always'
20.	ውስጢ wəst'i		wəʃt'i 'in side'

E) <s'> or <t'> to <c'>

Alveolar ejectives *s'* and *t'* in some old noun forms of Tigrinya are changed to palatal ejective *c'* in the modern forms. However, it is difficult to identify why all these changes from alveolar to palatal ejective occurred, since not all the changes involve the influence of front vowels (or of *u*, as in *ḥamuʃtə* 'five').

For example, some of the sound changes like from መቐመጫ *mäx'ämäyt'a* to መቐመጫ *mäx'ämäc'a* 'seat', ቁጾ *k'is'a* to ቕጫ *k'əc'a* 'bread' and ቀንጢ *k'änt'i* to ቀንጨ *k'änc'i* 'equal' do result from the influence of front vowel *i*, back vowel *u* or palatal consonant *y*. But the sound changes in ጽሕጫ *s'əḥmi* to ጭሕጫ *c'əḥmi* 'beard', as in *ənda abunä s'aḥəma* and *ənda abunä c'aḥəma* (place name), and ስንጥሮ *sənt'əro* to ስንጭሮ *sənc'əro* 'valley' are hard to motivate. The change of *s' > c'* might be triggered by the principle of least effort or ease of articulation, since *s'* is a harder sound to pronounce than *c'*; but this cannot motivate the change *t' > c'*.

Examples:

<u>Old Forms</u>		<u>Modern Forms</u>
21. ጽሕሚ s'əhmi		ጭሕሚ c'əhmi 'beard'
22. ሐሩጽ harus'		ሐሩጭ ስharuc' 'flour'
23. መቐመጫ mäx'ämäyt'a	➔	መቐመጫ mäx'ämäc'a 'seat'
24. ቀንጢ k'änt'i		ቀንጩ k'änc'i 'equal'
25. ስንጥሮ sənt'əro		ስንጭሮ sənc'əro 'valley'
26. ቂጾ k'is'a		ቅጫ k'əc'a 'bread'

3.1.2 Spirantization

This process involves the change from velar stop *k* to uvular fricative *x*, velar ejective *k'* to uvular fricative *x'*, and their labiovelar counterparts *k^w*, *k^{w'}* to *x^w*, *x^{w'}*, respectively. Ullendorff notes the special importance of this feature in Tigrinya, where “the spirantization of the velars has gone further than in any other Ethiopian language. It occurs in the case of both *k* and *k'* and is an important feature in the Tigrinya speech pattern...Tigrinya uses stop and fricative for the same root in accordance with their position within the word or sentence” (Ullendorff 1955: 56).

Kogan (1997: 425) explains the nature of Tigrinya spirantization as follows: “The unvoiced velar stops *k*, *k^w*, *k'*, *k^{w'}*, have uvular fricative allophones *x*, *x'*, *x^w*, *x^{w'}*...The spirantization takes place when these stops are postvocalic and non-geminate. Compare, for example, the following realizations of the phoneme *k*:

<i>käfätä</i> 'to open'	vs.	<i>täxäftä</i> 'to be opened'
<i>'akkäbä</i> 'to collect'		<i>täräxäbä</i> 'to be found'
<i>'arkäbä</i> 'to reach'		<i>bärrix</i> 'high, elevated' ”

(Note that the left and right elements in this table quoted from Kogan are not necessarily derived from the same root, but are just meant to illustrate the different environments.) This process is not represented graphically in any regular way in Däbtära Fässäha-Giyorgis' books, even though the fidal for the spirantized sounds are very occasionally found in the books and are represented the same as in present-day fidal, i.e. ḥ for *x*, ḥ̄ for *x'*, ḥ̄̄ for *x''*, ḥ̄̄̄ for *x'''*. Spirantized letters are written in the nouns *bəx''isumat* [gloss?], *bəx'əfaf* [gloss?] and *'a'ənax''i* 'jewels'; apparently, the change *-k > x* is attested in only one example: *'axäza* 'summer'. I found no examples involving verbs.

The following are a few examples from the two manuscripts where consonants in postvocalic position are not written spirantized but as stops. Had the process of spirantization not yet occurred? Or only very sporadically? Or had it occurred, but Däbtära Fässäha-Giyorgis simply did not normally represent it in writing? I leave the question open. Here are the examples; all involve future-tense forms:

Examples: <k> to <x>

	<u>Old forms</u>		<u>Modern forms</u>
27.	ይቀብእ yək'äb'ə	→	ይቆብእ yəx'äba' 'he will anoint'
28.	ይቀትል yək'ätəl		ይቆትል yəx'ätəl 'he will kill'
29.	ይቀስም yək'äsəm		ይቆስም yəx'äsəm 'he will suck'
30.	ይቀርብ yək'ärəb		ይቆርብ yəx'ärəb 'he will near'

Examples: <k> to <x>

	<u>Old Forms</u>		<u>Modern Forms</u>
31.	ይከድን yəkädən		ይኸድን yəxädən ‘he will cover’
32.	ይከፍት yəkäfət	⇒	ይኸፍት yəxäfət ‘he will open’
33.	ይከልክ yəkäləḥ		ይኸልክ yəxələḥ ‘he will slaughter’

3.1.3 The shift from <e> to <ä>

Instead of the expected short middle-central *ä* vowel, Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis very often writes <e> word-finally—and right after the first root consonant in triradical 3rd person masculine perfect verbs. The word-final <e> is puzzling, since historically we would have expected *ä* (first order) in this position, as is the case in both Geez and Modern Tigrinya. Could this phenomenon have been a dialectal feature of Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis’ Tigrinya? It exists today in the dialect of Walqayt (personal knowledge).

Examples:

	<u>Old Forms</u>		<u>Modern Forms</u>
34.	መጸኤ mäs’ə’e ‘he came’		mäs’ə’ä
35.	ከየደ käyāde ‘he went’		käyädä
36.	ፊጸመ fəs’ämä ‘he finished’	⇒	fäs’ämä
37.	ረኣየ rä’aye ‘he saw’		rä’ayä
38.	ኣላዘ ’ahaze ‘he took’		’ahazä
39.	በጸሐ bäs’əhe ‘he arrived’		bäs’əhä
40.	በልዔ bälä’e ‘he ate’		bälä’ä

41.	ተሰኢ täsä'e 'he woke up'		täsä'ä
42.	ረሰኔ räsä'e 'he forgot'	⇒	räsä'ä
43.	ፈረሰ färäse 'it is ruined'		färäsä

3.1.4 Deletion

A number of nouns, prepositions and verbs have undergone sound reduction or deletion in Modern Tigrinya compared to their forms as written by Däbtära Fässäha-Giyorgis. Some such changes show regularity in their occurrence and some of them simply reduce the sounds sporadically. Some of the changes probably involve deletion of morphemes rather than simple sound change.

A) The reduction or deletion of <'ən> in prepositions

The prepositions እንከእ 'änkä'a 'and/then', እንድከሪ 'əndəhəri 'after' and እንካብ 'ənkab 'from' seen in Däbtära Fässäha-Giyorgis' old Tigrinya have lost their prefix-like /'ən-/ in the modern forms. This would seem to be a morphological change, except that 'ən- would then be a meaningless "empty" morpheme, with no motivation either for its existence or its deletion. But as a purely phonological change, it would be quite strange.

Examples:

	<u>Old Forms</u>		<u>Modern Forms</u>
44.	እንከእ 'änkä'a	⇒	ከእ kä'a 'and'
45.	እንድከሪ 'əndəhəri		ድከሪ dəhəri 'after'
46.	እንካብ 'ənkab		ካብ kab 'from'

The form *'əndəhəri* is essentially identical to Ge'ez *'əm-dəhra* “after”, which coexists in Ge'ez alongside *dəhra*. But the other two words (*'ənkä'a*, *'ənkab*) have no obvious motivation of this sort.

B) Other Cases

There are sporadic instances where verbs and nouns in Tigrinya have partially lost sounds compared to what we see in Däbtära Fässäha-Giyorgis. For instance, the old diphthong-like labial consonant <w> in *mäwät-ä* ‘he died’ changed to <o> in *motä* to become a monophthong in modern Tigrinya. This is odd because the form *motä* ‘he died’ is already standard in Ge'ez; so why did Däbtära Fässäha-Giyorgis write *mäwätä*? It is relevant here that in Modern Standard Tigrinya there exist doublet pairs like *konä ~ käwänä* ‘become’, *s'orä ~ s'äwärä* ‘carry’ (Leslau 1941: 116; he does not mention *käwänä*). The deletion of *n* in *mängädi* ‘road’ to become *mägädi* is irregular and hard to motivate. The deletion of *m* in the word for “what” (*məntay > 'əntay*) is more likely to be a morphological than a phonological change; note that *məntay*, but not in its older sense ‘what’, still exists in expressions like *kəndi məntay* ‘how big’ and *'əti məntay* ‘(this is so) because’.

Example:

<u>Old Forms</u>		<u>Modern Forms</u>
47. ሞንጊጊ mängädi		ሞጊጊ mägädi ‘road’
48. ሞወተ mäwätä	⇒	ሞተ motä ‘he dies’
49. ሞንታይ məntay		እንታይ 'əntay/tay ‘what’

3.1.5 Sporadic Change of Consonant(s)

The following are examples of irregular consonant change in Tigrinya. Some of these examples surely involve morphological change, not phonological change. Of the purely phonological changes, dissimilation or assimilation accounts for most of them.

Examples:

	<u>Older Forms</u>		<u>Modern Forms</u>
50.	ተጸመረ täs'ämmärä	→	ተጸምበረ täs'ämbärä 'to join'
51.	ትበዝዝ təbäzəz 'shine'		ትፈዝዝ təfäzəz 'be gloomy'
52.	መፈጸንታ mäfäs'enta		መፈጸምታ mäfäs'ämta 'end'
53.	ደንበረ dänbärä		ደመረ dämmärä 'he/it merged'
54.	እናሽዑ 'ənəʃəʃu	⇒	እሽዑ 'əʃʃəʃu 'then'
55.	ወሃበ wəhabä		ሃበ haβä 'he gave'
56.	ቢሉ bilu		ኢሉ 'ilu 'he said'
57.	የልቦን yälbon		የሎን yällon 'none'
58.	ወብህ wəb-näh		ወኅህ wənäh 'person name'
59.	ምስትርጓም mäs-tərg ^w am		ምትርጓም mətərg ^w am 'to translate'

It is especially interesting to note three cases where the given word exists in essentially identical form in Ge'ez and in Modern Tigrinya, but where Däbtära Fässäha-Giyorgis' spelling is different. Such cases would seem to point to natural but idiosyncratic developments in his own spoken Tigrinya, which were not a universal feature of Tigrinya in his time. These cases are:

<u>Ge'ez root</u>	<u>Modern Tigrinya</u>	<u>F.G.</u>
f-z-z	təfāzəz	təbāzəz
f-ʂ-m	mäfäs'ämta	mäfäs'enta
d-m-r	dämmärä	dänbärä

In the first example, Däbtära Fissäha-Giyorgis' word differs in both form and meaning from Ge'ez as well as Modern Tigrinya. Here two different roots could well be involved: Leslau gives Ge'ez *fazaza* 'be stupefied, dumbfounded' but also Ge'ez *beza* 'shine' as a borrowing from Cushitic (1987: 117, 173).

On the other hand, in one case Däbtära Fässäha-Giyorgis' spelling preserves the older form:

ḏ-m-r	täs'ämbärä	täs'ämmärä
-------	------------	------------

Most of the other examples seem to involve morphological change. Some forms of *wähabä* lose the *wä-* syllable even in Ge'ez. The alternation of *bäl-* ~ *alä* "say" is familiar in (e.g.) Amharic. For *yälbon* ~ *yällon*, Leslau (1941: 75) notes the existence of both forms. And the verb "translate" in Ge'ez has forms reflecting both the *ta-* binyan and the *astä-* binyan.

3.1.6 Unexpected Absence of Consonants

There are words in Däbtära Fässäha-Giyorgis' text which lack a consonant that is present in the equivalent in modern Tigrinya. Most such cases evidently involve a morphological change (e.g. change of binyan to a *tä-* binyan) or a morphophonological change (e.g. change of conditioning environment for the

plural allomorphs C-at ~ V-tat). A couple of examples may really involve an epenthetic consonant in the modern language, though the reason seems mysterious. Here is a list of words with modern added consonant, with suggestions for explanation.

Examples:

a) ንስፎ ነጻጻፎ  nə-t-əsfo 'we hope'

ካልሌት ንቕድሚት ከምዘጽሑፍዎ ንስፎ

kalə'ot nəx'ədmit kāmzəs'əhfəwo nəṣəffo

[others for.the.future will.write.it we.hope]

'We hope others will write it in the future'

b) ሳፈሩ safār-u  tā-safār-u 'they got on board'

ናብ አታ ማርካብ ሳፈሩ

nab 'əta märkāb safāru

[to the ship they.got.on.board]

'they got into the ship'

Examples:

Old Form

Modern Form

61) አላዝኩ 'a-haz-ku

'a-t-haz-ku 'I started'

62) ዓዳት ስadd-at



ፍadi-tat 'countries'

63) አልቦን 'albon	'ay-älbon 'none'
64) ጠሪፍካ t'äräfä	t'är-n-äfä 'he collects'
65) ዛህራይ zahəray	tä-džäharay 'show off'
66) መረጋሕ märägah	mä-d-äraguh 'boulder'

Several of these examples apparently involve the verbal morpheme *tä-*. Other morphological examples are:

'add-at > 'adi-tat (change of morphological conditioning)

'albon > 'ay-albon (extra negative marker)

Added consonants with no clear morphological motivation are seen in

täräfä > tärnäfä

märägah > mädäraguh

3.1.7 Metathesis

Metathesis is a phonological change which involves switch/reverse of two sounds in a word. Metathesis is relatively uncommon. This type of change very often involves a liquid, glide, or nasal.

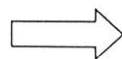
Examples:

Old Forms

67) ግምጥል gəmt'əl

68) ነጻቅ näs'ak'

69) ብእጽጥ bə'əs'ti



Modern Forms

gəlbət' 'these which translate'

näx'as' 'stubborn'

bəs'ə'əti 'clean'

Two examples indicate a reversal of s'-k' > k'-s' and '-s' > s'-'. The example m-t'-l > l-b-t' is complex; the liquid / skips over *two* consonants, and moreover m > b.

3.1.8 Haplology

In this kind of phonological change a word undergoes loss of a syllable/s because nearby syllables sound similar.

Examples:

<u>Old Forms</u>	→	<u>Modern Forms</u>
70) አምበርምበር 'əmbärəmbär		'əmbär 'especially'
71) ገጠሞምኒ gät'imoməni		gät'ämuni 'they met me'
72) ቲኸን ቲኸን tixon-tixon		'əntəxon 'though'
73) የጋእግእ yägə'əgə'		yägagi 'to be mistaken'

Two of the above examples apparently involve partial or total reduction of reduplication: 'əmbär, from reduplicated older word 'əmbär 'əmbär 'especially' and 'ən-təxon from tixon tixon 'though'.

3.2 Morphological Changes in Tigrinya

This type of language change involves change in internal structure of word forms including their bound morphemes or affixes. Morphological changes which I have observed in Tigrinya involve word merger and change in plural marking.

A) Merger of a compound word to a single one

The following words are examples of a fusion of a clear bipartite compound word into a single word.

Examples:

<u>Old Forms</u>	<u>Modern Forms</u>
74) በዓል ደገ bəʃal-däge ‘outsider’	baʃalägä ‘rude’
75) ዓይኒ ሳባ ናሃጃብ-saba ‘place name’	ናሃጃብ ‘place name’
76) ሎሚ መዓልቲ lomi-mäʃalti ‘today’	lomäʃanti ‘today’
77) ውብ ነህ wəb-näh ‘person name’	wənəh ‘person name’

B) Change in plural marking

The following examples are changes in plural marking in modern Tigrinya.

Examples:

<u>Old Forms</u>	<u>Modern Forms</u>
78) አናፍጥ ’anafət’ (näft’i sg.)	näft’ə-tat ‘weapons’
79) መባርህ mäbarəh (mäbrahti sg.)	mäbrahti-tat ‘lights’
80) አፍራንጅ ’afrandž (färändži sg.)	färänji-tat ‘white (people)’
81) አግራኽ ’agərax (gərixawi sg.)	gərixawə-yan ‘Greeks’
82) አግባጽ ’agəbas’ (gəbs’awi sg.)	gəbs’awə-yan ‘Egyptians’
83) አዕናቸኝ ’a’ənax’wi (’ənk’wi sg.)	’ənk’wi-tat ‘jewels’
84) አሰብኡ ’asäbə’u (säb’ay sg.)	säb’-ut ‘men’

In plural marking the Tigrinya language has changed remarkably in the past years, thus resulting in irregularity and inconsistency in plural forms. When we look at the archaic forms, they simply reflect the early technique of broken plural marking, as also found in Arabic, Geez and Tigre. By contrast, the more modern forms illustrate number marking using suffixes such as *-at*, *-tat*, *-'ut*, *-yan* etc. which are increasingly common in present-day Tigrinya and other Ethiosemitic languages. Some prescriptive grammarians of Tigrinya condemn this change, but it is a universal fact of the spoken language.

3.3 Lexical Change in Tigrinya

A) *Loss of Lexical Items*

Due to various reasons some lexical items of a given language can become obsolete and die. Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis uses a number of words — *k'wemäta* ‘committee, delegation’, *k'ərt'af* ‘carte’ (Italian or French), *məsəmm^wax*, *'ak^mat'äsuni*, *səns'əs*, *faʕara*, ‘attention/care’, *bəx'faʕ*, *bəx'wisumat*, *maybad*, *k'abt'an* ‘captain’, *yämärgəda* ‘they dance (fpl)’, *'ədəmməna* ‘humanity’ *ħəmät-bayta* ‘coal’, *däk'äl* ‘mast of a ship’, *t'ärbuf* ‘hat’, *abaʕäläya* ‘he remembers’ and *yätägru* ‘they go or travel (mpl)’ — which are no longer in use in today’s Tigrinya. For some of these words I can only guess at the meaning, and sometimes not even that.

I checked in Thomas Kane’s *Tigrinya-English Dictionary* (2000) whether these words exist in modern Tigrinya or not; only two of them, *ħəmät-bayta* ‘coal’ and *t'ärbuf* ‘hat’, are listed there. Some of the above words are clearly borrowed from European languages, namely Italian and French, and others from Ge’ez and Arabic

In plural marking the Tigrinya language has changed remarkably in the past years, thus resulting in irregularity and inconsistency in plural forms. When we look at the archaic forms, they simply reflect the early technique of broken plural marking, as also found in Arabic, Geez and Tigre. By contrast, the more modern forms illustrate number marking using suffixes such as *-at*, *-tat*, *-’ut*, *-yan* etc. which are increasingly common in present-day Tigrinya and other Ethiosemitic languages. Some prescriptive grammarians of Tigrinya condemn this change, but it is a universal fact of the spoken language.

3.3 Lexical Change in Tigrinya

A) *Loss of Lexical Items*

Due to various reasons some lexical items of a given language can become obsolete and die. Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis uses a number of words — *k’wemäta* ‘committee, delegation’, *k’ərt’af* ‘carte’ (Italian or French), *məsəmm’ax’*, *’ak’at’äsuni*, *səns’əs’*, *faʕara*, ‘attention/care’, *bəx’faʕ*, *bəx’wisumat*, *maybad*, *k’abt’an* ‘captain’, *yämärgəda* ‘they dance (fpl)’, *’ədəmməna* ‘humanity’ *ħämät-bayta* ‘coal’, *däk’äl* ‘mast of a ship’, *t’ärbuf* ‘hat’, *abaʕäläya* ‘he remembers’ and *yätägru* ‘they go or travel (mpl)’ — which are no longer in use in today’s Tigrinya. For some of these words I can only guess at the meaning, and sometimes not even that.

I checked in Thomas Kane’s *Tigrinya-English Dictionary* (2000) whether these words exist in modern Tigrinya or not; only two of them, *ħämät-bayta* ‘coal’ and *t’ärbuf* ‘hat’, are listed there. Some of the above words are clearly borrowed from European languages, namely Italian and French, and others from Ge’ez and Arabic

or possibly Amharic, since the writer had exposure to these languages. For example, the words *däk'äl* 'mast of a ship' and *t'ärbuf* 'hat' are evidently borrowed from Arabic. The word *səns'əs'* is used in context as an adjective to describe buildings like churches or palaces; I am not sure of its exact meaning, but it could be connected with Ge'ez *sans'a* 'to shine, beautify, decorate'. The word *yämärgəda* 'they dance' is a Ge'ez word glossed by Leslau (1987: 358) as 'perform a *maragd*-dance'. The word *yätägru* 'they go or travel' could be the *tä*-form corresponding to Amharic *aggärä* 'to walk, go on foot'. A particularly interesting case is the Biblical name *Yafet* ያፌት 'Japheth, third son of Noah'. Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis mentions this name *Yafet* and makes it clear that he means the Biblical Japheth, but employs the word in a context where it is clearly being used to indicate the direction 'southeast' (as if by metonymy: the name of a people is used to denote the location of that people) — a usage which does not exist today and perhaps was his own coinage (confusion with Yifat?).

3.4 Lexical Semantic Change in Tigrinya

A) Metaphor

Change based on similarity between concepts.

Examples:

<u>Old Tigrinya</u>	<u>Figurative Meaning</u>	<u>Literal Meaning</u>
85) ከብዳ ኢድ käḅədi 'id	'palm'	'belly of hand'
86) ባሕሪ ከብዳ baḥəri käḅədi	'interior of anything'	'sea of the belly'
87) ዓጽሙ-ሰጋ 'as'mä-səga	'relatives'	'bone and flesh'

These items do not occur in Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis' books but are based on the modern language only.

B) Metonymy

The following examples show metonymic transfer to a new meaning in a "contiguous" semantic domain. For instance, the use of the old Tigrinya words *mäsno* and *mädäb* with old meaning 'canal' and 'plot (of land)' extended to 'irrigation' and 'traditional bed (on the ground)' in modern usage, respectively.

Examples:

<u>Old Tigrinya</u>	<u>New Meaning</u>	<u>Old Meaning</u>
88) መስኖ mäsno	'irrigation'	'canal'
89) መደብ mädäb	'bed'	'plot'
90) ኅበዝ gobäz	'clever'	'matured'
91) ልሳን ləssan	'tongue'	'speech'

These words occur in Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis' text and have also kept their old meaning in Modern Tigrinya alongside the new ones.

C) Semantic Restriction

Semantic restriction occurs when the range of meaning of a given lexical item shrinks through the course of time. Some words in old Tigrinya have become restricted in their context.

<u>Old Tigrinya</u>	<u>New Meaning</u>	<u>Old Meaning</u>
92) ሰይጡ säayt'ä	'to sell'	'transaction'
93) መሸለ ባሕሪ mäḥäla-bahəri	'maize'	'cereal'
94) ጠርመዝ t'ərmuz	'glass bottle'	'glass'

In the following discussion I will examine two grammaticalization processes in Tigrinya. Note that these examples do not emerge from Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis' book, but rather from my own general knowledge of the Tigrinya language. All the examples below are from modern Tigrinya. I will examine each example from the perspective of the four basic parameters of grammaticalization: transcategoriality, unidirectionality, schematicity, and phonological shortening (see section 2.2).

3.5.1 Grammaticalization of the morpheme *'ənda* or *da-*

3.5.1.1 Cline or Transcategoriality

As to the parameter of transcategoriality, the noun *'ənda* 'house' has shifted by stages to three new meanings: residency, preposition, possession prefix.

Physical house → residency → preposition → possession prefix

1. The physical house

- | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| a) እንዳና ፈረሱ | c) bä'alti gāzay | 'housewife' |
| 'ənda-na fārisu | bä'alti betäy | 'housewife' |
| house-our ruined | bä'alti 'ənday | 'housewife' |
| 'our house is ruined' | | |
| b) ናብ እንዳና ንኺድ | | |
| nab 'ənda-na nəxid | | |
| to home-our let's.go | | |
| 'let's go to our home' | | |

In example (c) all three phrases are literally 'owner (f.) of house', now meaning 'housewife'. The word *bēt* is general Semitic; the word *gäza* seems to be borrowed from Italian; but in this phrase, the word 'ənda can also be freely used. Examples (a), (b) above are a bit old-fashioned, but (c) is totally normal.

2. *Residency/ownership*

a) ገዛ እንዳ በርሀ ፈረሰ

gäza 'ənda bärhä färisu

house home.of Berhe ruined

'Berhe's house is ruined'

b) እንዳ ፍቃዱ

'ənda fəqadu

'Fekadu's residence'

3. *Preposition "of"*

a) መገዳ እንዳ መገርያም

mägädi 'ənda marəyam

'Mary's road' (i.e. to Mary, wherever she is)

b) ቱሌቪዥን እንዳ ሻዕቢያ

televižən 'ənda fa'əbiya

'television of Sha'biya (political party)'

4. Possession marker prefix

a) አዳ ሃይሊ

'ədda haylä

'Haile's'

b) ዳሃይሊ

da-haylä

'Haile's'

At the end of this process, the old form አንዳ 'ənda 'house' ['ənda > 'ədda > da-] has started to be used as a possessive prefix in modern Tigrinya.

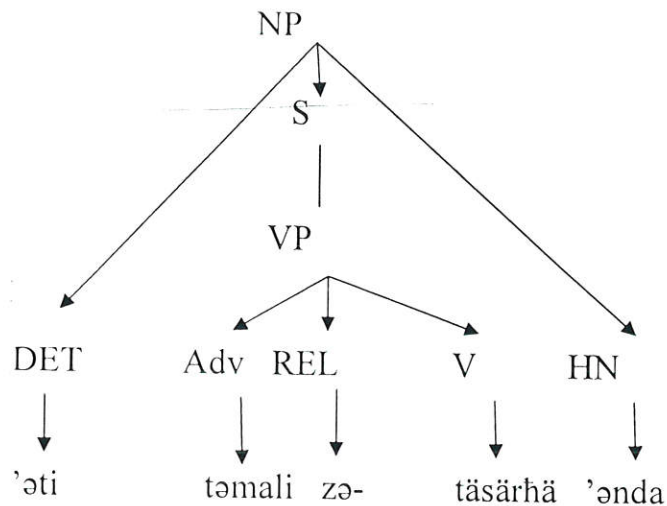
It is interesting, finally, to note that the word 'ənda 'house' was primarily an object name used to represent the physical house. As such it appears as a normal noun in clauses and can be modified by adjectives and complements as a head noun in a noun phrase. A Tigrinya head noun can be modified by an adjective, noun phrase or sentence. Hence, the following examples, which are considered rather old-fashioned, give us good evidence that 'ənda was originally a physical house.

1. አቲ ጥማሊ ዝተሰርሐ አንዳ

'əti təmali zə-täsärhä 'ənda

the yesterday REL-built house

'the house which was built yesterday'



2. ገዢ ስንዳ

gäzif 'ənda

'big house'

3. ናይ ወቕሮ ስንዳ

nay wəx'əro 'ənda

of rock house

'rock house'

3.5.1.2 Unidirectionality

When we come to unidirectionality, the second parameter of grammaticalization, it can be noted that the change of [*'ənda*] proceeds from a less abstract concept (like house) to a more abstract concept such as 'residence, owner, of, -'s'. This adheres to the metaphoric principle of unidirectionality: concrete concepts > abstract concepts.

The principle of unidirectionality also involves a progression from a free morpheme to a bound morpheme (*'ənda* → *da*).

3.5.1.3 Schematicity

A grammaticalizing morpheme (as a new functional word) becomes more schematic or general and less specific than the pre-grammaticalized morpheme (the old concrete word). In terms of schematicity, *'ənda* (house) has developed a more

general meaning (such as ‘residence’, ‘possessor/owner’, ‘of’ and ‘apostrophe-’s) along its pathway of grammaticalization. There is thus a morpheme *-da*, arguably a changed form of *'ənda*, which as such originally meant ‘house’ but has developed a less specific and more general meaning as in *da-fəx'adu* ‘Fekadu’s’ (anything of Fekadu’s, not just his house).

3.5.1.4 Phonological Shortening

As we can see from the above examples, through gradual process the word *'ənda* ‘house’ underwent a phonological reduction from *'ənda* > *'ədda* and finally to the very short bound morpheme *-da* ‘of’.

'ənda → *'ədda* → *-da*

3.5.2 Meaning Shift of the morpheme *'əya*

3.5.2.1 Cline or Transcategoriality

λP *'əya* is a 3fsg present tense copula verb, as in:

nəsa nəfə'ə-ti 'əya

she clever-3fsg is

‘she is clever’

It has been extended to *-ya* in the meaning of a past tense-focus marker, as in the construction *bəlu-ya* ‘they said-Focus’, *məs'əɖu-ya* ‘they came-Focus’, which emphasizes the nature of the verb as a past or perfect (completed) action.

Verb > Verb copula > past tense (perfect) focus marker

The development of the word 'aya from a free morpheme to a bound morpheme can also be taken as a case of grammaticalization.

3.5.2.2 Phonological Shortening/Oligosegmentalization

Grammaticalized morphemes can often be expected to be shorter compared to the length of their lexical source morpheme. This holds for the morpheme 'aya 'is (f.)', which underwent phonological shortening to become a monosyllabic bound focus morpheme -ya.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS

4. Conclusion

This study has been about language change and grammaticalization in Tigrinya. The investigation is based on a corpus collected from old written materials of the language composed in the late 19th century, namely two manuscripts by Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis, as well as data from grammar books and dictionaries. I have tried to look into different older features of the language, mainly lexemes, in order to compare them with present-day Tigrinya. Based on the findings of the research the following conclusions are drawn.

- *Palatalization*: bilabial, velar and mostly alveolar sounds in words of older Tigrinya have sometimes changed to their palatal counterpart. The main changes are:

n to ñ

bi > βi > yi or i

g, z or d to j

s to ʃ

s' or t' to č'

Especially noteworthy among these palatalizations is the change $bi > \beta i > yi$, as seen in cases like older *gäbirä* 'I did' to bilabial fricative β in *gäβirä* and finally to palatal y in *gäyärä* in modern Tigrinya.

- **Spirantization:** k and k' are frequently spirantized to become x and x' in modern Tigrinya respectively, which is a very rare phenomenon in (the written form of) Däbtära Fəssäha-Giyorgis' old Tigrinya. Spirantization happens in the nouns *bəx'wisumat* [gloss?], *bəx'əfəf* [gloss?] and *'a'ənax'i* 'jewels'; apparently, the change $k > x$ is attested in only one example: *'axäza* 'summer'. I found no examples involving verbs. This is in sharp contrast to modern Tigrinya, where postvocalic k and k' are regularly spirantized.

- **The shift from <e> to <ä>:** long front, central vowel e in older verbs 3msg changed to short middle central vowel $ä$ in modern Tigrinya.

- **Deletion:** The reduction or deletion of *'ən* from three older prepositions *'əndhəri* 'after', *'ənkab* 'from' and *'ənkə'a* 'then' to become *dəhəri*, *kab* and *kä'a* respectively has occurred in the passage from older to modern Tigrinya.

- **Unexpected change of consonant(s):** some sounds in older Tigrinya words are either assimilated or dissimilated by their neighboring sounds or substituted in modern Tigrinya.

- **Unexpected absence of consonants:** new epenthetic consonants are inserted in modern Tigrinya.

- **Metathesis:** some sounds in older Tigrinya words have reversed their position with adjacent sounds in modern Tigrinya.

- **Haplology:** reduplicated syllables in older Tigrinya words have lost a syllable in modern Tigrinya.

- **Morphological change in Tigrinya:** the morphology of the Tigrinya language has entertained several changes; among these, two of the most noticeable changes are the merger from a compound word to a single one and change in plural marking. Some compound words in older Tigrinya are merged to form a single word in modern Tigrinya.

On top of that, broken form plural marking was widely and frequently used in old Tigrinya as in archaic South Semitic languages. However, the use of plural suffixes like *-tat*, *-at*, *-ut*, etc. has increased greatly in present-day Tigrinya.

- **Lexical change in Tigrinya:** In Tigrinya a number of older words such as *k'artaš* 'Identification Card' and *fašara* 'attention' that were in use in old Tigrinya are no longer in use in modern Tigrinya according to Kane's (2000) *Tigrinya-English Dictionary*.

- *Lexical semantic change in Tigrinya*: some words or lexical items in older Tigrinya have extended, reversed, elevated or degraded their meaning with or without altering their original forms in modern Tigrinya.

- *Grammaticalization*: The free morpheme noun 'ənda 'house' in old Tigrinya is grammaticalized to become a possession marker affix in modern Tigrinya. First it undergoes a transcategoriality cline whereby a physical noun 'house' changes to an abstract inflectional possession marker affix *da-* like the English apostrophe -'s, and unidirectionally from a less abstract concept 'house' to a more abstract concept such as 'of'.

Moreover, the morpheme 'əya a 3rd person, singular feminine, copula changed to past tense focus marker. This reflects the parameter of grammaticalization of desemantization or semantic bleaching, which is a change from a free morpheme copula 'əya to a suffix focus marker.

- Fəssäha-Giyorgis Abiyezgi. 2001(1993 E.C.) [1889]. *Tarix ityop'ya*. Addis Ababa: Berhanina Selam Printing Press.
- Haspelmath, M. 1999. Why is Grammaticalization Irreversible? *Linguistics* 37(6): 1043-1068.
- Harris, Alice C. 1997. Remarks on Grammaticalization. *Proceedings of the LFG97 Conference*, pp. 4-17. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.
- Heine, Bernd, Ulrike Claudi & Friederike Hünemeyer. 1991. *Grammaticalization: A Conceptual Framework*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Heine, B. and T. Kuteva. 2002. *World Lexicon of Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hetzron, R. 1972. *Ethiopian Semitic. Studies in Classification*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Hetzron, R. 1977. *The Gunnän-Gurage Languages*. Naples: Istituto Orientale di Napoli.
- Hetzron, Robert (ed.). 1997. *The Semitic Languages*. London: Routledge.
- Hopper, Paul J., and Elizabeth Traugott. 1993. *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jeffers, Robert J., and Ilse Lehiste. 1979. *Principles and Methods for Historical Linguistics*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Joseph, Brian D. and Richard D. Janda (eds.). 2004. *The Handbook of Historical Linguistics*. Blackwell Publishing, 2004. Blackwell Reference Online. 12 May 2007

<http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/book?id=g9781405127479_9781405127479>

- Kane, T.L. 2000. *Tigrinya-English Dictionary*. Springfield, MD: McNeil Technologies/ Dunwoody Press.
- Kogan, L.E. 1997. "Tigrinya". In Hetzron (ed.), Chapter 18.
- Lehmann, C. 1995 [1982]. *Thoughts on Grammaticalization*. Munich and Newcastle: LINCOM Europa.
- Leslau, W. 1941. *Documents tigrigna*. Paris: Klincksieck.
- Leslau, W. 1987. *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Praetorius, Franz. 1871. *Grammatik der Tigriñasprache*. Halle: Waisenhaus.
- Ramat, P. 2001. "Grammaticalization". *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Amsterdam: Pergamon Press.
- Rubin, A.D. 2005. *Studies in Semitic Grammaticalization*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns.
- Shimelis Mazengia. 2005. *Phonological Reconstruction: The Genetic Position of Ge'ez vis-à-vis Tigrinya and Tigre*. MA thesis, Addis Ababa University.
- Solomon Gebrekristos. 1983. *harägat tagräynna*. Asmara: Asmara Catholic Church Publishing Enterprise.
- Taylor, J.R. 2002. *Cognitive Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tesfay Tewelde. 2000. *A Grammar of Tigrinya*. Rome: Simmos Printing Press.
- Traugott, Elizabeth C. and Bernd Heine (eds.). 1991. *Approaches to Grammaticalization*. 2 volumes. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

- Ullendorff, Edward. 1955. *The Semitic Languages of Ethiopia: A Comparative Phonology*. London: Taylor's Foreign Press.
- Voigt, Rainer. M. 1977. *Das tigrinische Verbalsystem*. Berlin: Reimer.
- Wilkins, D. P. 1996. Natural Tendencies of Semantic Changes and the Search for Cognates. In *The Comparative Method Reviewed*, ed. Mark Durie and Malcolm Ross, 264-304. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yule, George. 1996. *The Study of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<http://www.wikipedia.com>

<http://www-csli.stanford.edu/publications/>