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THE SEMITIC LANGUAGES OF ETHIOPIA

THE SEMITIC LANGUAGES OF ETHIOPIA

A Comparative Phonology

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To

Margery Perham

and

H. J. Polotsky

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PREFACE

WHEN I first went out to Eritrea and Ethiopia, early in the war, it was my intention to collect sufficient material, transcriptions, etc., to permit a fresh onslaught on the old problem of the relationship of the modern Semitic Ethiopian languages to each other as well as towards classical Ethiopic (Gəʿəz). During a five year stay in those regions I managed to attain fluency in Tigriña and an adequate practical knowledge of Amharic and Tigre. While the employment of this facility formed part of my official duties, the same could not, of course, be said of linguistic work in a more narrow sense. And although I brought back a sizable body of phonetic transcriptions, original letters and documents, MSS, books and newspapers, my work inevitably lacked the consistency and concentration of a full-time inquiry. The traces of time hurriedly taken off, the gaps as well as the unnecessary duplications were all too apparent. After leaving the Horn of Africa, at the end of 1946, a further period of nearly three years intervened during which other duties prevented me from doing more than filling some of the lacunæ in my material and seeking out those rare chances of giving my knowledge of modern Ethiopian tongues some practical exercise.

The bulk of this book (which was accepted by the University of Oxford for a doctorate of Philosophy) was written in 1949 and 1950, but teaching and other writing commitments prevented an early conclusion of my work. These delays have been at once salutary and disturbing. Salutary, because they allowed me to think again and to embark on some revisions; disturbing, because they not only interfered with the continuity of the work, but also magnified its shortcomings. Closer acquaintance with the results of modern linguistic theory has more recently brought me to the recognition that the "conventional" approach (which has here generally been followed) would have benefited from the more rigorous discipline which scholars like Hjelmslev and others in Europe and the various schools in America have brought to bear on linguistic studies—even though some of their work may still be tentative or prove to be ephemeral. However, I did not feel that it was possible, at this stage, to introduce here the strict criteria of structural linguistics. This is also partly due to the fact

that the entire material was gathered in Africa in virtual neglect of de Saussure, Bloomfield, or Trubetzkoy. In particular, I feel very acutely that linguistic field studies could long have been more fruitful, had some general guidance existed of the kind which is now offered by an international Council.*

It is, therefore, more than a conventional phrase when I say that I am deeply conscious of the shortcomings of this book. At the same time, I hope that it contains some fresh thoughts which may, perhaps, atone for its inadequacies.

"Phonology" in the title is meant to cover both phonetic and phonological aspects. Treatment of the morphology and syntax (the material for which is partly assembled) will have to be relegated to a later volume. In any event, it is phonetics and phonemics—as is shown in the CONCLUSIONS—which, in the case of the Ethiopian languages at least, are the carriers of most of the significant distinctions for the purposes of a comparative investigation. While morphology makes an important contribution, that of the syntax is negligible, mainly on account of the fact that all Semitic conceptions of syntactical conditions have been abandoned in modern Ethiopic. The influence of the Cushitic substrata, in this sphere, is transparent beyond any reasonable doubt and applies to all the modern tongues in virtually the same manner.

The mode of transcription used in this work is set out in the table of transcriptions below. In general, I have adapted the renderings of others to that here employed, but in some cases this did not seem practicable. Nor could I claim full consistency; commonly used spellings of well-known names (Shoa, Gojjam, etc.) have been left unaltered.

Even a glance at this book will show my indebtedness to the work of my predecessors and distinguished contemporaries, especially to the writings of Professors Marcel Cohen, Enno Littmann, E. Cerulli, W. Leslau, and of my teacher H. J. Polotsky. The late Carlo Conti Rossini has helped me not only by his countless contributions to this field of study, but also by personal advice in the earlier stages of my work until his death in 1949. Professors Littmann and Polotsky have answered many questions and placed me under a heavy debt of gratitude. The assistance I have derived from Professor Leslau's numerous

* Cf. J. R. Firth in *TPS* for 1951, pp. 77 *et seqq.*

writings will be apparent on practically every page. Although I had to disagree with some of his statements, particularly in the sphere of Tigriña dialectology, I should not wish to see my indebtedness to him obscured by this.

I also desire to acknowledge advice and help, in a more general context, given to me by Professors H. A. R. Gibb, G. R. Driver, D. Winton Thomas, A. M. Honeyman, and A. F. L. Beeston. Without the assistance of the Scarbrough (Treasury) Committee on Foreign Languages this work could not have been undertaken at the present time, and without generous grants by the Court of St. Andrews University and the Carnegie Trust it could not have been published. I should also like to record, gratefully, the advice and helpful interest of Dr. T. M. Knox, Principal of St. Andrews University. Professor R. C. Johnston has very kindly answered some questions pertaining to Romance philology.

Professor G. R. Driver has read my typescript and suggested many improvements for which I am greatly obliged to him. My thanks for help rendered in various ways are also due to H.E. the Ethiopian Ambassador in London, Ato Abbaba Retta, Abuna Ya'qob Gebreyesus, and other Ethiopian friends.

I am under the heaviest obligation to Dr. C. Rabin on whose profound Semitic and linguistic erudition I was allowed to draw at all times.

Miss M. A. Bryan, the International African Institute, and the Oxford University Press have very kindly permitted me to reproduce the excellent map attached to Miss Bryan's *Distribution of the Semitic and Cushitic languages of Africa.*

E. U.

St. Andrews University,

April 1954.

ABBREVIATIONS

Amh = Amharic
BSL = Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris
ESA = Epigraphic South Arabian
Eth = Ethiopic
EWN = Eritrean Weekly News, Asmara 1942–1952 (in Tňa)
GGA = Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen
GLECS = Groupe Linguistique des Études chamito-sémitiques
JA = Journal Asiatique
JAOS = Journal of the American Oriental Society
JRAS = Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
MO = Le Monde Oriental
MSL = Mémoires de la Société de Linguistique de Paris
OLZ = Orientalistische Literaturzeitung
OM = Oriente Moderno
ROC = Revue de l'Orient chrétien
RSE = Rassegna di Studi Etiopici
RSO = Rivista degli Studi Orientali
SA = South Arabian
SBWA = Sitzungsberichte der Wiener Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse
Tňa = Tigriňa (təgrəňňa)
TPS = Transactions of the Philological Society
UH = Ugaritic Handbook
WZKM = Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
ZA = Zeitschrift für Assyriologie
ZDMG = Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft
ZfES = Zeitschrift für Eingeborenen Sprachen
ZfS = Zeitschrift für Semitistik

Consonants			*Consonants (cont.)*		
(1)	ሀ	h	(21)	ዠ	ž
(2)	ለ	l	(22)	የ	y
(3)	ሐ	ḥ	(23)	ደ	d
(4)	መ	m	(24)	ዸ	ď
(5)	ሠ	ś (*)	(25)	ገ	g
(6)	ረ	r	(26)	ጠ	t′
(7)	ሰ	s	(27)	ጨ	č′
(8)	ሸ	š	(28)	ጰ	p′
(9)	ቀ	k′	(29)	ጸ	s′
(10)	በ	b	(30)	ፀ	z′
(11)	ተ	t	(31)	ፈ	f
(12)	ቸ	č	(32)	ፐ	p
(13)	ኀ	ḫ			
(14)	ነ	n		—	
(15)	ኘ	ň			
(16)	አ	ʾ	(9a)	ቈ	k′ʷ
(17)	ከ	k	(13a)	ኈ	ḫʷ
(18)	ወ	w	(17a)	ኰ	kʷ
(19)	ዐ	ʿ	(25a)	ጐ	gʷ
(20)	ዘ	z			

* See, however, p. 111 below.

Vowels		*Vowels (cont.)*	
(1)	ä	(5)	e
(2)	u	(6)	ə
(3)	i	(7)	o
(4)	a		

In this system of transcription all ejective sounds are treated alike (x'). In this way the special glottalized character of the Ethiopian ejectives is emphasized and the distinction in sound from general Semitic q, ṭ, etc., underlined.

All palatalized sounds are transcribed uniformly (x̌) in a manner which is equivalent to the Eth. original. Semitic languages other than Eth. are rendered in the customary way.

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Interest in the nature and degree of the relationship of the various Semitic Ethiopian languages[1] to each other as well as to classical Ethiopic (Gəʿəz) has sporadically flared up ever since the great pioneering efforts of F. Praetorius invited attention to this field.[2] In Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia a vigorous argument has long been conducted about the competitive claims of Tigre and Tigriňa to closer relationship with Gəʿəz. This somewhat sterile discussion, especially in view of the methods and means by which it is carried on, holds a curious fascination for educated Abyssinians.

While Tigriňa is the language now spoken in the region which was the original home of Gəʿəz (cf. the language map), some scholars have held that it is Tigre which exhibits the greatest resemblance to classical Ethiopic. Another problem which has engaged the attention of Semitists is the question whether Amharic is a direct descendant of Gəʿəz or whether it might not be derived from some—now unknown—sister tongue of Ethiopic. Is the nature of the relationship of Tigre and Tňa towards Gəʿəz thus essentially different from that of Amharic to Gəʿəz ? or is the difference one of degree (i.e. geographical distance, stronger influence of substrate languages) rather than of substance ? And where do Harari and Gurage have their place in this 'family tree' ? Our task in unravelling these threads is complicated by the fact that often old features have been eliminated and new traits been evolved in such close imitation of archaic elements that the genetic relationship is apt to be obscured. The elimination of old labio-velars in Gurage

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[1] For details of present-day distribution, geographical data, numbers of speakers etc., see third sub-section of this Introduction.

[2] Interest in the relationship of the Ethiopian languages has, of course, also existed prior to Praetorius' work. The comparative vocabularies in Salt's *Voyage to Abyssinia* and especially Beke's article in the *Proceedings of the Philological Society*, 1845, pp. 89 *et seqq.*, bear witness to that, but Praetorius was probably the first to possess the equipment necessary to make such study fruitful.

and the creation of new ones is a case in point. Moreover, geographical distribution as it appears today may well be misleading. Migratory waves of which hardly any historical data are preserved have to be taken into consideration. Thus with all its incisive differences Gurage in the extreme South shows some strange points of contact with Tña in the North. Are changes of habitat responsible for this, or do we encounter here one of those alleged vagaries of linguistic development?

There are, of course, many other problems, and quite a few will only come to light in the course of the following examination. With the possible exception of M. Cohen's brief, though immensely valuable, "essai de tableau dialectal éthiopien"[3] inter-Ethiopian linguistic relationships have never been systematically investigated, although the writings of Praetorius, Littmann, Conti Rossini, Cohen, Cerulli, Polotsky, Leslau, and others abound in alluring references to this important subject. The object of the present study is, therefore, to examine on a comparatively narrow front, in the fields of phonetics and phonology only,[4] the relevant features in the various Semitic Ethiopian languages. In this connection it is necessary to take into consideration those of the Hamitic Ethiopian tongues[5] which form the substrata over which the immigrant Semitic languages were laid. Parallel phenomena in the various Asiatic Semitic languages will be briefly discussed wherever relevant and helpful.

It will be an important task of the present investigation to make an attempt at providing an answer to the old question whether one single Semitic language was imported into Africa from Southern Arabia, or if several related Semitic tongues were brought across the Bab el Mandeb. In other words: can *one* language be supposed to have been the common source from which all the Semitic Ethiopian languages, in their present dialectal distribution, are derived, or are the linguistic divergences such as to compel us to assume dual or even multiple ancestry?

Within the Ethiopian domain itself it has become customary to speak of North and South Ethiopic as a means of classification. We shall have to ascertain whether this distinction is merely one of present-day

---

[3] That is the introductory chapter to his *Études d'Éthiopien méridional.*

[4] The reasons for restricting this study to phonetics and phonology are explained in the PREFACE.

[5] Hamitic Ethiopic is commonly called Cushitic and will be referred to by this name in the following; for details cf. third sub-section of the INTRODUCTION.

geographical distribution or if it can be shown to be indicative of a deep-seated historical cleavage.

Any contribution towards a clarification of inter-Ethiopian relationships will at the same time provide some material, however insignificant, for the study of language relationships in general. Furthermore, the inter-action of Semitic and Hamitic can—as the great, if lonely, pioneering work of Reinisch has shown—probably be studied most advantageously on Ethiopian soil. I should, however, like to emphasize that all that is being said in the following on general linguistics and Cushitic is merely adduced by way of necessary comparison, as ancillary matter only. The aim and hope of this book is to make a contribution in the specifically Semitic field.

Most of the material that appears in the body of the present study was collected in Eritrea and Ethiopia. I have avoided, as far as possible, supplementing my data by observation on Ethiopian informants in this country. My reluctance in this respect may have been exaggerated, but study of certain aspects in the work of some of my illustrious predecessors and contemporaries has shown me the great danger of reliance on one or two informants. Divergences of view which will come to light in the study of the available data are often due not so much to differences in the interpretation of the material as to different valuation of the matter supplied by isolated informants. The work of the late C. Conti Rossini, for instance, has, I think, shown the great advantage of an inquiry " on the spot " which eliminates very largely the unfavourable psychological and other factors present in a limited *ad hoc* questioning.

Apart from these procedural and methodical aspects the problem which we are to tackle is rendered difficult by the absence of preliminary work. Despite the efforts of a handful of scholars in the last two generations the primary material is as yet far from being fully assembled, and it will, therefore, be necessary in most cases to set out some of the basic data before we come to draw our conclusions. As has been mentioned in the PREFACE, my material in Gəʿəz, Tigriňa, Tigre, and Amharic is based on direct acquaintance, while that in Gurage and Harari is derived from printed texts or from information kindly supplied by fellow workers. Gafat and Argobba, both ill-investigated and swiftly disappearing, have only been brought in in some isolated instances.

Historical Background

In the following some of the main stages only in the development of the Ethiopian[6] languages will be set out. Their history, external as well as internal, has still to be written.

That the Ḥabašāt, the colonizers of the west coast of the Red Sea, nowadays called Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia, hailed from the south-west coast of Arabia, the Yemen, has been securely established by the researches of Glaser[7] and Conti Rossini.[8] It is not, therefore, proposed to cover the same ground again. Nor would it be profitable in this connection to speculate whether the ancestors of those Ḥabašāt who crossed the Red Sea in a westerly direction in the last pre-Christian centuries had previously, in pre-historic times, made a crossing in the opposite direction, i.e. from Africa into Arabia. We are not concerned here with the interesting question as to whether North-East Africa was

[6] A distinction should be made between " Abyssinia " and " Ethiopia." The former name is derived from the Ḥabašāt well known from South-Arabian and Ethiopic inscriptions. Strictly speaking, it is only applicable to the region which was the destination of the South-Arabian migration. It is thus a term referring to a definite ethnic unit roughly identical with the old Aksumite Empire (cf. the introductory note to my *Exploration and Study of Abyssinia*), while " Ethiopia " (from Αἰθιοψ the people with the " burnt face ") is a vague and nondescript term which may justly be applied to the whole country (Semitic, Hamitic, and Nilotic) in its present political boundaries.

It is, incidentally, of some interest that the name " Abyssinia " makes its first appearance in a European source in the *Otia imperialia* by Gervase of Tilbury (1211), an English writer who refers to the *Abasitæ* (which shows that his information was probably derived, directly or indirectly, from Arabic sources). This is followed only a few years later by a second mention, this time in the form *Abesia*, also by an English writer, Roger of Wendover, in his well-known *Flores historiarum*.

Cf. also E. Cerulli, *Etiopi in Palestina*, vol. I, p. 40.

[7] *Die Abessinier in Arabien und Afrika, passim.* There is no need to cite here in support the relevant South-Arabian inscriptions ; cf. in particular CIH 308 = Gl. 1076 (*Abessinier*, pp. 42 *et seqq.*), the famous inscription from Riyām.

[8] *Sugli Ḥabašāt* (*Rend. d. Accad. d. Linc.* 1906, pp. 39–59) ; *Expéditions et possessions des Ḥabašāt en Arabie* (*J.A.*, 1921, pp. 5 *et seqq.*) ; *Storia di Etiopia, passim.* In the first mentioned article Conti Rossini has also conclusively shown that earlier assumptions of an original habitat of the Ḥabašāt in South-East Arabia were misconceived.

Cf. also Hommel, *Ethnogr. und Geogr. d. Alten Orients*, p. 661.

the original habitat, the cradle, of Semites and Hamites as some scholars have supposed.[9]

The South-Arabian inscriptions found on African soil[10] also show that by the second pre-Christian century the Ḥabašāt were firmly established in their African colonies,[11] and they are certain to have gained permanent footholds there since the fifth century B.C. This migratory movement from Asia into Africa[12] is prominently present in the historical consciousness of Ethiopians—as is indeed shown in a passage by Ethiopia's only historian 'Aläk'a Tayyä in his Amharic *History of the Ethiopian People*, p. 7: ". . . there are very many peoples of different character who have immigrated into Ethiopia from Asia in various epochs. . . ."

The South-Arabians settled at first in the Red Sea islands (Soqoṭra, Dahlaq, etc.) and along the East African shores. From there they established camel routes into the interior, probably with the dual motive of expanding their commercial activities and of getting away from the inclement climate of the coast. Semitic place names of South-Arabian origin in the neighbourhood of Massawa and Assab still testify to the Sabaean progress on African soil.[13]

The South-Arabians introduced, above all, a vastly superior civilization, both material and cultural, into Africa. Among the former, the camel, incense, and many nutritive plants deserve mention; to the same category belongs the manufacture of better arms and the improvement of building. But it is the latter aspect, the cultural advancement, which makes the South-Arabian achievement in Africa so notable. And here it is writing[14] and language that outshine the importance of everything else.[15]

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[9] E.g. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p. 13.

[10] See below for further details.

[11] Cf. Conti Rossini, *Rend. Acc. Linc.*, 1906, pp. 57–9.

[12] The motives impelling this migration are well described in Luca dei Sabelli's *Storia di Abissinia*, vol. I, pp. 83 *et seqq.*

[13] Cf. Conti Rossini, *Storia d'Etiopia*, p. 103.

[14] The introduction of the South-Arabian alphabet need not be discussed here. Cf. Driver, *Semitic Writing*; Diringer, *The Alphabet*, etc. My own views have been expressed in an article on the Ethiopian syllabary in *Africa*, July, 1951. Cf. now also A. M. Honeyman's paper on the Qatabanian alphabet fragment read before the XXIInd Orientalist Congress at Istanbul, 1951, and *Africa*, April, 1952.

[15] " La civiltà etiopica non è se non un riflesso della civiltà sud-arabica ". (Conti Rossini, *Storia*, p. 106.)

It has sometimes been remarked that there appears to be a strange contrast between the epigraphic riches encountered in South-Arabia and the comparative paucity of epigraphic documents uncovered in Ethiopia. This is at least partly due to the fact that with the exception of the German Aksum expedition[16] and an Italian excavation at Adulis[17] no major investigation has been carried out in Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia,[18] a region which the late C. Conti Rossini justly called "uno dei più promettenti campi archeologici. . . ."[19] South-Arabian antiquities have, however, been found on the Qohaito plateau, and at Yeḥa, Tokonda, Kaskase, and other places, mostly in the province of Akkele Guzay.[20] D. J. Duncanson (*Antiquity*, xxi, p. 159) has justly pointed out that

> "it is not unreasonable to suppose that other sites may lie undetected beneath the surface and unmarked by the broken pillars, lengths of dressed stone walling and heaps of rubble that characterize most of those already known."

Several short South-Arabian inscriptions discovered in Southern Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia have been published by Littmann (*Aksum Expedition*, pp. 57 *et seqq.*) who dates them 5th–1st cent. B.C. In 1945 Eritrean villagers accidentally discovered a stone sphinx and a

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[16] Cf. Littmann's work, Berlin, 1913.

[17] Accad. d. Lincei memorials, Rome, 1908.

[18] It is strange to find that in 50 years of colonial rule in Eritrea the Italians should have been so indifferent in this respect. At the end of 1936 Ugo Monneret de Villard was entrusted by the Italian Government with a preparatory mission in the Aksum area with a view to making a topographical study for future excavations (the results of his work are embodied in his *Aksum*—see Bibliography). These excavations have never materialized due to the political changes in Ethiopia. During the last war, several members of the British Military Administration in Eritrea had hoped to undertake some archæological research, but the Legal Adviser took the view that any archæological work would be outside the strict limits imposed on a military caretaker government by International Law. In any future excavations the search should not be restricted to the Aksum area, but might with advantage cover large parts of the old Aksumite Empire.

[19] *Storia*, p. 27.

[20] Cf. also Nielsen, *Handbuch*, p. 34. It is most likely that the eastern part of the Akkele Guzay province was the area where South-Arabians first settled.

small stone altar bearing an inscription in South-Arabian characters.[21] The short text is quite clear, but contains two proper names which in precisely this form had not hitherto been known.[22] The writing is of considerable beauty (" del miglior tempo dei Mukarrib "[23]), and the inscription is dated by Conti Rossini 7th–5th cent. B.C. This is thus the earliest epigraphic document hitherto found on Ethiopian soil and testifies, together with the South-Arabian inscriptions described by Littmann,[24] to the early influence of South Arabians, not only along the shores of East Africa, but even on the inaccessible plateau. The causative form *hqny* shows us, incidentally, that the colonizers of that period were Sabaeans.

Of the South Arabian tribes who settled in what later became the Kingdom of Aksum we know only two by name: the Ḥabašāt[25] and the Agʿazyan.[26] The former provided the name for the people (" Abyssinian ") and the latter the name for their language (" Gəʿəz "). We do not, however, know whether these were the only South Arabian tribes who made their homes in North East Africa; nor do we possess any reliable information about their language. While the Kəramatən inscription shows that language to have been of the Sabaean type, we have as yet no means of knowing if and when other South-Arabian

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[21] Cf. D. J. Duncanson, *loc. cit.* The find was made at ʿAddi Kəramatən in the Akkele Guzay. Duncanson brought these interesting relics to Asmara where I had an opportunity of seeing them and of translating the simple inscription which is a boustrophedon and reads:

H'ḌB'L bn 'LMT' = H'ḌB'L son of 'LMT'
hqny ḌTḤMYM = dedicated [this] to Ḍt ḤMYM (the solar goddess)

Sphinx and altar are now in the Asmara Museum. Cf. also the conflicting story about this find given in A. Davico's article in the *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, Vol. V, 1946.

[22] Cf. Conti Rossini, *RSE*, V, p. 2. See also Ryckmans' *Noms propres*.

[23] Conti Rossini, *loc. cit.*

[24] *Aksum Expedition*, vol. IV.

[25] From the Arabic *ḥabaša* " to collect, to gather ", thus signifying the mixture of peoples in Abyssinia ? Cf. Conti Rossini, *OM*, 1921, p. 38; Glaser, *Abessinier*, pp. 24–5. See also Gordon, *UH*, p. 227, No. 650.

[26] The root *gʿz* seems to signify both " to emigrate " and " to be free ". Cf. also Conti Rossini, *OM*, 1921, p. 40.

dialects were imported.[27] Conti Rossini has surmised that " il sud-arabico giungesse in Africa in vari dialetti ";[28] he has, however, stressed that this is merely " probable " and that, in view of what he considers to be the " unità di origine "[29] of the modern Semitic languages of Ethiopia, we cannot be certain about it on the strength of the evidence at present available. Considering the comparatively small differences between the various dialects of epigraphic South Arabian (at least in the consonantal skeleton which alone is known to us), we are, in my opinion, unlikely to find any indications of those rather minute distinctions in the fully developed Gəʿəz language (or, *a fortiori*, in any of its successor tongues).[30]

While racially the mixture of Semitic and Hamitic elements in Ethiopia has produced a predominantly Hamitic type, linguistically the immigrants proved to be the dominant component. Naturally, their Semitic tongue was influenced by the Hamitic substrates, predominantly Agaw languages (see p. 28 below), but at first this influence was confined almost exclusively to certain phonetic aspects and the vocabulary. The emergence of Gəʿəz as a language with an identity of its own—and distinct from South-Arabian—was brought about much

[27] Glaser (*Punt und die südarabischen Reiche*, p. 60) has, however, surmised that the Ḥabašāt were nearest to the Qatabanians. This view is shared by Conti Rossini who has assembled a good deal of evidence in favour of this opinion, in particular " perchè il Qatabān estendevasi verso occidente fino allo stretto di Bab el-Mandeb " (*Rend. Acc. Linc.*, 1906, p. 49). Classical sources, notably Strabo, are also cited by Conti Rossini in support of this conjecture. In fact, Albright's recent find of a Qatabanian alphabet fragment in a letter sequence similar to that in Ethiopic may conceivably be further evidence of a close relationship between the Ḥabašāt and the Qatabanians.

[28] *Proverbi, Tradizioni*, etc., p. 13. Cf. also *Storia*, p. 219.

[29] *Proverbi, loc. cit.*

[30] A. F. L. Beeston has drawn attention (in a personal letter) to some difficulties of a chronological and linguistic nature which, as far as I know, have not hitherto been considered. His argument runs briefly as follows:

One of the principal characteristics of ESA is the regular and extensive use of deictic *-n* as an affix to nouns, in a function similar to that of a definite article. Since this usage has imposed itself on all the four ESA dialects, but is not found in other Semitic languages, it must be regarded as a linguistic innovation of ESA. If, therefore, as is generally held to be the case, South-Arabian speech was introduced into Ethiopia some time between the 8th and 1st centuries B.C., it seems quite inexplicable how this peculiar and characteristic feature of ESA could possibly be absent in what later became Ethiopic. Beeston is thus forced to conclude that, while " *Ur*-Gəʿəz " must at some

more by its natural, independent and separate development than by the impact of Cushitic substrates.[31] It is quite impossible to be precise about the time when Gəʿəz had ceased to be South-Arabian and became a different language no longer intelligible to traders from the east coast of the Red Sea. The process was, of course, a gradual one, but the distinctive identity of Gəʿəz must have been established by the beginning of the first century A.D. We have no written records from this period, but in any event it is impossible to pick out the year or decade when the African form of South-Arabian became Gəʿəz—just as we cannot say at what precise moment Latin, which had spread over a large area, became " modern Latin ", i.e. Italian, or Spanish, or French. These transitions are fluid.

The transformations—as compared with ESA—which Gəʿəz has undergone in the field of phonetics are discussed in detail in the main part of this book.[32] The most important changes are briefly: (*a*) the elimination of inter-dentals; (*b*) the disappearance of *ġ*; (*c*) the appear-

time have been spoken in South Arabia, this period cannot have coincided to any large extent with that in which ESA is historically attested, for otherwise the distinctive features of ESA, which had the power to impose themselves on all the ESA dialects, would have spread to *Ur*-Gəʿəz as well.

This is a weighty argument, indeed, and one that cannot be easily countered. To take the chronological aspect first : The South-Arabian inscriptions found on Ethiopian soil (cf. what has been said in the foregoing on those published by Littmann, *Aksum Expedition*, vol. IV, pp. 57 *et seqq.*, and about the Sabæan inscription on sphinx and altar of ʿAddi Kəramatən) leave little room for doubt as to their dating: some must be as early as the 7th century and others as late as the 1st century B.C. (cf. Conti Rossini, Littmann, and Nielsen, *loc. cit.*).

As to the linguistic objection, it must be remembered that the *-n* affix exists as a deictic element in many Semitic languages, and also appears in this role in Ethiopic, both in demonstrative pronouns and old adverbs (i.e. fossilized nouns). It seems to me, therefore, that the difference is one of degree rather than principle, for ESA would appear to have done no more than adapt a common Semitic element for a particular purpose. A definite article is not, after all, more than a special type of demonstrative. I would suppose that the loss of the nominal termination *-n* is the result of the long independent development of the Gəʿəz language and, indeed, one of the factors in marking it off clearly from its ancestral tongue.

However, this important question certainly requires further study, and I am grateful to Dr. Beeston for having invited attention to it.

[31] This is certainly so in the case of Gəʿəz; rather different circumstances prevail in the evolution of its successor tongues.

[32] Cf. also my note in *Africa*, 1951, pp. 208–9.

ance of two *p* sounds; (*d*) the emergence of several labio-velars. In morphology (which does not form part of this study) we notice the absence of deictic *-n* in the function of a definite article (see footnote [30] above). Unfortunately, in many other important aspects no valid conclusions can be drawn on account of the incomplete state in which ESA has been transmitted. In particular, we do not know anything about its vocalism. In view of the difference which the Ethiopic imperfect (*yəqat(t)əl*) shows as compared with Arabic and Hebrew (*yaqtulu, yiqṭol*), it would have been of very great interest to know something about the vowel distribution in this form in South-Arabian. Whether or not Ethiopic reflects the position as it obtained in South-Arabian must remain in the realm of conjecture.[33]

Unfortunately, ESA texts provide only 3rd person forms; we do not, therefore, know whether Ethiopic was the only Semitic language where the suffix of the 2nd persons perf. has *-k*.[34] The balance of likelihood does, however, lie with those who suppose that Gəʿəz very largely reflects the position as it obtained in South-Arabian (cf. also the arguments adduced in the last two footnotes).

Syntactically, Ethiopic shows somewhat greater freedom than most other Semitic languages, a process which, under the impact of Cushitic, has been carried much farther in the modern Ethiopian languages where all conceptions of Semitic syntax are in total dissolution. In classical Ethiopic, however, we can only speak of some greater latitude (which several scholars have attributed to the influence of Greek which was quite strong in the heyday of the Aksumite Empire), but on the whole the basic ideas of Semitic syntax are intact. Probably through the influence of Syrian Bible translators, we find certain resemblances to

[33] It is, however, noteworthy that the modern South-Arabian languages (Mehri, Soqoṭri, Šḥauri) have a vowel after the 1st radical in the indicative impf. This fact, together with the evidence of Ethiopic, might indeed point to similar conditions in ESA. Cf. also the position in Accadian.

[34] In the 1st pers. sg. perf. *-k* appears also in Accadian which has led Haupt (*JRAS*, 1878) to assume a specially close relationship between Ethiopic and Accadian. The unanimous evidence of the modern South-Arabian languages, which have *-k* in the 1st pers. sg. perf. and in all the 2nd persons (with the exception of the 2nd sg. f. where palatalization to *-ś* has taken place—as in Amharic; cf. below, pp. 69, 73) may certainly suggest that the *-k* forms in Gəʿəz were inherited from South-Arabian.

Cf. also Leslau, *JAOS*, vol. 63, pp. 4 *et seqq.*, and Rabin, *West-Arabian*, p. 51.

Syriac in the employment of some syntactical means, notably the proleptic use of the suffix and the introduction of the direct object by *l*.

Lexicographically, quite a few words appear to have no Semitic correspondences and are often loans from the Cushitic substrates. It is, of course, in the sphere of the vocabulary that foreign influences find easiest access, and not infrequently this is the limit of their intrusion. The Gəʿəz dictionary shows a marked resemblance to that of South-Arabian, but many words have received new and specialized meanings.[35] In other cases it is likely to be purely accidental that the limited vocabulary of ESA—as known to us now—does not contain words common in Ethiopic. Both ESA and Gəʿəz provide some instances of resemblances to North Semitic. Such parallels between geographically widely separated language groups are, of course, well known also elsewhere and have only recently been pointed out by C. Rabin in *West-Arabian* (pp. 26–28).

While Gəʿəz thus shows considerable independence in many aspects and maintains a distinctive character, it is by no means remote from what we consider to be the " Semitic type ". On the contrary, classical Ethiopic generally adheres in a fairly conservative way to this " type " and has preserved not a few archaic traits.

The South-Arabian inscriptions in Ethiopia (mentioned in the foregoing) were followed a few centuries later by Ethiopic epigraphic documents.[36] The oldest Ethiopic inscription extant (in still unvocalized script) is that of Maṭara which I date early 4th century A.D.[37] Here Ethiopic makes its first appearance as a new language—quite distinct from South-Arabian. The Maṭara obelisk is followed by the

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[35] E.g. the root *bʿl* in Ethiopic connotes " riches ", a semasiological development that can be easily followed. The word *bśr* " meat " is practically extinct in Gəʿəz where the Cushitic *śəga* is used. Similar phenomena are, of course, well known elsewhere: e.g. the purely poetical Hebrew *ḥaza* is in Aramaic the usual word for " to see ", and *raʾa* does not occur in Aramaic. In Hebrew *ʾaḥaz* has the special meaning " to seize ", in Arabic *ʾaḫaḍa* is the usual verb for " to take ".

Cf. also Leslau, *JAOS*, vol. 64, pp. 54–8.

[36] I am not concerned here with Ethiopic inscriptions in South-Arabian script (cf. Littmann, *Aksum Expedition*). Even at a time when Ethiopic writing was already fully developed the ornamental South-Arabian characters were still employed for intentionally archaizing purposes.

[37] Cf. *JRAS*, 1951, p. 27. Conti Rossini (*OM*, 1921, p. 40) dates it 3rd century, and Littmann (*Aksum*, IV, p. 61) about 350 A.D.

inscriptions contained in vol. IV of Littmann's *Aksum Expedition* and covering the period from the 4th century up to (probably) the 9th.[38] There is no need here to discuss these inscriptions, since Littmann's masterly exposition is available.[39] The further evolution of the phonetic pattern of Gəʿəz as it becomes apparent from these important documents is treated in detail in the main part of this study.

We possess no literary document in Ethiopic from a time prior to the introduction of Christianity into the country in the middle of the 4th century. Ethiopic literature[40] is not only almost exclusively Christian in content, but even ecclesiastical; it is very largely a vehicle for the monophysite dogma.[41] A Christian character is even projected into pre-Christian events—just as is the case in Islam in regard to the *Jāhiliyyah* age. I have, however, mentioned the possibility elsewhere[42] that a pre-Christian Ethiopic literature—or at least literary beginnings —might have existed and was subsequently suppressed or " christianized " beyond recognition. It is very difficult, to my mind, to explain the ease of diction in the 'Ezana inscriptions of Aksum without presupposing such a literary tradition—now completely vanished.[43]

The Kingdom of Aksum, based on the town by that name and the Tigre province, reached the zenith of its power between the 4th and 7th centuries. Not only was it the centre of a brief cultural flare-up in North-East Africa in which Greek (Byzantine), Syrian, and Arabian influences intermingled, but its expansion towards the north (up to the island of Meroe) coincided with large expeditions in South Arabia. Thus the Aksumites, the Arabian colonists in Africa, recrossed the Red Sea and subjected to their rule the very regions from which their

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[38] *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

[39] Interesting additional points on three of the principal Aksum inscriptions were published by Littmann in the *Miscellanea Academica Berolinensia*, 1950.

[40] See Littmann, *Gesch. d. æth. Litt.*; Guidi, *Storia d. lett. Etiop.*; and also my *Exploration and Study of Abyssinia.*

[41] Ullendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

[42] *Op. cit.*, p. 42.

[43] This view may possibly find support in various mediæval traditions which mention a dignitary who was " Custodian of the Law and Scribe of Aksum " under the pre-Christian Kings of Aksum. But whatever may have been written by this official has not so far been discovered (cf. also Conti Rossini, *OM*, 1921, p. 41).

ancestors had emigrated.[44] This happened on the eve of the advent of Islam, and linguistically this Abyssinian influence in pre-Islamic Arabia is reflected in a fair number of Ethiopic loanwords in Arabic.[45]

But the heyday of the Aksumite Empire was comparatively brief. Its decline began in the 8th century and was followed a century or two later by the eclipse of Gəʿəz as a spoken language, though it continued to be Ethiopia's literary and ecclesiastical language to almost the present day. It is, however, interesting to note that the classical period of Gəʿəz literature was between the 13th and 17th centuries, i.e. hundreds of years after it had ceased to be a living language used in the day to day life of the people.[46]

It is particularly unfortunate that the period from the 9th to the 13th century is shrouded in complete darkness owing to the political upheavals which occurred at that time and which greatly disturbed the continuity of Ethiopian history. No literary documents of that period, epigraphic or other, have come to light, and with the restoration of the so-called Solomonic dynasty in 1270[47] we find Gəʿəz succeeded by a number of other languages. Thus our knowledge of Gəʿəz *as a living language* is limited to the Aksum inscriptions (of which some short and not very significant ones reach down to the 9th century A.D.) and the period of Bible translations between the 5th and 7th centuries. If we possessed documents belonging to the 9th–13th centuries we might be able to see more clearly the gradual transformation of Gəʿəz in the various areas in which it was spoken.

Through the influence of the Church and its wide ramifications (particularly the vast number of priests, village churches and schools as well as monasteries) Gəʿəz was embalmed and kept in a permanently " frozen " state throughout the centuries for all ecclesiastical and nearly all literary purposes. One is, I suggest, fairly safe in assuming that this " freeze " reflects the stage Ethiopic had reached, probably at Aksum and surroundings, between the 8th and 10th centuries.[48]

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[44] Cf. Guidi, *L'Arabie antéislamique*; and in particular Conti Rossini, *JA*, 1921, pp. 5–36. I can, of course, not go here into the details of this fascinating episode.

[45] Most of these have been collected and discussed by Noeldeke, *Neue Beiträge*, pp. 46–66.

[46] The historical background of this development cannot be discussed here; cf. however *Exploration and Study*, pp. 43 *et seqq*.

[47] Under Yəkuno 'Amlak with the help of the Saint Täklä Haymanot.

[48] Further details are given in the fourth sub-section of this INTRODUCTION dealing with the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz.

Such changes as can be noticed between the early inscriptions and early Bible translations, on one hand, and the literary period of the late Middle Ages, on the other, are all almost exclusively in the sphere of phonetics and are, therefore, treated in the relevant chapters below.

The old Aksumite Empire (consisting of what is now the Tigre province of Northern Ethiopia and the Hamasen, Serae, and Akkele Guzay provinces of Southern Eritrea[49]) covered an area about as large as England and Wales. There is a strong *prima facie* presumption that an area as large as this was subject to dialectal divergences.[50] It is, however, well not to exaggerate the extent of such differences. In this particular aspect we are fairly well placed to judge the position: Tña nowadays covers about the same area, and conditions, including notably communications, have hardly altered in the past two thousand years. The spectacular roads the Italians have built are predominantly used by Europeans, and the circumstances in which most village communities live have scarcely undergone any change. The whole of this territory is situated on the plateau at an average altitude of some 7,000–8,000 feet, and during ten months of the year it is quite convenient to reach any part of this area. Although Abyssinians are predominantly sedentary, it is quite usual for individuals or small groups to absent themselves for a month or two from their village and to visit friends or relatives in remote parts of the country. Thus we find fairly constant contacts between areas which are in no way geographically contiguous. Even the casual visitor to Eritrea and Ethiopia, who is amazed at the bewildering variety of racial groups, notices the striking homogeneity of what was once the Kingdom of Aksum. All these factors combined must, I think, be held responsible for the surprising unity of Tigriňa which exhibits, contrary to some scholars without personal experience of this area, a remarkable dearth of dialectal divergences.[51] I believe,

[49] Compare the Language Map; this is now almost exactly the territorial extent of Tigriňa.

[50] I hope to have succeeded in showing on p. 8 above that, while it is quite likely that more than one South-Arabian dialect (in particular Sabæan and Qatabanian) was imported into Ethiopia, we can neither as yet be definite about this nor, much less, say anything about their distribution on African soil. The possibility must, I submit, also be considered that there were no clear-cut divisions between the settlements of the immigrants, in fact that through constant intermingling dialectal distinctions were neutralized, which, in turn, was a factor in the emergence of the new language, Gə'əz.

[51] Further details in CONCLUSIONS below.

therefore, that we have to envisage the position in Gəʿəz as broadly similar. There must certainly have existed some regionally definable speech habits—just as there are in Tňa nowadays—but I submit that we have no reason to assume any sharp dialectal incisions. At least this is likely to have been so until the chaos and interregnum of the 9th–13th centuries began. Civil disorders and the absence of even minimum standards of security are certain to have prevented social intercourse remote from one's home and thus to have created regionally watertight compartments. Moreover, the shift of political power, at that period, towards the south-west, i.e. the northern end of Lake Tana (see Map), brought the Abyssinians into touch with racially and linguistically divergent elements. It is thus, when the curtain of Ethiopian history lifts, towards the end of the 13th century, that we find that Gəʿəz—as we know it—no longer exists and is, instead, transformed into languages which I would broadly identify with the Tigriňa type in the north and the Amharic type in the south.[52] During this period the Cushitic languages, which had originally made so limited an impact on the South-Arabian language which subsequently became Gəʿəz, were able to exert a much stronger influence, especially on the southern branch.[53] This influence was not only felt in the sphere of the sound pattern and the vocabulary, but mainly in syntax and, to a much lesser extent, in morphology. In fact, Semitic syntax became virtually a total casualty of this onslaught.

Since the close of the first millennium and up to the present Gəʿəz has held a position in Ethiopia which is similar to that of Latin during the Middle Ages. Literary work was limited to those[54] who knew the only language considered to be worthy of being a vehicle for literary creation. Whether by this ban on all vernaculars for purposes other than daily use much in the way of popular literary expression has been

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[52] In this re-construction of the circumstances attending the metamorphosis of Gəʿəz into Amharic and Tňa I have had to anticipate an important point which will be further elucidated in the concluding part, viz. the sole parentage of Gəʿəz of the modern Semitic Ethiopian languages—and not, as has often been thought, a different ancestry, perhaps in the form of an unknown sister tongue of Gəʿəz, for the South Ethiopian languages.

A summary of the chief characteristics of these successor languages will be given below.

[53] This is further discussed in the concluding part.

[54] That is generally the clergy.

lost—or strangled at birth—must remain a matter for speculation. While those who could actively wield a pen in Gəʿəz must at all times have been a minute fraction of the population, the same does not apply with regard to those who had a purely passive knowledge of Gəʿəz. Through the influence of churches, church-schools, and monasteries literacy in Ethiopia[55] was always comparatively high; such literacy[56] generally consisted of ability to read and understand the Scriptures.

It is this exclusiveness of Gəʿəz which has suppressed almost all information as regards the vernaculars. But this ban was applied a trifle more leniently in the South, outside the area of the original Aksumite dominion, where Amharic is spoken. Thus we do possess some old Amharic songs in honour of the Kings dating back to the 14th century.[57] Although their understanding, despite the valiant efforts of several scholars,[58] still presents very considerable difficulties, there can be no doubt about their singular importance as the oldest document in the Amharic language.[59] A purely temporary fillip was given to Amharic literary activities in the late 16th and early 17th centuries by outside influences. Portuguese and, to a lesser extent, Italian Jesuits employed Amharic for their propaganda against the monophysite heresy and translated into Amharic such of the writings of their faith as might sway the people. For this purpose they obviously considered Gəʿəz wholly unsuitable.[60] With the expulsion of the Jesuits by Fasil (about 1633) the impetus given to the use of Amharic in writing had vanished and Gəʿəz regained its supremacy, although for less important purposes Amharic soon began to be employed, at least sporadically.

With the exception of the old Amharic songs of the 14th century we scarcely possess any specimens of early Amharic. Most Amharic MSS

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[55] I.e. Northern Ethiopia—and the highlands only.

[56] From a private investigation which I undertook, with the help of several Eritrean friends, in the three plateau provinces of Eritrea (i.e. the central and northern parts of the old Aksumite Empire) it emerged that literacy here might be as high as 8—10 per cent.

[57] The best version is that contained in *MS Bruce* 88, ff. 36 *r*—37 *v*, in the Bodleian Library.

[58] Cf. in particular: Praetorius, *Amh. Sprache*, appendix; Littmann, *Die alt-amharischen Kaiserlieder*, Strassburg, 1914; *idem*, in *RSO*, vol. XX, where also valuable bibliographical information is given; Conti Rossini, *RSO*, vol. X.

[59] Cf. also I. Guidi in *Rend. d. R. Accad. Linc.*, 1889.

[60] Cf. Conti Rossini, *OM*, 1921, p. 173.

(or, more often, Amharic glosses and admixtures to Gə'əz MSS) date from the end of the 17th century and thereafter. The earliest Amharic prose known to me is contained in the Bodleian *MS Clarke Or.* 39[61] which I date as early as the end of the 16th century; it is a treatise on the Christian Faith and is largely based on the *Haymanota Abaw*. Amharic is here used for commentary and explanation and shows some genuinely archaic features.

The first really useful information on Amharic is contained in Ludolf's writings (cf. bibliography). In book I, chapter 15 of his *Historia Æthiopica* (1681) Ludolf accurately describes the transfer of Government from Aksum towards the centre of the country: thus

> " . . . Amharica[62] dialectus in usum venit. Nam novus Rex, linguæ Tigrensis rudis, . . . vernaculam suam in aulam et castra invexit. . . . Sic Amharica lingua (alias etiam ləsanä nəgus[63] Lingua Regis dicta) cum aula et castris per universum Regnum, ceu Regia circumlata, brevi omnibus aliis dialectis, ipsique antiquæ et nobili nostræ Æthiopicæ, in communi loquendi usu prævaluit[64] . . . . "

Consequently, as Ludolf (having had the position described by Gregory with some exaggeration) continues, one may traverse the whole country with the help of Amharic. While Amharic differs from Gə'əz " cum constructione, tum grammatica ", about half the vocabulary is, nonetheless, common to both. Ludolf throws an extremely interesting sidelight on linguistic conditions in 17th cent. Ethiopia when he tells us (*ibidem*) that a man as erudite as his informant Gregory had some difficulty in *speaking* Gə'əz mixing it with many Amharic words. But Gregory found it even more difficult to *write* Amharic, as for literary and ecclesiastical purposes he only used Gə'əz.[65]

While our data for Amharic neither reach back very far nor are very

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[61] No. 79 in my catalogue of Ethiopian MSS in the Bodleian Library, where some further details may be found.

[62] In the English translation of Ludolf's work (London, 1682) we find, I believe, the name " Amharic " for the first time in the English language.

[63] Or in Amharic: *yänəgus k'ank'a*.

[64] In a footnote Ludolf remarks that the Abyssinians themselves call Amharic *amharəñña* (or rather *amarəñña*), and Gə'əz is called *mäs'ḥafəñña*, i.e. language of the book.

[65] Some isolated, but interesting, observations on late Gə'əz and early Amharic are made in Conti Rossini's edition of the *Historia Regis Sarṣa Dengel* (Paris, 1907). Cf. in particular Praetorius' most valuable review in *ZDMG*, 1910.

ample, the position as regards all other modern Ethiopian languages is incomparably worse. Ludolf (*loc. cit.*) had already clearly recognized, on the basis of the information supplied by Gregory, that, while the language of the Aksum region had undergone considerable changes, yet it approximated most closely to the classical language:

". . . ut etiam Habessini ipsi, si vocabulum quodpiam dubium in hac occurrat, Tigrenses de significatione eius consulant. . . ."[66]

And again (*ib.*):

" Tigrensis cum Æthiopica nostra maxime convenit, minimam inter omnes [scil. linguas Æthiopicas] corruptionem passa."

Just as Amharic was named after the province (Amhara) where it had its origin, so Tigriña is thus called after its home, the Tigre province. Ludolf refers to it as " Tigrensis ". But the position is a little complicated because we have two languages by the name of Tigre: one, " Tigre ", is nowadays[67] spoken nowhere near the Tigre province, but to the north of it. The other, " Tigriña " or " Tigray " (with the Amharic or Tña *nisbe*-forms, respectively[68]), is spoken all over the Tigre province and has also the name " Tigre " plus ending = *Tigrensis*. The term " Tigriña " (with Amharic ending) was first introduced into Europe by d'Abbadie (*J.A.* 1843) in the form *tögryaña*; this was changed by Munzinger to *Tigriña* (*Vocabulaire*, p. III). This unfortunate terminology[69] leading to much ambiguity has since been generally accepted under protest and with the sole object of avoiding further confusion. Tigre and Tigriña are today[70] two distinct languages and mutually as unintelligible as Spanish and Italian.[71]

The position is, however, even worse than that, for until the latter part of the 19th cent. Tña was called " Tigre " by Europeans.[72] Thus Salt's vocabularies (appendix to his *Voyage*, 1814) include one of the " Tigre language ", but the actual words make it perfectly clear that he

[66] This is the case to the present day. And Tigriña is referred to by Abyssinians as *ḥabəša par excellence*.

[67] In the concluding part we shall consider whether Tigre, too, originated in the province by that name.

[68] Cf. my note on this subject in *Africa*, 1949, p. 68.

[69] Cf. Praetorius, *ZDMG*, XXII, p. 747.

[70] See concluding part.

[71] Cf. below.

[72] We do not know whether Abyssinians themselves had generally accepted names differentiating the two languages. In the Kassala province of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan Tigre is called الخاصية.

refers to what we now term Tña. Isenberg's Grammar (1842) gives rise to the same confusion. Since earlier reports contain no samples of words or sentences we are unable to say: (*a*) whether Tña and Tigre formerly were one language, (*b*) if so, when their separate identities were finally established.[73]

We are even worse off (if that were possible) as regards historical information on other Ethiopian languages. The material available in Europe even as late as the end of the 19th cent. was so scanty that Praetorius in his inimitable *Amh. Sprache* included Harari, Gafat, and Gurage as " dialects " of Amharic. What we know at present is almost exclusively the result of researches during the past few years.

The Ethiopian Languages Today

In setting out the salient features of the modern Ethiopian languages as we find them today it will be convenient to proceed from North to South :

Tigre[74] is mainly spoken in Eritrea and some parts of the Kassala province of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. It is the northernmost of the Semitic Ethiopian languages and includes the Eastern Lowlands of Eritrea (i.e. the administrative division of Massawa and the Dahlaq islands), the Western Lowlands (the Keren and Agordat divisions), the Mensa, Maria, Ad Temariam, Ad Tekles, Beni Amer tribes as well as many smaller units which need not be enumerated here.[75] The Beni Amer tribe overflows into the Kassala province of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Several tribes are bilingual, e.g. Tigre and Bilin, or Tigre and Bedja.

The Tigre speakers constitute the pastoral and nomadic sector of the Eritrean population. They are almost all Muslims. In 1945 I estimated the number of Tigre speakers at 170,000.[76] Cerulli is quoted (oral information to Miss Bryan) as giving an estimate of 250,000.[77] This may well be correct if it includes all Tigre speakers

[73] Such doubts exist, of course, only as far as express external historical records are concerned. Internal (linguistic) evidence makes the relationship between the two reasonably clear (see under Conclusions).

[74] On the name see p. 18 above.

[75] Cf. Bryan, *Distribution*, pp. 7–9.

[76] *Exploration and Study*, p. 69; Bryan, *Distribution*, p. 7.

[77] Bryan, *Distribution*, *loc. cit.* See also *Africa*, 1948, p. 314. Cf. Language Map.

in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan for which we possess no official estimates.

The chief characteristics of Tigre are: It possesses no velar fricatives (unlike Tĭna).[78] *'Imāla* is not as noticeable as in Tĭna and Amharic. The verbal pattern in the perf. is *qatla* (Gə'əz and Tĭna *qatala*). Its syntax is somewhat less influenced by Cushitic than that of Tĭna and Amh. In the sphere of the vocabulary the influence of Bedja and Bilin can be discerned.

Owing to the highly unsatisfactory state of our knowledge of Tigre it is very difficult to express oneself in more than purely impressionistic terms about the question of dialectal divergences. There would appear to exist some differences between the Eastern and Western Lowlands.

Tigre possesses no written literature, but Littmann has taken down large numbers of songs and dirges which are collected in five stout volumes of his Princeton texts.[79] Other texts (including Gospels and Psalter) have been printed by the Swedish Mission and, to a lesser extent, the Catholic Mission. The Tigre speaking population is very largely illiterate, and those who have pretensions to literacy very frequently turn to Arabic;[80] as Muslims and traders they find Arabic a more useful means of expression. There is no doubt that Tigre is losing ground in favour of Arabic, but it is as yet impossible to express this in terms of figures.

There exist no dictionaries of Tigre, with the exception of the small *Vocabulaire* appended by Munzinger[81] to Dillmann's *Lexicon Linguæ Æthiopicæ* and the equally fragmentary list of words in the Missione Cattolica grammar.[82] The same applies to grammars. The last named is of some practical value but has no scholarly pretensions. It is, however, unduly influenced by the compilers' knowledge of Tĭna.

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[78] See below under Spirantization of Velars.

[79] See Bibliography.

[80] Students of Arabic dialects may find the curious mixture of Aden and Sudani Arabic (as well as a good deal of ignorance due to Arabic not being an indigenous tongue) spoken in Eritrea an interesting subject of investigation. Some partial idea of this language may be obtained from the columns of *Ash-Shahr* which, with the aid of African sub-editors, I edited during the war.

[81] See Bibliography.

[82] See Bibliography.

Professor E. Littmann kindly informs me that a Tigre dictionary prepared by him and Miss M. Höfner is now in an advanced stage of compilation.

Leslau's valuable short outline[83] is based on Littmann's Princeton texts and not on living acquaintance. Apart from dictionary and grammar[84] we are especially in need of well transcribed texts from all parts of the Tigre speaking areas.[85]

Tigriña[86] is spoken in the area largely identical with that of the old Aksumite Empire and may thus lay claim to being—at least geographically—the direct successor of Gəʿəz. Its territory[87] covers the administrative divisions of Hamasen, Serae, Akkele Guzay, the fringes of the Keren and Massawa divisions, the Tigre province itself, and as far to the south-west as Walqayt.[88]

The Tña speakers form the compact, densely populated, sedentary, agricultural block of the Eritrean and Northern Abyssinian plateau. They are overwhelmingly Christians of the monophysite (" Coptic "[89]) persuasion. In 1945 I estimated the number of Tña speakers at 1,300,000[90] of whom nearly 500,000 live in Eritrea; the rest are in the Tigre province of Northern Ethiopia. Cerulli[91] considers this an over-estimate.[92]

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[83] *JAOS*, 1945, 1948; cf. also my review in *Africa*, 1949, p. 75.

[84] Professor Littmann, with his unrivalled knowledge of spoken Tigre, has again taken up work in this field (private letter of June, 1950).

[85] Cf. p. 163 below.

[86] Correctly *təgrəñña*. Generally spelt *Tigriña*. Italian and French books mostly write *Tigrigna*. During the British occupation of Eritrea (1941–52) *Tigrinya* was adopted as offering the least difficulty on the typewriter and as being most readily comprehensible to English speakers. Also referred to as *Tigrai* or *Tigray*, and until about 1850 simply as *Tigre*, i.e. the language of the province by that name (cf. pp. 18 *et seqq.* above). Tña speakers themselves, as has been mentioned, call their language *ḥabəša*.

[87] Cf. map.

[88] For further details about its precise geographical distribution see Praetorius, *Tña Spr.*, pp. 5 *et seqq.*; Kolmodin, *MO*, 1910, pp. 240–2; Bryan, *Distribution*, pp. 9–10.

[89] The term " Coptic " is hardly suitable now that the Ethiopian Church has finally become autocephalous (1951) and is virtually independent of the Coptic Patriarch in Egypt.

There are also a few thousand Roman Catholics and Muslims (Jabarti—cf. A. Pollera, *Le popolazioni indigene dell'Eritrea*, Bologna, 1935, pp. 149 *et seqq.*), the latter racially indistinguishable from their Christian brethren. Cf. now also Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, O.U.P., 1952.

[90] *Exploration and Study*, p. 68.

[91] As quoted by Bryan, *Distribution*, p. 9.

[92] I have defended and further explained this estimate in *Africa*, 1948, p. 315.

Tña—like Tigre—has maintained ʿ and ḥ in their proper pronunciation.[93] Tña spirantizes both *k* and *k'* under relevant conditions.[94] The morphology does not exhibit any profound deviations from that known in Gəʿəz. Tña syntax is almost as far removed from the Semitic type as is Amharic syntax, certainly more so than is the case in Tigre. The vocabulary is predominantly Semitic, but Cushitic elements, notably Agaw, are by no means infrequent.

The question of dialectal divergences in Tña is still largely unexplored, but already hotly disputed. This matter will be referred to in some detail in the main part and again in the CONCLUSIONS. In my view, dialectal distinctions in Tña are fairly insignificant; they have, I think, often been over-estimated because research was based on the evidence supplied by single informants. Differences in their speech habits were frequently individual rather than dialectal.[95]

Tña literature is still in its beginnings. Due to the absolute domination of Gəʿəz and, to a lesser extent, the political prestige of Amharic as *yänəgus k'ʷank'ʷa*, Tña has never enjoyed the dignity of a written language. With the exception of a short collection of customary law, the *Sarda code*,[96] and some surprisingly rare Tña glosses in Ethiopic MSS,[97] Tigreans have until recently used Tña only for epistolary purposes. But under the stimulus of political events during the past ten years a lively Tña Press has sprung up.[98] At least two codes of customary law have been published with the help of the British Administration.[99] Mission societies have printed many biblical and religious texts (among them the complete New Testament, parts of the Old Testament, and the *Imitatio Christi*),[1] but a representative selection

[93] See chapter on Laryngals.

[94] See chapter on Spirantization of Velars.

[95] Cf. in particular pp. 58 *et seqq.*; p. 185, and concluding part.

[96] See Conti Rossini, *OM*, 1921, p. 170; and esp. the *Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana*, p. 296.

[97] Cf. my *Catalogue of Ethiopian MSS*, p. 21.

[98] The Tña *Eritrean Weekly News*, founded in 1942 by the British Ministry of Information as the first regular paper in that language, was followed after the war by papers sponsored by the various Eritrean political parties.

[99] The work had actually been started under the Italian Government before the outbreak of the war (cf. *RSE*, vol. VII, Suppl.).

[1] Some further details in *Exploration and Study*, pp. 68–9.

from the vast body of traditions, proverbs, and songs has only recently appeared.[2]

Tña 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. Francesco da Bassano has given us a useful dictionary, although meanwhile we require quite a substantial supplement. Leslau's transcribed texts are excellent and so are Kolmodin's[3] collections in Abyssinian characters. Much study of detail remains to be done among which the problem of Tña dialects ranks prominently; for this we need carefully transcribed texts from *all* parts of the Tña area, and in each case the evidence of several informants is desirable.

Amharic[4] is spoken not only in its home province, Amhara, but over large areas of Central Ethiopia. Ludolf already knew that it had spread to the Begemdir, Shoa, and Gojjam.[5] This expansion, which took place during the first part of the 2nd millennium A.D., has embraced the provinces of Lasta, Damot, and Semien.[6]

Amharic is now the language of the sedentary population of the Central and Southern Abyssinian highlands and is thus spoken predominantly by Christians[7]. It is very difficult to give a reliable estimate of the number of Amharic speakers, mainly perhaps because we possess no figures of the total population of Ethiopia. The best estimates range between 3–5 millions.[8] Amharic is thus, next to Arabic, the living Semitic language spoken by the largest number of people; Tña holds the next place numerically. As Amharic is the

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[2] C. Conti Rossini, *Proverbi, tradizioni e canzoni tigrine*; a splendid volume. Professor H. J. Polotsky has suggested (*JAOS*, 1947, p. 143, note 2) that a collection of the original contributions to the *EWN* would make a good Tña chrestomathy.

[3] Cf. the Bibliography for the works cited here.

[4] Cf. the latter part of second sub-section above.

[5] *Historia*, book I, chapter 15.

[6] Details in Bryan, *Distribution*, p. 10.

[7] See note [6] above.

[8] *Exploration and Study*, p. 67; Bryan, *op. cit.*, p. 10. Cohen (*Traité*, p. 15): 5 m. Ethiopian estimates are considerably higher, no doubt for reasons of prestige, and not infrequently exceed the best estimates for the *total* population by quite a few millions.

only recognized language of the Ethiopian Empire, it is not only essential for all official purposes, but the distribution of Amharic speaking administrative officials throughout the country affords it considerable prestige—not rarely supported by a moderate degree of compulsion. How far the present Ethiopian Government has succeeded in its policy of encouraging Amharic at the expense of other languages, is not at present easy to gauge, but there can be little doubt that Amharic is slowly gaining ground.

Amharic has undergone profound changes in its phonetic character: the laryngals have been reduced to *h* and the glottal stop—and even the latter is rare now. Palatalization is, perhaps, the most notable feature in the Amharic sound pattern.[9] In verb-formation consistent doubling of the medial radical in the perf. and the use of composite tenses stand out. The construct state has disappeared; the suffix -n indicates the accusative. The syntax has completely lost all Semitic conceptions. The vocabulary is shot with Cushitic elements (Agaw, Sidamo, Galla).[10]

There is general agreement that, considering the wide area covered by Amharic, there are remarkably few and insignificant dialectal differences. Such distinctions as do exist occur principally between the speech forms current in the provinces of Shoa and Gojjam, respectively.[11]

On the beginnings of Amharic literature cf. pp. 15–17 above. Among modern Amharic writers Afeworq, 'Aläk'a Tayyä, and Heruy Walda Sellase[12] deserve mention. The son of the last named, Sirak, is the author of a translation of Dr. Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*. However, literary creation in the true sense of the word is still limited in Amharic. So far it is the Ethiopian Press and Information Bureau which predominantly provides the " literature."

With the exception of Gə'əz, Amharic, among all Ethiopian languages, has enjoyed most attention by scholars. The first grammar was written by Ludolf more than 250 years ago. The names of Isenberg, Praetorius,

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[9] For details see the relevant chapters below.

[10] Many perfectly good Semitic roots have been effectively disguised by phonetic changes, such as the dissolution of the laryngals.

[11] See below *passim*—and also in the CONCLUSIONS.

[12] The spelling of these names is not consistent, as the authors' own renderings, where known, have been used.

Guidi, Armbruster, and Cohen are the most outstanding in this field. While we are on the whole well provided with careful descriptions of Amharic, our desiderata, naturally, remain manifold. Among these, good transcriptions from as many parts of the country and by as many informants as possible deserve again high priority. They alone will allow us to deal with many matters for which at present we lack the raw material.

In order to convey a preliminary idea[13] of the position of these three modern languages (Tĭña, Tigre, Amh.) and Gəʿəz, we find a useful parallel in the Romance languages: If Gəʿəz is compared to Latin, Tĭña takes the place of Italian,[14] Tigre of Spanish, and Amharic of French. Whatever the " inner " relationships may be,[13] on the surface at least this is a remarkably close comparison.

To the *South of the Amharic area* we find a small number of Semitic islands, of varying size and significance, which are not—as Praetorius still supposed—Amharic dialects, but independent languages. Some of these have preserved Semitic characteristics which are lost elsewhere, and in some instances we find curious parallels with the North-Ethiopian languages. The disentanglement of those traits of old Semitic, North-Ethiopian, Amharic, and Cushitic origins is an important task for the future; some matters which have a bearing on the sound-structure will be dealt with below. I would only add now that Conti Rossini's view,[15] that we find here languages of old military colonies established in remote parts by the kings of Aksum, has much to commend it.

Harari is the language spoken in the town of Harar[16] in Eastern Ethiopia. It is surrounded on all sides by Galla and Somali. The Hararis are Muslims, and Arabic has exerted a not inconsiderable influence on their language. This applies, of course, to the vocabulary in particular, but is noticeable also in morphology, especially in the conjugation of hollow verbs. Since Harar came under effective Shoan

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[13] Details in CONCLUSIONS.

[14] Also in that it is the successor language in the original centre of the parent-tongue.

[15] *OM*, 1921, p. 174; *Storia*, p. 283; E. Ullendorff, *Africa*, 1950, pp. 335–7.

[16] The history of Harar is described by Cerulli, *Stud. Etiop.*, I.

sovereignty the influence of Amharic has grown,[17] and it seems likely that the latter will slowly displace Harari altogether.

The number of Harari speakers is estimated at about 35,000.[18]

Harari " literature " is limited to some songs and the codification of Muslim customary law.[19] In its scholarly treatment the names of Praetorius, Paulitschke, Mondon-Vidailhet, Littmann, Cohen, and especially Cerulli[20] deserve mention.

Gurage[21] is generally referred to as a " dialect cluster."[22] It is spoken in an area which lies to the south-west of Addis Abbaba, and is bordered in the north by the river Awash, in the west by the river Omo, and in the east by Lake Zway. Gurage is surrounded by Galla in the north and east, and by Sidamo in the south and west, both of course Cushitic languages. It is separated from Amharic by a fairly narrow Galla corridor, and—as Bruce had already shown[23]—many Gurages speak Amharic in addition to their own language. Some seemingly archaic features in Gurage which might reflect North-Ethiopian characteristics appear to be explained by the likelihood that North-Ethiopian military colonies settled among tribes of Sidamo stock.[24] Nowadays Gurages are overwhelmingly pagans, but there are more or less significant minority groups of Muslims, Christians of Ethiopian rite, and Roman Catholics.[25] Cerulli estimates the number of Gurage speakers at 350,000.[26]

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[17] But the syntax is less " de-semitized " than is the case in other Ethiopian languages. In some, perhaps superficial, aspects it reminds one of Tña features, esp. the " euphonic " *-i* in which nouns ending in two consonants terminate.

[18] Cerulli, as quoted by Bryan, *Distribution*, p. 10.

[19] Cerulli, *Stud. Etiop.*, I. It is noteworthy that Harari has generally been written in Arabic, and not Ethiopian, characters.

[20] Cf. Bibliography.

[21] About the name cf. *Africa*, 1950, pp. 336–7, where also some historical information is provided.

[22] Bryan, *Distribution*, p. 11.

[23] *Travels*, vol. IV, pp. 147 *et seqq.*

[24] Conti Rossini, *Etiopia e genti d'Etiopia*, pp. 132–5 ; Ullendorff, *loc. cit.* (footnote [21]).

[25] No figures are available.

[26] Bryan, *loc. cit.*

Our knowledge of the Gurage dialects is as yet extremely limited. Chaha appears to be the most important one; others are Muher, Aymallal, Eža, Walani, etc.

Gurage is characterized by the extraordinary debility of the liquids and the abundance of palatalized and labialized phonemes.[27] The dictionary shows large numbers of non-Semitic words, mostly of Sidamo origin.[28]

There exists no Gurage literature. The writings of Praetorius, Mondon-Vidailhet, and notably Cohen, Polotsky, and Leslau have considerably enhanced our knowledge of this interesting language.

Gafat was spoken by tribes in the Blue Nile region of the Gojjam province. All we possess of this language is a 17th cent. MS of the *Song of Songs* in the Bodleian Library,[29] on the basis of which Leslau has provided a grammatical outline of Gafat.[30] In 1840 Charles T. Beke had already found that Gafat was " on the eve of extinction ",[31] and when Leslau visited the area in 1947 he managed to collect, after considerable endeavours, a total of four people who could still speak the language.[32] Gafat undoubtedly belonged to the South-Ethiopian group of languages, but—as Polotsky has cogently shown in a review of Leslau's *Gafat Documents*[33]—it would be very hazardous to say much more in view of our unsatisfactory acquaintance with this language.

Argobba is—or rather was—spoken to the east of Shoa and south of Harar, but the number of speakers (estimated at about 2,000 by Cerulli[34]) is decreasing at an astonishing speed in favour of Amharic.

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[27] Cf. the relevant chapters below.

[28] Sidamo is the Cushitic language group which has had the strongest influence on Gurage (see Language Map). Cf. now Leslau, *Language*, 28, i, 1952.

[29] *MS Bruce Or.* 94.

[30] See Bibliography.

[31] *Proceedings of the Philological Soc.*, 1846, p. 92, where an interesting account of a dying language may be found.

[32] *Word*, vol. IV, pp. 220–1.

[33] *JAOS*, 1949, pp. 36 *et seqq.* Prof. Leslau informs me that a new work on Gafat is virtually ready (1952).

[34] Bryan, *Distribution*, p. 10.

Virtually all that is known about Argobba we owe to the work of M. Cohen.[35]

Since the *Cushitic languages* enter this treatise for comparative purposes only it will suffice to say a very few words.

The special importance of the Agaw peoples and languages is pointed out in an extensive footnote below.[36] They formed the original population of the Northern and Central Ethiopian plateau and their speech has exerted a considerable influence on that of the immigrant Semites. Nowadays Agaw is only employed for "home use," all official contacts require a knowledge of Amharic, Tňa, or Tigre (as the case may be). Virtually all Agaw are, therefore, bilingual; their own languages appear to be dying out now—with the possible exception of Bilin. Bilin is spoken in the north (Keren region); it is in contact with Tigre.[37]

Khamir and Khamta form small islands in the southern Tňa region. Quara and Qemant[38] are spoken on the northern and western shores of Lake Tana; they are gradually being superseded by Amharic.

In the north-east we find Dankali (or Afar) and Saho, both languages which cover vast and sparsely populated areas. They are as yet ill investigated. In the centre and south-east, Galla and Somali extend over even larger regions of the hot lowlands. And in the south-west the Sidama languages (whose investigation we owe to Cerulli) are in contact with Gurage.

The geographical distribution of these languages can, I hope, be clearly seen from the Language Map. But present-day geographical facts are not always indicative of linguistic relationships: migrations and other factors have made this a fairly complicated pattern. Very often only a few faint traces point to an originally differing distribution, but however few the linguistic data at our disposal may be, they are frequently the only indications from which historical conclusions can be drawn. Into some of these relationships we shall have to probe in

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[35] *Études* and *Nouv. Ét. d'Éthiopien méridional.*

[36] Pp. 63–64.

[37] Reinisch's pioneering studies have made at least something of these languages available to the scholarly world, but fresh research with modern linguistic methods would be most desirable, particularly in view of the threatened disappearance of some of these tongues.

[38] Cf. Conti Rossini, *La langue des Kemant.*

the following, but a good deal more research is needed to throw light on these intricate influences and counter-influences in the vast Ethiopian area where Semitic and Cushitic have met.

The Traditional Pronunciation of Geez

Reference to this important subject is made at various places below. It is, however, necessary to preface here a few general remarks,[39] particularly as my views on the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz appear to deviate in several aspects from those expressed by Littmann,[40] Cohen,[41] and Mittwoch.[42]

Apart from epigraphic evidence, mainly from the 4th and 5th cent. A.D., all our knowledge of Gəʿəz is derived from MSS prepared several centuries after Ethiopic had ceased to be used as a language other than for literary and liturgical purposes. These MSS were, in their overwhelming number, written at the centre of Ethiopian civilization which had—as we have seen—moved away from Aksum towards the south at the beginning of the second millennium. MSS were frequently produced in the capital of the Empire and at the court of the King. This centre was predominantly, though not invariably, situated at Gondar, in the Amharic speaking area. It is, therefore, not surprising that most MSS reflect the phonetic evolution which Amharic had undergone.

The problem arises, therefore, as to our knowledge of

(*a*) the spelling of Gəʿəz (apart again from the limited range of epigraphically attested words);

(*b*) the pronunciation of Gəʿəz.

Does there exist a tradition of Gəʿəz pronunciation which contains genuine elements of the original mode in which Ethiopic was pronounced before it ceased to be a living language ? Or is the so-called traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz merely a reflection of the speech habits current in the various modern Ethiopian vernaculars ?

It is a well-known fact that the spelling in Gəʿəz MSS is generally quite chaotic. In wishing to ascertain the " correct " way of spelling we have, I suggest, only two possible guides: comparative etymologies

[39] I am reserving a detailed treatment of this problem for publication elsewhere.
[40] *Nachrichten d. königl. Gesellsch. d. Wissensch. Göttingen*, 1917–8.
[41] *JA*, 1921.
[42] *Trad. Ausspr.*

and statistical preponderance. Both methods are very defective. Comparison of Eth. *qtl*—Hebr. *qṭl*; Eth. *'zz*—Hebr. *'zz*; Eth. *ḫnzr*—Arab. *ḫnzr* ; Eth. *'gl*—Hebr. and Arab. *'gl*; Eth. *ʒr'*—Hebr. *ʒr'*; etc., suffices to show the great hazards of this method. And statistical preponderance is, of course, no proof of the original and correct pronunciation and spelling. Dillmann, in the Prolegomena to his *Lexicon* (p. xviii), shows some of the difficulties which these " literarum permutationes " cause the lexicographer, but he does not, unfortuately, tell us which criteria he adopted in the compilation and arrangement of his dictionary.

As to the pronunciation of Gə'əz, we should require information under four heads on which the script offers no clue:

(1) *Vowels.* The 6th Eth. vowel order may represent *ə* as well as zero. We are uncertain about the quality of the 1st and 6th vowel orders,[43] and should also wish to know whether the 5th and 7th orders were ever diphthongized in Gə'əz. All we know about the quantity of the Ethiopic vowels is derived from the evidence presented by the modern vernaculars.

(2) *Consonants.* The laryngals ' ', and *h*, *ḥ*, *ḫ* have undergone quite different developments in, for instance, Tĭa and Amh.; the former tends to preserve, the latter to eliminate. What was the position in late Gə'əz ? And when were the distinctions between *s* and *ś*, on one hand, and *s'* and *ʒ'*, on the other, given up ? We may suppose with some assurance—but there is no certainty—that the unanimous evidence of the modern languages as regards the glottalized ejective character of the emphatic sounds reflects the position as it obtained in Gə'əz.

(3) *Gemination* is not indicated in the Ethiopic script, and all our notions on this important feature in Gə'əz are largely conjectural.

(4) *Accent.* The great disadvantage of not knowing anything definite about stress conditions in Gə'əz is fully described in the chapter on the Accent.

Does there now exist a genuine tradition as to the conditions which prevailed in Gə'əz ? Cohen (*JA* 1921, p. 228) has established a rule which should very largely be regarded as a reliable guide:

" . . . la lecture moderne des phonèmes figurés par l'écriture n'apporte aucun témoignage valable sur une période antérieure, chaque fois qu'elle concorde avec la langue parlée des lecteurs."

In the light of this rule I would say that—with a few exceptions—the

[43] About this and other questions cf. the relevant chapters below.

so-called traditional pronunciation is little more than the application to Gəʿəz of the phonetic habits of the speaker's vernacular. Littmann, Cohen, and Mittwoch have worked with two or three informants, generally (though not always) Amharic speaking, and have concluded that

> " . . . die heute übliche Aussprache des Aethiopischen muss also im amharischen Sprachgebiet ihre schulmässige Ausbildung erfahren haben . . ." (Mittwoch, *Trad. Ausspr.*, p. 2.)

I, too, gained this impression at first when I heard Gəʿəz read at Addis Abbaba. And conversation with some Ethiopian scholars (though not all) confirmed this impression. But after I had made a careful study of the pronunciation of Gəʿəz at Debra Bizen and other traditionally learned places I came to the conclusion that it is the respective vernacular which determines the way in which Gəʿəz is rendered. I am not, therefore, inclined to believe that there exists an " authorized " Amharic-influenced tradition of Gəʿəz pronunciation, but on the whole Gəʿəz is pronounced in the Amharic manner in the south and in the Tňa manner in the north. I consider this to be so on the basis of investigations covering most parts of the country; the indigenous opinions quoted by Littmann, Mittwoch, and Cohen[44] are, to my mind, merely the reflection of the enormous prestige attached to Amharic as the language of King and Government.

Thus I have regularly heard the accurate pronunciation of ʿ and *ḥ* in the recitation of Gəʿəz all over the Eritrean plateau—just as the Tňa vernacular of these readers maintains these sounds.[45] But in all Amharic speaking areas ʿ and *ḥ* are rendered as ʾ and *h*, respectively, just as is the case in Amharic itself.[46]

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[44] Littmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 627–8; Mittwoch, *op. cit.*, p. 2; Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 243. I would suggest, with great respect, that these scholars have, perhaps, been unduly impressed by the dogmatic manner in which Ethiopians are inclined to voice their views on these matters.

[45] I am aware that this is in contrast to the interesting incident which Littmann relates (*loc. cit.*). See note 7, on p. 37 below.

[46] I broadly agree with Cohen's verdict (*op. cit.*, pp. 226–7):

> " En aucun cas la force de la tradition ne peut perpétuer des faits anciens directement opposés aux nécessités de la prononciation amharique: quand les éléments du langage ancien . . . heurtent la phonétique amharique, ils doivent ou disparaître entièrement, ou être conservés au prix d'une accommodation quelconque. . . ."

See, however, next paragraph.

This is not to say, though, that in a few instances some isolated genuine remnants of Gəʿəz pronunciation may not have survived. This is especially likely when a certain feature diverges sharply from the phonetic habits of the vernacular in question. A case in point is the non-diphthongization of the 5th order vowel in the recitation of Gəʿəz, although diphthongization generally occurs in both Amharic and Tĭña (see pp. 169–182 below).[47] On the whole, however, it is well to regard all alleged manifestations of this traditional pronunciation with a good deal of scepticism. The process of transformation by which Gəʿəz merged in its successor tongues must have been a gradual one, and it is, therefore, very unlikely that one particular stage in this evolution should have been singled out in the consciousness of those involved in this very process and be handed down as the *status quo ante*.

[47] As is explained on pp. 169–170, Mittwoch's experience is different in this respect from my own.

CHAPTER I

CONSONANTS

Like Gəʿəz and the other Semitic languages the modern Abyssinian tongues have maintained the characteristic Semitic preponderance of the consonants over the vowels, the former being the carriers of semantic value, while the latter introduce mood and other modifications of the basic root conception. In discussing the sounds, consonants and vowels, of the Abyssinian languages we shall begin with the consonants in a position of isolation. The following comparative table, based on the place of articulation (the manner of articulation will be examined with each group of consonants), shows that the most obvious difference between Gəʿəz and the modern languages is the decline in the laryngal and sibilant classes and the development of a number of palatalized sounds:

	Gəʿəz	Tǐña	Tigre	Amh.	Gurage	Harari	Gafat
(*a*) Laryngals	h ḥ ḫ ʾ ʿ	h ḥ ʾ ʿ	h ḥ ʾ ʿ	(ʾ) (h)	—	ʾ h	h
(*b*) Velars	g k k′	g k k′	g k k′	g k k′	g k k′	g k k′	g k k′
(*c*) Labio-velars	g̑ k̑ k′̑	g̑ k̑ k̑	—	g̑ k̑ k′̑	g̑ k̑ k′̑	—	g̑ k̑ k′̑
(*d*) Labials	m b f p p′	m b f p p′	m b f p (p′)	m b f p p′	m b f (p) p′	m b f	m b f (p′)
(*e*) Dentals	d t t′	d t t′	d t t′	d t t′	d t t′	d t t′	d t t′

	Gəʿəz	Tǧña	Tigre	Amh.	Gurage	Harari	Gafat
(*f*) Sibilants	z s ś s′ z′	z s s′	z s s′	z s (s′)	z s	z s	z s s′
(*g*) Liquids	l n r	l n r	l n r	l n r	(l) n r	l n r	l n r
(*h*) Pre-palatals	—	ď ť ť′ š ž (ň)	ď ť ť′ š ž (ň)	ď ť ť′ š ž ň	g^y k^y k'^y ď ť ť′ š ž	ď ť ť′ š (ž) ň	ď ť ť′ š ž ň
(*i*) Semi-vowels	w y	w y	w y	w y	w y	w y	w y

The above table refers, of course, to pronunciation and not to script, as even Amharic still uses all the characters of the Gəʿəz alphabet. Thus some sounds have each more than one graphic expression.[1]

[1] In European grammars we find naturally more or less differing systems of classification for the consonants of the various Abyssinian languages. We need not concern ourselves with those varying modes of division here. What appears, however, to be of considerable interest are the (generally neglected) notions which indigenous grammarians have as regards both classification and terminology (see now also M. M. Moreno's *Struttura e terminologia del Säwasəw*, in *RSE*, VIII, 1950).

Abba Yaʿqob (*Mäsʿḥafä säwasəw zägəʿəz*, p. 6, and *Nay təgrəñña säwasəw*, p. 17) writes:

1st: laryngals (*nəbabä ǧərʿe*): h, ḥ, ḫ, ʾ, ʿ.
2nd: linguals (*nəbabä ləsan*): l, r, t, n, d, t′.
3rd: labials (*nəbabä känafər*): m, w, b, p′, p.
4th: strong sounds (*nəbabä kʿal wəddud*): k′, k, g, y.
'The same sounds are called in his *Tǧña grammar* palatals (*'ank'är*) which seems a more suitable designation.
5th: dentals (*nəbabä asnan*): ś, s, z, s′, z′, f.

It will be noticed that the prepalatals, although mentioned elsewhere in Abba Yaʿqob's *Tǧña grammar*, are not considered within his classification scheme.

LARYNGALS
(Cf. Inventory on pp. 33–34)

The distinction between *all* the laryngal sounds was probably strictly observed only in the " most " classical period of the Gəʿəz language. Documents from that period are not very numerous, but it seems clear from the Aksumite inscriptions of the 4th century A.D. that interchange did not then take place. The period in which all these distinctions were stable was, however, of comparatively short duration, and later inscriptions (tentatively dated by Littmann 7th–11th cent.) show already some uncertainties with regard to *ḫ*.[2]

Even the oldest Gəʿəz MSS known to us (from the 13th cent. onwards) exhibit some confusion as regards laryngal sounds. This confusion may generally be said to increase the more recent MSS are. The degree of inconsistency is greater if the MS in question was produced by an Amharic speaking scribe, and rather less if the vernacular of the scribe was either Tĭña or Tigre. In general, the following stages of development in Gəʿəz MSS can be observed,[3] although it must be remembered that there is much fluctuation and no rigid borders :

(1) Differentiation between ʾ and ʿ, *h* and *ḫ* (*ḥ*) maintained[4], but frequent interchange of *ḫ* and *ḥ*.

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[2] Littmann, *Aksum Expedition*, vol. IV, XIII, 11–12:

አሕለፍክዎሙ instead of አኀለፍክዎሙ

አውራሕ instead of አውራኀ

All other examples are not based on certain readings.

[3] This refers, of course, to a period when Gəʿəz had ceased to be a living language.

[4] ይትመዋ (Littmann, *Aksum*, IX, 4) for ይትመዋእ (X, 5) from √ ሞእ has hardly any relevance in this connection, and I cannot follow Littmann in his remarks (*loc. cit.*) that the absence of the ʾ foreshadows perhaps a later development of laryngal disappearance. Neither is this single example—as against consistent preservation in these inscriptions—of sufficient weight nor in itself of convincing enough a nature to arrive at such a conclusion. Moreover the development in Tĭña and Tigre, presumably the direct heirs of the speech of Aksum, is such that ʾ would have been maintained in the above quoted instance. To speak of an Amharic-like influence (or that of any forerunner of Amharic) here would entail disregard of overwhelming evidence in favour of what is probably no more than a *lapsus calami*. (Prof. Littmann now thinks that the form in question is probably a simple error (information by letter).)

(2) Occasional uncertainty about ʾ and ʿ; frequent interchange of *h*, *ḥ* and *ḫ*.

(3) Indiscriminate interchange of ʾ and ʿ, on one hand, and *h*, *ḥ* and *ḫ*, on the other.

We must here make the necessary distinction between writing and pronunciation. Despite the above mentioned confusion in the MSS, which had already begun in the epigraphic documents of a later period, the intention as well as the endeavour generally prevail to write orthographically "correct" Gəʿəz. Lack of knowledge, however, often causes the most astounding exchanges repulsive to the orthographically and etymologically trained eye. Even a man as erudite as Abba Yaʿqob Gebreyesus does not hesitate to put on the title page of his *Gəʿəz grammar* (written in Amharic) መጽሐፈ ፡ ሰዋስው ፡ ዘግእዝ ። although I found that, on being questioned about it, he was naturally aware that the proper spelling should be *Gəʿəz*. It is interesting to note, though, that despite the oddest interchanges there are certain words which are apparently never misspelt. Among such words I would mention *lʾl*, *lʾk*, *mlʾ* and never, to the best of my knowledge, *lʿl*, *lʿk*, *mlʿ*.

As to the *pronunciation* of the Gəʿəz laryngals (at a time when the language was no longer the "natural", spoken tongue), we must not place undue reliance on the so-called traditional pronunciation of Ethiopic. In this connection see especially the works of Cohen and Mittwoch on this subject, but the latter did not always allow sufficient weight to the fact that his informant's native tongue was Amharic and that Blatta Herouy was much too educated, sophisticated and headstrong a man to make a good informant. When Mittwoch states that "*h*, *ḥ* and *ḫ* lauten vollständig gleich wie das gewöhnliche deutsche *h* ohne Reibegeräusch"[5] or "ʾ und ʿ werden — von einander nicht im mindesten verschieden — als leiser Einsatz gesprochen",[6] he omits to add that this is so only in the case of someone whose vernacular is Amharic. The position is quite different where the mother tongue is either Tňa or Tigre. We must, therefore, differentiate between a

[5] *Traditionelle Aussprache*, p. 11.
[6] *Ibidem*, p. 12.

northern and a southern tradition of Gəʿəz pronunciation[7]; there is, of course, little doubt that the northern tradition—born and continued in the original home of the Ethiopic language—is of greater value to us in assessing the manner in which the Gəʿəz laryngals were pronounced. This has been discussed in detail under "Traditional Pronunciation" in the INTRODUCTION.

Abba Yaʿqob in his grammar of Gəʿəz (p. 7) explains the difference between *h*, on one hand, and *ḥ* and *ḫ*, on the other, that *h* is being pronounced *tʿəkʿit lalto* "a little weaker" than the other two. Unfortunately, he tells us absolutely nothing on the far more interesting distinction between *ḥ* and *ḫ*.

In Tigriňa, *ḫ*, although still written,[8] has in pronunciation coalesced with *ḥ*. Offeio in his *Grammatica* explains the difference between *h*, *ḥ*, and *ḫ* as "aspirata", "più aspirata", and "aspiratissima", respectively. Mauro da Leonessa gives the appearance of even greater precision in explaining a difference which he himself could never have discerned and which is modelled on the distinction between Arabic *ḥ* and *ḫ*.[9]

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[7] In this connection Littmann's statement (*Gəʿəz Studien*, 1917, pp. 627–8) that the Amharic pronunciation of Gəʿəz was generally and everywhere considered "more refined" runs counter to my own experience. Littmann's informant had been educated at Gondar and therefore produces Gəʿəz in Amharic pronunciation. The Ethiopian who described Littmann's accurate rendering of the laryngals as that of a peasant (*loc. cit.*) no doubt came from an Amharic speaking area. I have heard hundreds of Ethiopians all over the country read Gəʿəz, and there can be no doubt, in my view, that they reproduce the pronunciation of their vernacular.

[8] Especially by members of the Catholic Church of Ethiopian rite; in Swedish Mission circles and schools there is an increasing tendency to omit *ḫ* altogether.

[9] *Grammatica Tigray*, p. 4: ". . . il suono della *h* consista in un soffio formato mediante lo scostamento della glottide. . . ."

"La *ḥ* si pronunzia chiudendo la glottide . . . in modo che il soffio . . . sia costretto a passare per la glottide detta . . . respiratoria (tenuta apperta), all'orlo della quale si produce il rumore speciale del fregamento. . . ."

"La *ḫ* segue lo stesso modo di pronunzia, ma con emissione più accentuata del soffio e con fregamento prolungato fino alla faringe inclusa. . . ."

This view as well as that of Offeio (both members of the Catholic school) is not based on phonetic evidence, but on the desire to save the character for *ḫ* in the modern Abyssinian languages. This is, of course, an altogether different problem, and there is no reason why the same sound might not be represented in writing by two signs, as is indeed the case in many other languages where spelling is historical rather than phonetic.

In actual fact, we have a clear distinction in Tña between '[10] and ʿ, on one hand and *h* and *ḥ*, on the other.[11] *ḫ* is still very often written in cases where it has an etymological justification,[12] but as far as present-day pronunciation is concerned it is in no way different from *ḥ*, and any distinction between *ḫ* and *ḥ* is of " purely graphic value " (Littmann as quoted in Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, p. 125).

The position in Tigre is precisely the same as in Tigriña. It would be futile to ascribe—as has sometimes been done—the clear distinction between ' and ʿ in Tigre to contact with Arabic speaking traders. This would still leave the parallel position in Tña unaccounted for; moreover, under the impact of Arabic we should then have expected Tigre to regain the difference between *ḫ* and *ḥ*, which, of course, it has not done.

In Amharic the laryngals are now in a state of complete dissolution which, in turn, has caused considerable chaos in the spelling of the language. Thus *h*, *ḥ*, *ḫ* are pronounced as a weak *h*, and even the

[10] Under certain conditions, i.e. after *i*, the glottal stop may sometimes be softened and then eventually disappear: e.g. *ḫat'i'at* > *ḫat'yat* (cf. C. Rabin, *West Arabian*, p. 130).

[11] In some rare cases an exchange of *h* and *ḫ* occurs: e.g. *tähalaläḫä* " to be obstinate ", da Bassano, *Vocabolario*, col. 2; *täḫalaläḫä*, *EWN* 101 (3rd August, 1944), p. 3, col. 1; *həzbi* (*Matth.* v, 1) for usual *ḫəzbi*. On the whole, however, the difference between *h* and *ḥ* is clearly audible in Tña.

[12] The Tigriña Language Council (cf. my note in *Africa*, 1949, p. 63) has laboured with the problem as to whether or not there is a slight difference in the pronunciation of *ḥ* and *ḫ* in present-day Tña. The division generally ran on Mission school lines (the Catholics maintaining that there exists an audible distinction and the Protestants denying it), but one gained the impression that those who " favoured " a difference were not quite clear as to the distinction between phonetic value and graphic expression. Their insistence on the existence of a difference seemed to spring from a desire to preserve traditional Gəʿəz spelling.

The discussion is reported, in extracts, in *EWN* No. 94, of 15th June, 1944. The gist of the somewhat longwinded Tigriña argument is that already in Gəʿəz " it was found difficult " (*sic*) to pronounce *ḫ* and it was thus frequently exchanged with *h* and *ḥ*. Originally, so the report says, *ḫ* was pronounced in Gəʿəz as *ḫ* is pronounced in Tña today.

It is held by Tña scholars, the discussion continues, that *ḫ* now mostly appears " clothed " as *ḥ*. While *ḫ* cannot be banned from the Ethiopic alphabet on account of its importance for Gəʿəz, the majority on the Council were in favour of its being thrown out of the Tña spelling system as redundant.

latter often becomes '. ' and ' are pronounced alike, and the articulation of ' has become so weak that the written character for ' is mostly only a graphic convention as a vowel carrier. It is frequently used like *hamzat-al-waṣl*, and we may justly speak of an almost complete disappearance of laryngal sounds in Amharic.

While there is a tendency to give preference to *h* and ' in modern spelling, ', *ḥ*, and *ḫ* have by no means disappeared from the present-day spelling pattern and are maintained for what Klingenheben (*ZDMG* 1950, p. 375) calls " graphisch-aesthetische Gründe ".

h becomes ' in e.g. *hərmät* > *'ərmät*, *hagär* > *'agär*; *h* disappears entirely in *təmhərt* > *təmərt* (though the former continues to co-exist). On the other hand, traditional spelling prevails in ecclesiastic terms and *mots savants* like *'əgzi 'abḥer*, *təḥut*, *bərhan*, and others.[13]

Unfortunately, transcriptions of Amharic names or words in early European sources prove to be a singularly unhelpful and disappointing means of discovering any stages in the disappearance of the laryngals in Amharic. This is mainly due to two reasons: first and foremost, European contact with Amharic speaking Ethiopians took place when this process was already at an advanced stage. Secondly, European interest, at that time, was not linguistic but religious; it brought missionaries into contact with Gə'əz literature of whose spelling pattern they could rid themselves as little as Ethiopians did. Apart from this, transcribed Amharic material in 16th–18th cent. sources is singularly meagre.

In Portuguese books comparatively few names seem to have been transcribed. Among the few examples containing a laryngal is one from B. Tellez's version of d'Almeyda's *Historia Geral de Ethiopia* (Coimbra 1660): *Bahar-Nagays* (for *baḥr-nägaš*) " Governador das terras maritimas de Ethiopia ".

In Ludolf's days Amharic must have reached a stage in the development of her laryngals little different from that which we find today. However, from Ludolf's archaizing spelling we cannot piece together an accurate picture. The traditional methods of spelling used in his work—even though they clearly indicate the confusion in the laryngal field—are particularly ill adapted to convey a clear idea of the *spoken*

[13] The impression, or rather lack of impression, made by Amharic laryngals on an untrained European ear may be gauged from the transcription of N. Pearce who lived in Ethiopia between 1807 and 1819: *larli* (i.e. *la'lay*); *narsey* (i.e. *näḫasye*) (Wright, *B.M. catalogue*, CCCCV).

language at that time. Ludolf's own prejudice (and no doubt that of his informant, Gregory) against this " decay " (" imprimis gutturales *h ḥ ḫ ' ʿ* talem cacographiam inducunt . . .", *Grammatica Linguæ Amharicæ*, p. 6) prevented him from seeing and describing this development objectively. In the *Lexicon Amharico-Latinum* he writes consistently *hagär*, *ḥaläk'a*, *ḥand*, *ḫaməst*, *ʿasər*, etc., although it is highly probable that also towards the end of the 17th cent. the actual pronunciation was *'agär*, *'aläk'a*, *'and*, *'aməst*, *'asər*, etc. On the other hand, we cannot altogether exclude the possibility of some older forms in Ludolf's time, but the way in which the material has been transmitted allows us no accurate estimate of the true state of affairs. Praetorius (*Amh. Spr.*, p. 7) thinks it at least possible that in Ludolf's days *'ayyä*, for instance, might indeed still have been pronounced *ḥayyä*.

In the Amharic sample given in the first volume of Bruce's *Travels* (end of 18th cent.) the position with regard to laryngals differs little from that obtaining at present.

In a Bodleian Library MS (Dillmann, *Bodleian Catalogue*, vol. I, No. 29) dating from the end of the 16th cent.[14] we find *ḥ* and *ḫ* beside *h*; there is very little consistency, and the position is very similar to that reflected in Ludolf's writings. A glance at Littmann's *Altamharisches Glossar* (see Bibliography) reveals this with particular poignancy. Here certain variant readings collated by Littmann (*ibidem*, p. 484) show that the above mentioned *ḥayyä* and *'ayyä* were written side by side. I am inclined to think—although this can hardly be proved—that this is indicative of inconsistent spelling rather than of fluctuation in the actual pronunciation, i.e. that traditional orthography still had a fairly strong hold, but was not expressive of a process of change occurring at that particular time.

The Amharic laryngals were most recently made the subject of a careful phonetic investigation by A. Klingenheben (*ZDMG* 1950, pp. 374 *et seqq.*). Even if one is unable to agree with his views in their entirety, there are many valuable and suggestive details. Everybody agrees that in what Klingenheben calls " die Volkssprache " the five original Gəʿəz laryngals (including *ḫ*) have disappeared in " Wortin- und-auslaut ", but Klingenheben has shown that, while the same

[14] Cf. also: Zotenberg, *Catalogue*, No. 143; Guidi, *Rendiconti della Regia Accademia dei Lincei*, vol. V, fasc. 2, Rome, 1889; Praetorius, *Amh. Spr.*, pp. 499 *et seqq*; and now also Littmann's *Altamharisches Glossar*.

generally also occurs in " Wortanlaut ", the position is different if a word appears in pause, i.e. if either it is spoken in isolation or a " Sprechpause " occurs before it. In this case " fester Einsatz ", a glottal stop, is clearly heard by Klingenheben. My own observations on the whole agree with this statement. While there is thus little doubt about the actual facts, Klingenheben does not accept the explanations given by Praetorius, Brockelmann, Bergsträsser, Cohen, and others, but believes that disappearance is due not to a sound-shift but to a peculiarly Amharic assimilation of consonants to neighbouring " sonants ". The results of his theory are summarized by Klingenheben (*ibidem*, p. 384) : the original Semitic laryngals are " aus der amharischen Volkssprache lautgesetzlich restlos verschwunden ", but due to inner-Amharic phonetic developments three new " Lautformen", i.e. ', *h*, and *ḫ*[15] have evolved.

I cannot help feeling that in the absence of a well-documented sound-history of late Gəʿəz and early Amharic (as exists, for instance, in the case of Latin passing into French) such a view must necessarily remain highly speculative.

In comparing the six laryngal sounds (' ʿ *ġ h ḥ ḫ*), which are likely to have existed in primitive Semitic and which are still preserved in South Arabian, Arabic, and Ugaritic, with early Gəʿəz one notices that only five (minus *ġ*) appear in the epigraphic documents of the 4th cent. A.D. Unlike Hebrew for which the transcription of the LXX makes an original differentiation into ʿ and *ġ* at least possible (cf. Gaza, Gomorra),[16] we have no evidence that South Arabian *ġ* ever existed in Ethiopic. At a later stage (between the 5th and 10th cent. A.D.) Gəʿəz had lost the distinct pronunciation of *ḫ* which began to coalesce with *ḥ*. The remaining four sounds (' ʿ *h ḥ*) thus form the laryngal inventory of the last few centuries of Gəʿəz (before its eclipse as a living language) as well as of Tňa and Tigre (the same position obtains in Hebrew and Aramaic).

When Tigriňa and Tigre assumed a separate identity (at a time which can as yet not be further defined, but which might have been at

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[15] For the sake of uniformity I am using my transcription throughout, even in quotations, unless otherwise stated.

[16] But cf. against this view Ružička, *ZA*, XXI, pp. 293 *et seqq*. This was, of course, written long before *ġ* had also been found in Ugaritic which would invalidate at least some of R.'s arguments.

the beginning of the 2nd millennium A.D.), they inherited all the laryngals which Gəʿəz itself at that time is likely to have possessed.

In Gurage and Gafat the disappearance of the laryngals is as marked as it is in Amharic, while Harari has maintained the clear pronunciation of ʾ (representing also etymological ʿ) and *h* (representing also etymological *ḥ* and *ḫ*).

In Amharic—as we have seen—the dissolution of the laryngals is almost complete. Even ʾ and *h* survive only in certain circumstances, and this too is mostly due to the influence of the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz. Amharic is not the only one among the Semitic languages which has parted with its laryngals. The position in Accadian is somewhat similar.[17] Here only ʾ and *ḫ* are preserved, and the original laryngal can only be ascertained either from comparative etymology or certain changes that have taken place in the vowel concerned. ʿ normally leaves *e* or *i* (*ebêru* < ʿ *br* ; *ṭêmu* < *ṭ* ʿ *m*), while ʾ and *ḫ* mostly cause the vowel to be *a* (*akâlu* < ʾ *kl* ; *râmu* < *rḫm*). Despite distance of time and space the development in Amharic is curiously parallel—except for the distinctive reflection on the vowel ; we have no such aid of vowel shade in Amharic and *lam* " cow " (from *lahm*[18]) could just as well be derived from *l* ʾ *m*, *l* ʿ *m*, or *lḫm*.

Now it has long been held that the reduction of the laryngals to ʾ and *ḫ* in Accadian was not due to independent development within the language itself, but is probably to be attributed to the influence of the Sumerians[19] and possibly other non-Semitic inhabitants of Mesopotamia. The question thus imposes itself at once whether a similar development might have taken place in the case of Amharic, viz. whether the Semitic Ethiopic tongue of the conquerors who swept southwards towards (what is now) central Ethiopia, at the beginning of the second millennium, was influenced and, if so, to what extent by the Cushitic languages that were spoken, and may still be spoken, in central Ethiopia. Brockelmann's answer (*Grundriss*, p. 32) is in

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[17] In the South Arabian dialect of Ḥaḍramawt ʿ is sometimes interchanging with ʾ (cf. Hoefner, *ASA Gramm.*, p. 17). In Syriac—as in Amharic—*h* sometimes interchanges with ʾ, e.g. *henon* and *ʾenon*.

[18] Despite the different laryngal probably etymologically to be connected with Arabic and Hebrew *lḥm* ?

[19] Cf. G. Ryckmans in his *Grammaire Accadienne*, p. 2: " La disparition de la plupart des laryngales en accadien doit être attribuée à l'influence du sumérien."

the affirmative[20] in asserting that the conquered Hamitic peoples of the South " bildeten das semitische Idiom nach ihrem Geiste um " which was achieved phonetically by the " simplification " of the laryngals and sibilants and the creation of the palatalized sounds.

Reinisch has shown that the articulation of ' does, in fact, exist in Cushitic languages,[21] although initially it is often omitted. Thus : Sem. *'kr* ; Gə'əz *hagär* ; Amh. (')*agär* ; Galla *irge* ; Somali *hag*.[22] Sem. *'b* ; Gə'əz *'ab* ; Tña *'abbo*[23] ; Agaw, Bilin *abba* ; Somali *abbo* ; Galla *ababo*.

', too, exists in Cushitic, though it often becomes ' or zero. Sem. *'yn* ; Gə'əz *'ayn* ; Amh. *'ayn*[24] ; Agaw *'il* ; Galla *iğğa*. Gə'əz *'amät* ; Amh. *'amät* ; Agaw *ami* ; Somali *amad*.

As to *h*, Cohen (*Cham. Sem.*, p. 96) states: " Le souffle *h* apparaît souvent en couchitique comme affaiblissement de *ḥ* et *ḫ*." This is indeed a phenomenon parallel to that in Amharic. However, in this connection it is important to remember that in Cushitic the sound *h* seems firmly established, whereas in Amharic it shows a tendency to become weakened and to disappear altogether:
Bedauye (or Bedja) *hawad* " night ". Somali *hilib*[25] " meat ". Galla *hada* " mother ". Sem. *hll* " sing "; Gə'əz *ḫly* ; Agaw *halay* and *ilil*. Sem. *hwy* and *'wy* " desire "; Bed. *hiyo* " husband "; Som. *hawo*

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[20] So is Noeldeke's in his article *Semitic Languages* in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*—and similarly that of other scholars.

[21] The position of Agaw (the great importance of which is discussed below, p. 63) in regard to the laryngals is different in the various dialects. In Kemant (cf. Conti Rossini, *La Langue des Kemant*), for instance, ' has disappeared completely, while in Bilin (cf. Reinisch, *Bilin*) *ḥ* and ' are preserved. The connection is evident: Kemant is spoken in and near the Amharic domain, whereas Bilin touches Tigre territory. There is no reason always to assume *a priori* that the Cushitic language must have influenced the Semitic language. At present we have little precise knowledge, but there must have been influences and counter-influences (cf. Conti Rossini, *Kemant*, p. 38). In the present case, it is at least conceivable that Kemant gave up its laryngals (normally found in Agaw languages) under the impact of Amharic. But this is mere guesswork.

[22] Cf. Cohen, *Cham.-Sem.*

[23] Amharic has the pluralic form *'abbat*.

[24] Though almost invariably written *'ayn*.

[25] No doubt connected with Sem. *ḫlb*. Cf. the not wholly dissimilar semasiological development in the case of *lḥm*.

" desire ". Sem. Hebr. *hyy* (*hwy*) " to be "; Bed. and Som. *hay*. In Saho, too, both ' and *h* frequently occur.[26]

Sem. *ḥ* normally appears in the Cushitic field as *h* (i.e. the same development as we have observed in Amharic)—except in Somali where *ḥ* is often retained. It is, of course, possible that this phenomenon is due to Arabic influence which is strong on the Somali coast: Sem. *ḥšb*; Gəʿəz *ḥsb*; Tňa *ḥsb*; Tigre *ḥsb*; Amh. *'sb*; Agaw *hasab*; Bed. *hasib*; Som. *ḥisab* (obviously borrowed from Arabic). Sem. *ḥyy*; Bed. *hay*; Saho *hay*. Gəʿəz, Tňa *ḥw* " fire "; Agaw, Bilin *haw*.

ḥ does not exist in Cushitic; even Gəʿəz had lost this sound while still a living language.

From the above comparisons we may conclude that such influence as Cushitic languages in central and northern Ethiopia may have exerted on Amharic was certainly not of a nature likely either to encourage laryngal development or to preserve all existing sounds. On the other hand, it seems that Amharic has gone farther than those languages which are alleged to have brought about the dissolution of its laryngals.[27]

Naturally, the problem of the laryngals is only one isolated aspect, and definite views can only be formed in the light of the complete material. Moreover, we do not know precisely with which Cushitic languages Amharic came into contact at the decisive time, but we cannot be far wrong in assuming them to be languages of the type and character today represented by Agaw, Galla, Sidamo, Somali, etc.[28]

We may then say, provisionally, that the laryngal-disintegrating

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[25] Cf. Capomazza, *L'Assaorta-Saho*, Napoli, 1914, *passim*.

[27] See, however, Reinisch (*Bedauye*, para. 36) who surmises that the Cushitic peoples " originally " only possessed " ordinary " *h*, that in genuine Cushitic words no laryngals beyond *h* and ' can be proved to exist and that *ḫ* and *ḥ* sound to the Cushitic ear like *k*. Thus in loanwords:

kadam (< *ḫdm*) " to serve "
kalag (<*ḫlq*) " to create "
milak (< *mlḫ*) " salt "

[28] We know, of course, something of the present distribution of the Cushitic languages: In the north, Tigre is in contact with Bedauye (or Bedja) and Bilin. Tňa and Northern Amharic touch Agaw territory; Gurage is contiguous to the Sidamo region; and Harari and Shoan Amharic are surrounded by Galla, Sidamo, and Somali speakers.

Cf. also p. 28 above.

influences of certain Cushitic languages that were brought to bear on a Semitic Ethiopian tongue, now called Amharic, must have been strong, but they would hardly have sufficed, had a tendency of this character not already existed in proto-Amharic before then.

The position of the laryngal sounds in the modern Abyssinian languages in general and in Amharic in particular is of considerable interest to us in surveying the development of Gəʿəz after it had ceased, in its " classical " form, to be the everyday language of the Ethiopians. In this connection it has to be recalled that Gəʿəz experienced its most prolific literary growth between the 13th and 17th centuries, i.e. hundreds of years after it had died out of the mouth of the common people and become the ecclesiastical, literary language of the country. It is from that period, unfortunately, that most of our knowledge of Ethiopic originates.[29]

It is obvious—as far as the laryngals are concerned—that Tigriňa and Tigre have maintained (better than any other modern Abyssinian language) the position which obtained in Gəʿəz at the latest period of its existence as a spoken language.

VELARS
(cf. Inventory on pp. 33–34)

The three velars, *g*, *k*, *k'*, can be treated together for the various Ethiopian languages, for—unlike the laryngals—they have developed on essentially identical lines and have generally maintained the same characteristics. This means that for an examination of inter-Ethiopian relationships the velar sounds will not prove to be very productive, and we shall thus be able to dispose of them fairly quickly.

The manner of articulation and related problems of one velar sound, viz. *k'*, will be taken up again ; cf. the chapter dealing with the glottalized ejective sounds. The peculiar nature and origin of these ejectives will merit special scrutiny.

Apart from this, some velars are subjected to certain variations, i.e. spirantization and palatalization, and in this connection they have again taken an independent course in the various modern Abyssinian langu-

[29] Cf. also p. 13 above.

ages. Strictly speaking, both phenomena are generally, though not invariably, the result of combinatory effects,[30] but for a number of reasons it will be more convenient to let the treatment of spirantization and palatalization of velars follow the present section.

g is pronounced hard in all Abyssinian languages—like Arabic *g* in Egypt, Aden and some other parts of Arabia. We have no reason to assume that its pronunciation ever fluctuated (see, however, below under Palatalization).

k, too, offers no difficulties. It is articulated against the soft palate. The circumstances under which it may become spirantized in some of the modern languages will be set out later on.

k', on the other hand, requires further elucidation. We do not know its precise pronunciation in early Gəʿəz. It is likely that its articulation at first differed very little from that of South Arabian *k'* (*q*) but, naturally, we know still less about the pronunciation of the latter. If we may judge by the habit of the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz (modelled, of course, on what is customary in the modern languages), then it has to be clearly realized that Ethiopic *k'* differs considerably in its pronunciation from Arabic *q*. Praetorius (*Æth. Gr.*, p. 8) and Chaine (*Gr. Eth.*, p. 7) are hardly right in stating that "*k'* reproduit le *q* arabe"; this is only the case etymologically. In its sound Ethiopic *k'* is a voiceless velar ejective and shares with all other ejectives the glottal closure which makes the vowel following it appear in a peculiarly detached manner. The transcription *k'* (= *k'*) is thus more appropriate than *q* which is bound to cause confusion with the very differently pronounced Arabic sound.[31]

The ejective character of *k'* is apparent in all Semitic Abyssinian languages.

The glottalized pronunciation, which is perhaps the most distinctive

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[30] Because, in a narrow sense, spirantization can only occur under the influence of a preceding vowel. In Amharic, however, this phenomenon has generally become stereotyped and no longer depends on such combinatory conditions. Similar reasons apply to palatalization.

[31] Leslau's definition (*Doc. Tña*, p. 5) is:

"Occlusive sourde emphatique; se prononce comme un *k*, mais avec une tension buccale plus forte, suivie d'une occlusion glottale (*k'*)." How far the "suivie" is justified, will be discussed in the section dealing with the ejective sounds in general.

feature of the Ethiopian ejectives, has led to one important consequence which, as far as I know, was first noticed by Isenberg (*Amh. gramm.*, p. 7). As his statement has been profusely echoed in the relevant literature following him and is of some importance even in its erroneous part, it will have to be quoted *in extenso*:

> "This pronunciation [i.e. "with a sudden explosion of breath from the palate"], however, is not uniform, although general. In Tigre[32] it is besides often pronounced like the Arabic *ġ*, often like *q*; in Shoa generally, like a mere spiritus lenis ('), similar to the *q* as pronounced by common people in Egypt. Thus the word ተቀበለ is pronounced in three or four different ways: in good language: *tak'abbala*; in Tña *taghabbala* (تَغَبَّلَ) and *tak'abbala*; and in Shoa *ta'abbala*."

If we leave aside the erroneous identification with Arabic *q*, Isenberg indicates three different pronunciations of Amharic-Tña *k'*:

(1) *k'* (general)
(2) *ġ* (sometimes in Tña)
(3) ' (Shoa).

Brockelmann (*Grundriss*, p. 124) and Praetorius (*Tña Sprache, passim*) infer from this that in Tña the pronunciation of *k'* as *ġ* is "ausdrücklich bezeugt". Now, in this form neither Isenberg nor those who follow him are quite accurate. Tña ቀ is always *k'*, precisely as in the other Ethiopian languages. However, spirantized *k'* (i.e. ቐ) sounds, indeed, almost exactly like غ; when I first heard the frequent ተቐበለ in Tña, I transcribed it before my mind's eye: تَغَبَّلَ.
This will be discussed in greater detail under spirantization below.

The Shoan pronunciation of *k'*, to which Isenberg was the first to invite attention, has to be explained from the glottalized nature of this Ethiopian phoneme.[33] The transition *k'* > ' is, however, even in Shoa far from being general, and I feel sure that the ordinary articula-

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[32] I.e., the language of the Tigre province = Tña.

[33] Further details in section on ejectives.

tion of *k'* is still prevalent.[34] This is certainly the case in all other Amharic speaking areas where *k'* > ' is quite unknown.

On the other hand, the change *k'* > ' is also found in:

(*a*) Harari (Cerulli, *Harari*, para. 6 and Leslau, *Word* I, p. 63), although weakening to ' does not appear to be very frequent; e.g. Harari *t'it* " little " √*t'k't* (Praetorius, *Amh. Spr.*, p. 71).

(*b*) Gurage, for which M. Cohen (*Études*, p. 108) records: " Le *k'* est sujet à perdre son occlusion buccale et à se réduire à l'occlusive glottale ' .... L'articulation ' m'a été donnée sporadiquement ..."

(*c*) Gafat (Leslau, *Gafat Documents*, p. 22), e.g. *'arät'ä* " to cut " √*k'äräs'ä*.

(*d*) According to Littmann (in Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, p. 124) *k'* may become ' in Tigre at the end of a syllable " bei schnellem Sprechen." I have never observed this phenomenon either in the Keren or the Massawa regions.[35]

It should be added here that " weakening " is, of course, prevented whenever *k'* is geminated (cf. especially Cohen, *Nouv. Ét.*, p. 41); this applies to all the languages for which the phenomenon has been recorded.[36]

Finally, attention should be drawn to the fact (for which I have no explanation to offer)[37] that all Ethiopian languages, as well as other Semitic languages, transcribe European *k* (and especially Greek *k*) by

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[34] Cohen (*Traité*, p. 35): " Par une particularité dialectale les paysans du Choa septentrional [?] n'effectuent pas toujours l'occlusion buccale du ፕ, de sorte qu'en diverses positions ils articulent seulement l'occlusive glottale, notée ici '; ainsi " mulet " se trouve prononcé *bä'lo* au lieu de *bäk'lo*."

This description places the matter in its proper perspective, for many accounts have been exaggerated, such as Isenberg's (*loc. cit.*), Armbruster's (*Amh. gramm.*, p. 32), etc. About Armbruster's assertion that *k'* is pronounced like Hamza in Shoa, Guidi remarks in his review of Armbruster's book (*GGA*, 1909, p. 935): ". . . L'Armbruster sembra dare questa pronunzia [la velare esplosiva ridotta a '] come la consueta di Scioa, il che non è punto esatto. . . ."

[35] Professor Littmann very kindly informs me by letter that his " interlocutor *sometimes* said *lə'tal* instead of *ləqtal*, . . . but this pronunciation of my Tigre man is certainly individual."

[36] Further details in section on ejectives.

[37] Unless *k* was even in Gəʿəz and Arabic felt to be *potentially* spirantizable (for which there is no evidence) as is the case in Hebrew, Syriac, and some of the modern Abyssinian languages. The Gəʿəz transcription might also have been the result of Syriac influence at Aksum.

means of *k'* (*q*) rather than *k*, although the latter is its phonetic equivalent. It certainly seems strange that the strong ejective sound should consistently have been employed for this purpose.

Concluding then we may state that the velar sounds in the various Abyssinian languages correspond fairly closely to the velars in other Semitic languages—with the possible exception of *k'*. In general, the modern Ethiopian languages have not developed beyond Gəʿəz,[38] as far as this class of consonants is concerned, and in fact reflect fairly accurately the position which must have obtained in Gəʿəz itself (excepting, of course, the regionally and socially[39] rather limited phenomenon *k'* > ').

The manner of articulation of *k'*, its relationship to all those sounds which share its way of articulation, but not its basis, is a special problem which can only be discussed in conjunction with the other glottalized ejectives (cf. relevant section below). In that connection we shall also have to deal with the question of possible Cushitic influence as well as with the position of the Ethiopian sounds vis-à-vis the emphatic series in Semitic.

Spirantization of Velars

Two of the three velar sounds with which we have been dealing, the two voiceless ones, are susceptible to spirantization,[40] i.e. narrowing of the air passage instead of complete closure. *g* is never spirantized in any Abyssinian language.

We have no evidence that either *k* or *k'* were ever pronounced as spirants in *Gəʿəz*. What has been said about *k'* on p. 48 above with regard to the transliteration of foreign words makes it certain that *k'* at least was never a fricative. We do not possess similarly positive proof for *k*. While internal evidence concerned with Gəʿəz words makes spirantization seem remote (just as is the case in Arabic as well as South Arabian), we might find a hint in Gəʿəz transliterations of certain foreign words where *k* transcribes Greek χ. Dillmann

[38] Spirantization and palatalization are special phenomena which will be discussed presently.

[39] " . . . Il faut l'attribuer plus précisément aux campagnards de cette province (i.e. Shoa). . . ." (Cohen, *Études*, p. 108).

[40] The alternation of stop and fricative is of no phonemic significance in Ethiopian languages; they are merely facultative variants.
Cf. Trubetzkoy, *Principes de Phonologie* (French transl.), p. 47.

(*Grammar*, para. 25) had already drawn attention to this; but it is, of course, impossible to decide whether *k* was employed for such transcriptions[41] as the only suitable approximation or on account of an inherent, and normally perhaps latent, inclination towards spirantization.

It will now be convenient to consider the position in *Amharic* before we come to the Northern Abyssinian languages.

Praetorius (*Amh. Spr.*, p. 68) finds that in Amharic spirantized *k* is " an nicht sehr zahlreiche Worte gebunden ", whereas in Tňa, under certain conditions, it is possible in almost every word.

Furthermore, in Amharic the " starke Aussprache " (*loc. cit.*) of *ḵ* is facultative, far more often one hears it pronounced as *h*. This is still the position in Amharic today: ኸ is now rarely pronounced = *ḵ*, generally = *h*. In fact, one can go further: ኸ is comparatively rare in present-day Amharic, the transition from *k* to *ḵ* in the living speech (so common in Tňa) no longer takes place; it only persists in stereotyped instances, and ኸ has now either reverted to *k*[42] from which it originated or progressed to *h* and fully identified itself with it.

The position is, however, somewhat involved in consequence of dialectal differences in Amharic. This is one of the few phenomena where we are able to follow the historical development to some extent.

In general, there is little doubt that dialectal differences in Amharic, Tigre, and Tňa (and particularly the last) have been exaggerated, but as regards spirantization of *k* such differences do, indeed, exist in Amharic. The tendency to transform *k* into *h* (via *ḵ*) is much stronger in Shoa than elsewhere. A glance at Guidi's *Vocabolario* is enough to show that, whereas in Gojjam and elsewhere *k* is more generally pronounced without spirantization, in the Shoa province *h* has very often taken its place. The examples are so numerous that only the most important instances will be mentioned here. The suffixed

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[41] E.g.: ሚካኤል, ሲራክ, አስኬማ, etc. Μιχαηλ, Σειραχ, σχημα (ኀሥሥመ).

[42] A particularly instructive example for this process is the restitution, by false analogy, to *k* of etymologically justified *h*: ሀብት " riches " was also spelt ኽብት and then was erroneously " restituted " to *k*, i.e. ክብት, to which it does *not* belong (the root is *whb*). Guidi (*Voc.*, col. 537) in noting ክብት remarks: " ortografia antica ኽብት "!! ክብት, as distinct from ሀብት, has now assumed the special meaning of riches in cattle.

personal pronoun 2nd pers. is written and pronounced *-h*, *-ḵ*, *-k* ; while this is the order of present-day frequency, the historical sequence is precisely inverted : *k* became *h* by way of velar spirantization (*ḵ*). *h* is predominant in Shoa, *ḵ* and *k* in Gojjam and in northern areas. Due to Shoa's political and cultural weight and the consequent penetration of Shoan Government officials and Press, etc., into all parts of the Empire, *-h* has become almost universal in writing and predominant in pronunciation. Likewise *-hu* from *-ku*, *hullu* from *kullu*, *hulät* from *kəl'etu*, *hedä* from *kedä*[43] and countless other examples.

In many cases both forms (or even all three: *məknəyat*, *məḵnəyat*, *məhnəyat*) coexist, and Cohen has given a list of some " alternances " in his *Nouv. Études*, pp. 37–8.

Brockelmann (*Grundriss*, I, p. 204) is not quite correct in stating: " Das Tigriňa und das Amhar. assimilieren *k* einem vorhergehenden Vokal zu *ch*, das im Tňa oft, im Amhar. jetzt stets zu *h* reduziert wird." The influence of a preceding vowel is correctly stated for Tňa; for Amharic we can only assume that here, too, this was the position originally. Extended analogy and widespread stereotyped and "frozen" forms make this no longer so obvious today. Nevertheless, we are justified in thinking that in Amharic in the past, as well as in Tňa till now, a preceding vowel was the cause of spirantization.[44] The second part of Brockelmann's statement is incorrect: *k* is not " often " reduced to *h* in Tňa nor " always " in Amharic. What precisely the conditions in Tňa are, we shall see later on; the position in Amharic has been briefly reviewed above. In continuation Brockelmann notes that in the Amharic of Ludolf's time the fricative *ḵ* was far more widespread than it is today. And here we have this historically traceable development otherwise so consistently removed from our view. In Ludolf's Amharic writings in the 17th century as well as in Amharic MSS or glosses of that and the preceding centuries we easily recognize a more widespread spirantization of *k* than is the case today. In fact,

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[43] These forms *hullu*, *hulät*, *hedä*, etc., which developed from *k* via *ḵ*, originally mostly appeared, of course, in environments such as *bäḵullu*, *yəḵed*, etc., and later the " fossilized " spirantized form was also used initially.

[44] The phonetic process of spirantization in Amharic has recently been competently described by A. Klingenheben in *ZDMG* 100 (1950), pp. 381 *et seqq.*, though on points of detail one might not always agree with his statements. The inclusion of Tigre among languages which spirantize *k* is probably a *lapsus calami*.

reference has already been made above to the retrogressive process that has taken place since. Isenberg (in his *Amh. Gramm.*, p. 6) writing just over 100 years ago finds that " this pronunciation of the *ḵ* (i.e. " answering the Hebrew *k* without the Dagesh ") is equally in use in the Amharic language." Since then, however, the initially no doubt only sporadically occurring identification of *ḵ* with *h*, in the Shoa province, has vastly extended under the wings of Shoan political expansion to which I have referred before.

That spirantization of *k* must at one time have been very widespread in Amharic (considerably more so even than in Ludolf's time) clearly appears from the interchange of *k* and *h* and the large number of alternative spellings. Cf. also the perhaps only slightly exaggerated statement by M. Cohen that " la majorité des *h* qu'on rencontre en amharique représentent d'anciens *k* " (*Traité*, p. 35). All this is the outcome of an originally very extensive process of spirantization which was later arrested; finally the velar articulation disappeared altogether and the aspiration alone remained.

Spirantization does not take place when *k* is geminated. Thus we get different forms from the same root: ungeminated *h*, geminated *k*, and possibly even an intermediate *ḵ*; e.g. *honä* and *'akk^{w}ahan*; *hedä* and *'akkahed.*

M. Cohen seems to have doubted for a long time that *ḵ* had more than " valeur de la graphie " (*Étud.*, p. 395), but the examples given in Armbruster's grammar together with further observation on an Amharic speaking boy from Gondar (though brought up in Addis Abbaba) have convinced him that there is, indeed, " une prononciation intermédiaire entre *k* et *h* " (i.e. *ḵ*).

Afeworq's assertion (*Gramm.*, p. 11) that *ḵ* is not used " all'infuori del primo ordine " in Amharic is symptomatic of a curious prejudice Ethiopian scholars have evolved in this matter. A glance at MSS, books, and newspapers will disprove this—as has already been pointed out by Cohen (*loc. cit.*). What might have been at the back of Afeworq's mind is, perhaps, the occasional use of ሸ (pronounced *hä*) for ሀ (which is always pronounced *ha*), as otherwise *h* + *ä* could not be graphically depicted in the Ethiopian syllabary.

k' is never spirantized in Amharic.

In *Gurage* (according to Cohen, *Études*, pp. 106 *et seqq.*) *k* is never spirantized when geminated or after a consonant. Occasionally, it occurs unspirantized also in intervocalic position, but more generally

it becomes a fricative even initially, e.g. *ḵwonäm* " he was " (Gəʿəz *konä*). While there also seem to be a few contrary examples, Cohen (*loc. cit.*) believes that—unlike Tña—Gurage does not favour the alternation between plosive and fricative in the same word, but generally selects one of the two possible pronunciations and then applies it irrespective of circumstances. In Gurage, too, *kʼ* is never spirantized.

Polotsky, on the other hand, shows (*Études de grammaire Gouragué*, pp. 139 *et seqq.*) that in verb-formation alternation between the plosive (geminated in perfect) and the fricative (in impf.) does in fact occur: e.g. *näkkäbäm* " find " and *yəräḵəb*; etc., etc. " Outside the verb the alternation *k* : *ḵ* cannot be proved to exist for the simple reason that nowhere else does it possess morphological significance. In general it may be said that in Gurage old ungeminated *k* can become *ḵ* in every position " (private communication from Professor Polotsky).

Although Leslau (*Gurage Documents*) does not specifically deal with this question, examination of his texts would seem to confirm Polotsky's view.

In *Harari* the position seems somewhat complicated. Cohen (*Études*, pp. 255 *et seqq*) shows that *k* alone among the velars is " spirantizable ", and that it makes fairly extensive use of this faculty. According to Cohen (*loc. cit.*) *k* seems only regularly preserved in initial position; it is spirantized between vowels, after a consonant, and in final position. Cohen transcribes spirantized *k* as *ḫ* and explains that its articulation is velar " comme le *ḫ* le plus habituel en arabe ". This spirantized sound appears, e.g., in the pronoun, 2nd pers. masc. sing. *aḫaḫ* or attached to the verb: perf. sing. 1st pers. *läqämḫu*; 2nd pers. masc. *läqämḫi*; 2nd pers. masc. plur. *läqämḫu* (*läqämä* "to gather ", " to harvest ").

k appears intervocalically in *fakara* " to be able ", and others. On the other hand, Harari would seem to be unique in that (according to Cohen, *Études*, p. 256) it appears to admit spirantization even when the consonant is geminated, e.g. *aḫḫa*[45] " now " (cf. Amh. *ahun*).

[45] Cf. Gəʿəz *ʾənkä*. Cohen's examples are, however, not wholly convincing, and before we accept spirantization despite gemination, more proof will be needed for this otherwise unknown phenomenon in Ethiopic. It appears more likely that spirantization preceded gemination, and that the consonant was doubled when it was no longer felt to be a spirantized velar which, in any event, could no longer be reduced to its plosive articulation.

In the case of this particular example, *aḫḫa*, Cerulli (*Harari*, p. 73) gives the ungeminated form *aḫa*.

It is important, however, to note that—as in Amharic but unlike Tña (see below)—spirantization has become very largely fossilized in Harari and no longer occurs freely under relevant conditions. This regular phenomenon in most South Ethiopic languages is sufficiently important to warrant quotation of Cohen's view in full (*loc. cit.*):

> " Comme pour le gouragué[46] et pour l'amharique actuel il n'y a pas alternance régulière entre *k* initial et *ḫ* après voyelle pour une racine déterminée, mais plutôt choix, *pour toute la racine*, entre l'occlusive et la spirante. Le phénomène demanderait à être étudié sur des exemples plus nombreux que ceux qui sont disponibles, et avec des notions qui manquent sur l'étymologies de certains mots."

At present the material we possess for the spirantization of *k* in Harari is neither altogether satisfactory nor wholly convincing. In many examples it seems difficult to decide whether we really find spirantization or simply Arabic *ḫ*; this doubt is particularly strong in the case of the alleged spirantization of geminated sounds. As Cohen himself says, the documentation is still too tenuous, and we require further data before reaching definite conclusions. That the influence of Arabic is considerable in Harar needs no emphasis here.

Unfortunately, Cerulli's Harari grammar does not, in this respect, go materially beyond Cohen's notes.

In *Gafat* the transition *k* > *ḫ* occurs in the suffixed pronoun 2nd pers. m. sing. -*ḫä*; (cf. Leslau *Gafat documents*, para. 6).

We have now to consider the position in the northern languages and shall first take *Tigre*. Here, in some ways, the situation is precisely opposite to that in the southern languages: Tigre never spirantizes *k*, and what little spirantization is alleged to occur is limited to *k'* which —as we have seen—is never thus treated in South Ethiopic.

It should be stated at once that our knowledge as regards spirantization in Tigre is far from being satisfactory which is rather astonishing in view of the tolerably adequate number of texts in our hands and the scrutiny Tigre has received over the past 75 years, particularly thanks to Littmann's publications. However, few texts are in transcription, and both transcribed and untranscribed texts seem to pay little or no attention to spirantization. Moreover, most researches in Tigre seem to have been confined to the Mensa and Keren regions. No accurate data are available for either the extreme North of Eritrea,

[46] Cf. however Polotsky's notes on Gurage quoted above.

its western parts, the Kassala province of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, or the Massawa-Ginda region.

Here is a summary of the information at present available; it must be hoped that this unsatisfactory state of affairs will soon be remedied by further investigations in the various Tigre speaking areas. There is complete unanimity about *k* which is never spirantized. Doubt arises only as to *k'*. The publications of the Swedish Mission, Asmara, which are based on investigations in the Mensa region do not show any vestige of spirantization. This is hardly due to typographical reasons, for Swedish Mission Tña books regularly use *ḵ'*. Littmann in his many Princeton texts never alludes to spirantized *k'* nor does he refer to it in his studies of the Tigre verb or pronoun (*ZA*, XIII, XIV and *ZA* XII, respectively). Leslau does not mention *ḵ'* in his short grammar of Tigre (*JAOS* 1945), and it was only after a month's stay at Keren in 1947 that he reported, in his *Supplementary Observations on Tigre* (*JAOS* 1948), that " the glottalized *q* in a closed syllable is pronounced as glottalized fricative *q̄* : *'aq̄-bər* ' graves ', *'aq̄-bäla* ' to return ', *mäq̄-däd* ' bone of the vertebra.' In intervocalic position it remains *q*[47]: *təqäbbər* ' she buries ', *təqabäla* ' to meet '."

And, finally, the Tigre grammar of the Missione Cattolica, where spirantization of *k'* extends much farther. In fact, here the use of *ḵ'* is as widespread as it is in Tña, i.e. in post-vocalic and intervocalic position. A glance at the verb-formation (*k'tl*, pp. 46 *et seqq.*) shows this quite clearly. Other examples can be found in *op. cit.*, pp. 81, 82, 83, etc., etc.

From my own notes on Tigre (not very extensive ones) and recollection it would seem that in the Keren region I found the situation on the whole as shown by the Mission grammar. Elsewhere in Tigre I have not encountered any spirantized *k'*. It would seem that the

[47] Cf. against this the name of the Eritrean town Agordat which is always written *'Aḵ'ərdät* and pronounced in such a manner that one would render it in Arabic with *ġayn*. The meaning of this word is " a hilly place ", cf. Arabic *qrdd*.

W. Leslau, in response to an enquiry, very kindly informs me that he feels certain that his note (quoted above) in the *Supplementary Observations* reflects the position in the Keren region accurately. The rather different description contained in the Missione Cattolica grammar (largely based on the Keren area) and my own notes and recollection (see below) make it, however, appear likely that the omission of spirantization in intervocalic position was a peculiarity of Leslau's informant.

spirantization of k' *in Tigre is confined to the area contiguous to the Tña region* with the possibility of direct Tña influence.

The question of spirantization in Tigre is important enough to warrant the collection of further information as soon as possible. Professor Littmann very kindly informs me that he has never heard *k'* pronounced *x'* in Tigre, " but, of course, I have always spoken the Mensa dialect. However, my Tigre texts, especially the songs and dirges, came from other dialects also; there is not the slightest indication of a *x'*. It may be that at Keren there has been some influence of Tña pronunciation. I always thought that the Asmara Missione Cattolica was influenced by their knowledge of Tña. . . . Surely *x'* is not a Tigre sound."

At present I would, therefore, conclude on the evidence available that the spirantization of *k'* in Tigre occurs only on the fringes of the Tigre territory, i.e. where there is a certain amount of overlapping between Tña and Tigre in parts of the Keren region.[48] Wherever spirantized *k'* occurs in Tigre it would, therefore, not seem to be indicative of Tigre as a whole; or rather: it is not a genuine Tigre phenomenon.

In *Tigriña* 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 Tña speech pattern. Unlike some of the southern languages where spirantization occurred—as we have seen—at an early period and was later discontinued (but remnants still appearing in a " fossilized ", stereotyped form), unlike also such languages where spirantization either does or does not occur throughout all variations of a given root, Tña uses stop and fricative for the same root in accordance with their position within the word or sentence. In Tña the fricative has no phonemic value.[49]

In Tña *k* and *k'*, if not geminated, are normally spirantized to *x* and *x'* after a vowel (or after the 6th order when *shəwa mobile*), not only

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[48] " *x'* sporadisch auch im Tigre " (Kolmodin, *MO*, 1910, p. 229).

[49] Thus Abba Ya'qob Gebreyesus in his Tña grammar (pp. 13 *et seqq.*) in explaining the nature of the consonants gives examples of *k'* — *x'*, *k* —*x* promiscuously without ever thinking that *x'* and *x* require an explanation. To him they are fully identical with *k'* and *k* respectively; this is, indeed, the feeling of the Tña speaker—just as a Hebrew speaker is not conscious of the difference in *katab* and *yiktob*.

within a word, but also initially,[50] if the preceding one ends in a vowel.[51]

Examples: *käbärä* " to be honoured " *yəḵäbbər* ; *k'ätälä* " to kill " *yəḵ'ättəl* ; *bäḵ'li* " mule " ; *'aḵälä* " to be sufficient ", but *'akkal* " person ".[52]

Praetorius in his Tña grammar (p. 96) explains that the fricative is never " necessary ", the plosive always " possible ", but not vice versa. This is, indeed, true. To use the fricative without any of the conditions mentioned being present would be considered wrong, while the use of the plosive instead of a justified fricative would be held to be due merely to slovenly speech or writing. This applies to the entire Tña area without difference of dialect (cf. remarks on this point below). In other words: spirantization is a facultative variant.

Praetorius (*loc. cit.*) believes that he has met *ḵələttä* and *ḵätäma*, in this form, also outside vocalic position, but unfortunately he does not quote the whole sentence ; it might easily have been a simple *lapsus calami*—or the writer might have changed the preceding word, which originally ended in a vowel, without troubling to make the required alteration at the beginning of the following word.

In some other cases Praetorius believes that the fricative may occur legitimately, although preceded by a consonant, but that this consonant had originally been followed by the Tña ending *-i* (*op, cit.*, p. 97); e.g.: መንግሥትኻ because from መንግሥቲኻ; ንስኻ because from *ነፍሲኻ. This explanation is, however, not necessary. The fricative simply occurs in these instances because it is preceded by a neutral vowel (*Murmelvokal*, equivalent to *shəwa mobile*) i.e. the pronunciation of the above two examples in Tña is: *mängəstəḵa* and

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[50] After a full stop even (though very unusual): . . . *'iyyu. ḵämzi* . . . (*EWN* 364).

[51] Cf. Hebrew and Aramaic *b g d k p t* rules.

[52] Conti Rossini (*Lingua Tigrina*, p. 19) states: " Va avvertito che spesso il *k*, trovandosi in mezzo di parola, fra due vocali, e senza sua reduplicazione, si aspira e prende il suono di *ḵ*; in tale caso lo si trascrive *kh*. . . ."

Conti Rossini knew, of course, that spirantization can also occur initially, under suitable conditions, and that the preceding vowel is the main criterion; the following sound does not have to be a vowel, though it may be. Nor does *ḵ* take the sound of *ḫ*; he probably had in mind the sound of *ḫ* to which it is similar.

nəssəḵa; cf. also Hebrew *ḥĕrūṭəḵā*;[53] in Tña the neutral vowel is much more audible than in Hebrew.

Praetorius, in his article in the *ZDMG* XXVIII " Über zwei Tigriña-dialekte ", became the victim of a common fallacy which anyone will easily recognize as such who has ever heard Tña spoken in the various parts of its fairly large area. The fact that the two MSS in Praetorius' possession[54] were written by two people who happened to belong to different regions of the Tña speaking territory has induced Praetorius to assume completely erroneous conceptions of Tña dialectology, a blind alley into which he has unhappily been followed by others. At the moment we are, however, only concerned to show that the conclusions at which Praetorius arrived have no value as far as spirantization is concerned. Thus on p. 439 of the above cited article Praetorius finds that

> " der Übergang des *ḵ* (über den des *b* und *ḵ'* können wir bei dem Mangel einer Bezeichnung in der Schrift nicht urteilen)[55] in die entsprechende Spirans *ḵ* scheint merkwürdiger Weise in diesem nördlichen Dialect etwas weiter vorgeschritten zu sein als im Dialect von Adoa."

Even a casual glance at Praetorius' article shows quite clearly that the writer of the MS in the " northern dialect " (i.e. Hamasen) was nearly illiterate, and whatever differences exist in the two MSS are due to the Hamasen writer's lack of knowledge and to the widely divergent social background of the two scribes. The spelling " Ḵamasen "[56] (instead of correct " Ḥamasen ") does not show a different pronunciation or a more advanced stage of spirantization, but simply betrays lack of knowledge.

It must be stated categorically here—and we shall later on have occasion to refer again to real or mostly alleged dialectal differences in Tña—that as regards spirantization there are no distinctions whatever over the entire area in which Tña is spoken. MSS and letters as well

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[53] Cf. Bauer—Leander, p. 251.

[54] The first three chapters of St. John's Gospel.

[55] This is, of course, only true for *b*; the Ethiopian character for *ḵ'* had been known in Tña for a long time. I have met it in Tña letters from the beginning of the 19th century. See, however, below.

[56] Used by one of the scribes.

as conversation with hundreds of Tigreans from Hamasen or Adwa or any other place prove this beyond doubt.

Reference must, however, be made here to three special cases discussed by Praetorius in his above quoted article, although they are not based on dialectal divergences. Praetorius finds that " sometimes " spirantization occurs after a consonant and these are his examples: *bälḳu* " I said " and *näbärḳu* " I was ". These two instances show—and they could easily be multiplied[57]—that spirantization *may* take place after a liquid. " *l* and *r* are sonorous consonants and can form a syllable by themselves and bear a specific tone."[58]

I would say that generally the plosive is used after a liquid, but the fricative may be employed and, indeed, is in some cases. In my experience this is based on social distinctions rather than on anything else. Educated Tigreans like to use the fricative as much as possible, while the less sophisticated do not employ it quite so often.[59] Written expression is not always a guide—and this was one of Praetorius' pitfalls—as some people write a plosive where they would speak a fricative, either out of laziness or because they consider that the characters of the sacred Gəʿəz alphabet should not be " needlessly " altered. And needless it is considered, because, while the use of the plosive instead of a justified fricative would sound queer, it would be perfectly clear and understandable; in other words: it is of no phonemic significance.

Secondly, the use of the fricative after ʾ and ʿ. I have heard it used, but the plosive would be employed in the overwhelming number of cases.

E.g.: *nab gäzaḳa ʾəntämäsʿaʾku məntay täbəlʿanni* " If I come to your house, what will you give me to eat " (da Bassano, col. 308); *təmali bəzuḥ ʾəntäbälaʿku, nəssəḳum bəzuḥ ʾablaʿḳumuni* " If I ate so

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[57] *baʿlḳatkum* (*EWN*, 364).

[58] Westermann—Ward, p. 72, à propos of many African languages.

[59] Spirantization seems to be regarded as a sign of some refinement. This applies in Tĭna especially to fricative articulation after the word-boundary and such rare cases of spirantization as occur after liquids, laryngals (ʾ and ʿ) and semivowels (*w* and *y*). In modern Hebrew, too, *ʾani ḳoteb* is confined to the educated, " normal " usage is *ʾani koteb*.

In the *Eritrean Weekly News* of 25th August, 1949 (No. 364) I find the following two examples concerning the word-boundary:
zena kätäma ʾasmära " chronicle of Asmara town " and
zena ḳätäma ʾaḳʾərdät " chronicle of Agordat town ".

much yesterday, (it was because) you gave me so much to eat" (from my collection of letters).

Note the indiscriminate use of *ku* and *ḳu* here. *'əmbə'arkä mäba'ka nab mäsaw'i 'əntä 'ams'a'ka* (Matthew, v, 23).

The last example shows the plosive after both liquid and laryngal; in this connection it should be remembered that the Tña translation of the N.T. (Swedish Mission for B. & F. B. S.) is normally exceedingly liberal in employing the fricative. As stated above, after liquids and laryngals spirantization occurs only in exceptional cases. Leslau (*Doc. Tña*, para 7, d) observes that spirantization of *k* is facultative after a laryngal; in addition to ' and ' which are, though rarely, attested, he gives *säraḥḳa* side by side with *säraḥka*. In my experience (and I have lived for a long time in the Akkele Guzay, the place of origin of Leslau's informant) the former is quite impossible, as spirantization never takes place after *h* or *ḥ*. There can be no question of assimilation here (*h*–*ḳ*), and I think this is one of a very few instances where his informant's language proved to be unrepresentative of normal Tña.[60]

And, lastly, we have to consider spirantization after *w* and *y*. Leslau (*Doc. Tña*, para. 7, d) states that the fricative may be used facultatively after *y*; he does not mention *w*. He is right inasmuch as the fricative is employed more often after *y* than after *w*, although it occurs also in the latter case.

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[60] This is a good example of the danger of building theories of dialectology on the testimony of one single informant. Leslau's views on Tña dialects, based on spirantization (*GLECS*, III, p. 37) are, unfortunately, erroneous; they do not derive from a number of individuals originating from various parts of the country. It is a curious fact that Abyssinian informants—despite the most scrupulous safeguards on the part of the researcher—will often go completely "off the rails" and supply the most miraculous information.

"Une description du tigrigna doit toujours être située localement car le tigrigna, contrairement à l'amharique, a des dialectes distincts." (Leslau, *GLECS*, III, p. 37, à propos of spirantization).

This statement is not correct; dialectal differences in Tña are of the slightest (we shall discuss later on where they appear), and Leslau's above note as well as his article in *JA*, 1939, are not supported by an investigation "on the spot."

Polotsky, in reviewing Leslau's *Doc. Tña* (*JAOS*, 1947), remarks somewhat cautiously:

"I do not think that those have been right who have stressed the dialectal diversity of Tña in contrast with the alleged unity of Amharic. . . ."

It may then be said that as a rule the plosive is used after *w* and *y*, but the fricative *may* be employed, though more often following *y* than *w*. A special case is the negative prefix *'ay-* after which the fricative is found in the majority of cases.

Examples: *'ayḵonän* "he was not"; *'ayḵə'ələn* "I [or: "he"] can not"; *fəttawḵa* and *fəttawka* "your desire"; *bəzäyka* "except you" (rarely *bəzäyḵa*); *fätawka* "you loved"; *ť'awkum* and *ť'awḵum* "your salt."

In Syriac, on the other hand, *Qušš̈aya* always takes place after both *w* and *y*: e.g. ܡܘܬܐ "death"; ܣܘܦܐ "end"; ܒܝܬܐ "house". Cf. on the other hand Hebrew בֵּיתָה and בַּיְתָה (Gesenius—Kautzsch—Cowley, para. 96, p. 285), הַמָּוְתָה (*Ps.* 116, 15).

Finally, a reference to the *sound* of *ḵ* and *ḵ'*. *ḵ* is a velar fricative, and *ḵ'* is an ejective velar fricative (see below the chapter on glottalized ejectives) similar in sound to Arabic *ġ*[61] (cf. chapter on velars above). The *letter* ך was already known to Ludolf, while I have not found ﻛ employed earlier than the beginning of the 19th cent. It was unknown to Isenberg, for otherwise he would have put the case differently in the passage quoted on p. 47 above; and—as we have seen—Praetorius had not met it either.

In *conclusion* we may state: in the South Ethiopian languages (Amharic, Gurage, Harari, Gafat) spirantization is confined to *k*; moreover, while there is sufficient evidence to show that formerly it was widespread, nowadays it is limited—except for Gurage—to not very numerous existing forms. The alternation of stop and fricative exists among South Ethiopian languages only in Gurage.

In the north, Tigre never spirantizes *k*. There is some doubt about *k'*, but we arrived at the conclusion that *ḵ'* cannot at present be regarded as a genuine Tigre phenomenon and appears to be due to Tigriňa influence, since it occurs only in areas contiguous to Tňa territory.

In Tňa the phenomenon of spirantization of voiceless velars has gone further than in any other Semitic language. It has become a notable and characteristic feature of the Tňa speech pattern. Both *k* and *k'* appear as fricatives and do so with great frequency in the condi-

[61] "... auch hat das Tňa einen *ġ* Laut (*ḵ'*). ..." (Littmann, *ZA*, XXI, p. 53.)

tions described above. Tǐa has thus developed—alone among Semitic languages, as far as I am aware—the spirantization of the glottalized velar ejective *k'*, and altogether it has transformed a relatively insignificant aspect, that of velar spirantization, into a major feature of its sound pattern.[62]

This picture then emerges:

We are unable to detect any certain traces of spirantization in Gəʿəz. Tǐa, which at least geographically is the successor of classical Ethiopic, spirantizes both *k* and *k'*, while Tigre makes no use of fricatives (with the exception, perhaps, of *k'* in certain border areas). In Amharic *k* only was previously susceptible to spirantization, whereas in Gurage the alternation of stop and fricative in the case of *k* is still active today. While we know nothing about the position in Tǐa and Tigre since the "demise" of Gəʿəz (we have, however, no reason to suppose that there has been any significant change over the past few hundred years), we do know that in Amharic spirantization, though always confined to *k*, was originally as widespread and alive as it is in Tǐa today. This was first recognized by Praetorius (in his *Amh. Spr.*, p. 68) who states that in Amharic the same development had taken place as in Tǐa, but for reasons unknown to him was later arrested. We can only observe now that in older Amharic texts more fricatives occur than is the case today. Cohen (*Études*, p. 393) thinks that "il est probable que jusqu'au XVIIe siècle la prononciation de *k* spirantisé était *ḫ* (i.e. *x̌*) comme en tigrigna; aussi bien la graphie était-elle la même, c'est-à-dire *k* à chapeau ˇ."

Before we come to draw our conclusions from these facts, we shall briefly look at the position in the Semitic and Cushitic languages.

The spirantization of velars in Semitic takes place only in Hebrew and Syriac[63]; it is confined to *k* and nowhere includes *q*. The circum-

[62] The widespread spirantization in Tǐa has caused the Amhara (and the Shoan in particular) to consider the language of the Tigre province harsh, cacophonous and unrefined (*ləzzəbənnät 'aǐ'*). I have heard many Amharas remark on this (more so even than on the preservation of the laryngals) and the "impossibility" of pronouncing *x̌'*. It is in this light that Afeworq's somewhat naive remark (*Gramm. Amar.*, p. 1) has to be understood: "La lingua . . . amarica può dirsi la più dolce e quella che più piace fra le lingue orientali."

[63] The setting in which this occurs in Hebrew and Syriac is, of course, different inasmuch as here all plosives are liable to spirantization.

stances in which *k* is spirantized in these languages are—as has previously been mentioned—similar to those in Tña. In modern Syriac we encounter the same position as in some of the South Ethiopian languages: " Im Neusyrischen ist dies Gesetz (i.e. spirantization of *k*) nicht mehr lebendig; in den einzelnen Wurzeln hat sich bald die Explosiva, bald die Spirans analogisch über das ganze Paradigma ausgebreitet."[64] This is, indeed, a precise parallel to the situation in Amharic. Beginnings of such standardization, especially among the illiterate and vigorously fought by the educated, can also be observed in modern Hebrew, although here it cannot necessarily be considered a genuine Semitic development (e.g. *kataḇti* and thus also "uneducated" *yiktoḇ*, *liktoḇ*, etc.).

While velar spirantization is known in some Semitic languages and unknown in others, we can find nowhere a Semitic parallel to the *ḵ'* of Tña. The tendency observed in Amharic and elsewhere of arresting the process of spirantization and the concomitant extension of either the plosive or the fricative over the entire form pattern of a given root is found in other languages as well (see above). Why spirantization should first occur in the circumstances described and then be discontinued again, can only be explained either by the assumption that modern speech habits tend towards higher standardization than was previously the case or by accepting the conclusions at the end of this chapter.

Among the Cushitic languages Agaw[65] deserves our special consideration. Here we find the position represented by Tña in the Semitic group, viz. the spirantization of both *k* and *k'* (cf. Leslau, *Word*, I,

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[64] Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, p. 205.

[65] The great importance of Agaw has long been recognized by both European and indigenous scholars. For that area which is properly called Abyssinia (i.e. the area of the old Aksumite Empire) Agaw may, indeed, be considered the substrate *par excellence*. Reinisch's works have most notably contributed to what little is known about Agaw today; it has to be considered a whole language group of which the northern extension, Bilin, is best known thanks to Reinisch's writings. In all questions regarding the non-Semitic substrata of the area which is now Eritrea and the Tigre province, Agaw must thus take first place. Abyssinians themselves refer to all the original inhabitants of their country collectively as the Agaw (cf. in this connection W. Max Mueller's article " Hamitic Languages " in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*[13]). This consciousness finds expression in the prominence

1945) which would appear to be a peculiarity existent in Tǐa and Agaw only.[66]

Cohen (*Cham. Sem.*, p. 106) traces the Semitic velar fricative which he transcribes *ḫ* to two separate origins: (1) as the continuation of the Arabic, South Arabian, and old Ethiopic phoneme (*ḫ*), and (2) as a secondary sound " comme traitement de *k* affaibli " in Aramaic, Hebrew, and some modern Ethiopian languages. We are here only concerned with the second, i.e. *k*. The normal treatment of spirantized *k* in Cushitic (apart from Agaw—as we have seen) is the transition into *h*. And indeed this is what has frequently occurred in Amharic, particularly in the Shoa province. We should have expected this result, as Shoa is geographically farthest removed from Agaw and most exposed to the influence of other Cushitic languages, whereas, on the other hand, *ḵ* may still be pronounced as a velar fricative in the Northern Amharic area (contiguous to Tǐa and Agaw territory) where Shoa's political and cultural ascendancy has not yet diluted it completely.

Spirantized *k'* occurs in Agaw, among many other instances, in : *ḵ'as'a* " leaf " (cf. Ethiopic *k'as'əl*); *saḵ'ara* " bee " (cf. Ethiopic *säk'arä* " to sting ").

There are numerous examples for general Cushitic transition *k* > *ḵ* > *h*; cf. here only Sidamo *rak* " to hurry ", *rahi* " hurry " (imper.),

accorded to the Agaw in 'Aläk'a Tayyä's Amharic *History of the People of Ethiopia*, cf. especially pp. 28 *et seqq.*, where the passage on the Agaw begins: " The Agaw tribe came (into the country) together with the army of Menelek I "—which, of course, has to be understood both as a compliment and an indication of a very early date.

Cf. also Conti Rossini in his *Storia d'Etiopia*, p. 74: " Da essi (gli Agau) specialmente, per incrocio con elementi semitici, cui aggiungonsi, nel corso dei secoli, altri etnici fattori forniti dalle vicine popolazioni, sorgerà l'elemento fondamentale Abissino."

While a linguistic map of the present time will show only comparatively small areas where Agaw is spoken nowadays (at the S.W. tip of the meeting place of Tǐa and Amharic and, as Bilin, around Keren), it must originally have extended over a very considerable region.

[66] Reinisch (*Bilin grammar*, pp. 12 *et seqq.*) points out that in Bilin *k'*, *k*, and *g* can appear as fricatives. The latter is never spirantized in any Semitic Ethiopian language. Reinisch, too, found the similarity between *ḵ'* and Arabic *ġayn* as startling as did other scholars and travellers before and after him. The transition to *ḵ* and *ḵ'* is not obligatory and the plosive may be used; e.g. *naḵ'i* " bring " beside *nak'i*.

In Kemant (a Southern Agaw language), too, the development *k* > *ḵ* and *k'* > *ḵ'* is common (cf. Conti Rossini, *La langue des Kemant*, para. 5).

(Cerulli, *Sidamo*, p. 49). And finally, I would mention Westermann-Ward's (*African Phonetics*, p. 84) statement : " the velar fricatives are very common in African languages ".

While there is no internal evidence that Gəʿəz, at any time of its life, developed the spirantization of velars, there are certain external indications which are of some weight in this connection:

(1) We have mentioned before that Semitic and Greek velar fricatives were transliterated into Gəʿəz as *k* (pp. 49–50 above).

(2) Noeldeke (*Neue Beiträge*, p. 59) points out, in discussing Ethiopic loan-words in Arabic, that Gəʿəz *bql* " mule " reappears in Arabic as *bġl* (Sura 16, 8). Now, we have repeatedly shown in the foregoing that Tňa *ḵ'* sounds almost exactly like Arabic *ġ*. It seems to me possible, or even likely, that *bġl* was meant to reproduce not *k'* (which could easily have been done as *bql*), but spirantized *ḵ'* which could not be expressed more adequately than by using *ġ*. Unfortunately, there are no other instances of this nature, and it would be wrong to base conclusions on such feeble premises. There is a little more evidence for the inverse process, i.e. transliteration of Arabic words into Ethiopic (cf. Praetorius, *Amh. Spr.*): *ġwl* " demon " appears as Amh. *k'wl* (cf. Isenberg, *Dict.*); *ṣbġ* " dye "—Amh. *sbk'*.

Littmann, in examining an Arabic-Tňa glossary (*ZA*, XXI), finds that " die arabischen Lehnworte mit *ġ* haben . . . im Tňa ein *k'*," (p. 54).

It could be argued, of course, that *k'* was as suitable a rendering of Arabic *ġ* as ʿ or *g* might have been, but, taken in conjunction with *bġl*, I feel that there is some justification for thinking that in the later stages of Gəʿəz *k'* could possibly be pronounced as a fricative.

(3) This belief is further strengthened by the fact that Agaw, originally spoken over most of the area later identified with Gəʿəz, possessed those spirantized velars and that Tňa, which at least geographically took over from Gəʿəz, preserves these fricatives to this day.

(4) Moreover, other Ethiopian languages (whatever the precise degree of their relationship to Gəʿəz might be) have at various times, in certain circumstances, and to varying degrees, developed the phenomenon of spirantized velar articulation.

I would thus conjecture that Gəʿəz, at least in the latest phases of its life and under the impact of the Cushitic substrata (mainly, no doubt,

Agaw), which began to assert themselves after the rigidity of the strong South Arabian tradition had somewhat worn off, that Gəʿəz at that time knew velar fricatives, probably both *ḵ* and *ḵ'*. Tĭna, which continued to be spoken in the original domain of Agaw and Gəʿəz, may have extended this development still further, while other Ethiopian languages, which had also inherited this tendency from late Gəʿəz, were inclined to divest themselves again of spirantization, no doubt encouraged by the habits of the Cushitic substrata in their particular area. This process was the more effective the greater the distance from the original centre, both in time and place, became. This explains why in Ludolf's time, when the main weight of Amharic had not yet shifted quite so far southwards, spirantization seems to have been more widespread than it is today when this southward movement has considerably advanced.[67]

I am, of course, aware that much of this must remain in the realm of conjecture, but I would suggest that the weight of evidence is not unimpressive. The criterion of velar spirantization is of considerable assistance in determining the relationship between the various Abyssinian languages.

Palatalization of Velars

Palatalization[68] is an important feature in some of the Ethiopian languages, particularly in the southern group. While it principally

[67] It would, of course, be as futile as it is impossible to try and present a more precise picture of all the stages of this development. Nor does there seem to be any obvious reason why Tigre, alone of all Ethiopian languages, shows no remnants of a *k* spirantization in spite of possible Tĭna influence and certain Cushitic pressure in this regard. We must allow here some room for the sometimes " inscrutable whim " in the development of living language.

[68] " On dit qu'une consonne est mouillée ou palatalisée, quand à son timbre habituel vient s'ajouter un timbre particulier qui rappelle ce qu'il y a de spécifique dans celui du *y*. Ce timbre particulier est dû à un large étalement du dos de la langue contre le palais, semblable à celui qui se produit pour l'émission du *y*."

" Les occlusives vélaires se mouillent quand le contact s'étend d'arrière en avant jusqu'au milieu du dos de la langue. Mais il faut reconnaître alors que le point d'articulation s'est sensiblement ravancé; . . . quand les vélaires se mouillent elles cessent d'être des vélaires."

(Grammont, *Traité de phonétique*, pp. 79–80.)

" Palatalization is the raising of the front of the tongue towards the hard palate as a secondary articulation added to the main articulation of a consonant . . . in this position . . . a kind of *y*-glide is heard. . . ." (Westermann-Ward, p. 105.)

occurs in connection with sibilants and dentals, it also affects velar consonants, though in a more limited way.

We shall later on deal with the palatalization of sibilants and dentals, but it will be convenient here to append a few notes on this phenomenon as far as it concerns the velar group.

k may become *ť*, *k'*—*ť'*, and *g*—*ď* (the latter is often exchanged with *ǯ*; on the interchange of the quite different sounding *ť* and *š* see below) in certain cases and circumstances when the following vowel was *i* or *e*.[69] We shall presently see in greater detail that this no longer applies actively to all Ethiopian languages, nor are we able, in all existing cases, to trace the phenomenon back to the influence of these two vowels.

Palatalization has become one of the distinctive characteristics of the modern Ethiopian languages, and examination of the Cushitic substrata later on will show that it is this non-Semitic influence which bears chief responsibility for this development.

The study of the phenomenon of palatalization is made somewhat complicated by virtue of its dual origin, i.e. a palatalized sound may result from either a retrogressive movement (i.e. in the case of the far more frequent dentals) or from a forward one (in the case of the velars). It is not always easy to determine the origin of a platalized sound, and this has to be kept in mind when considering the etymology of fairly large numbers of words.

As to the sound of the resultant palatalized phoneme, it seems that there is no audible distinction as to whether it is derived from a dental or a velar,[70] nor does the Ethiopian use different characters for their graphic expression.

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[69] Cf. for example the pronunciation of Italian *c* and *g* before *i* and *e*.

[70] This does not apply to Gurage where a distinction does exist. Polotsky (*Gouragué*, p. 144) uses the following transcription for the new phonemes produced by palatalization:

" postpalatales "	g' k' x' q'
" dentales sifflantes "	ž š
" dentales occlusives "	ǧ č ç

This shows that distinctions (in sound) are far greater in the prepalatal class in Gurage than elsewhere in Ethiopic. In a personal note to me Professor Polotsky explains that he has differentiated between all these phonemes " exclusively on the basis of sound and not according to etymology (which, in any event, is not always known to me)."

Cf. now also Leslau (*Gurage*, pp. 12 and 14); see also pp. 142–143 and pp. 146, 148 below.

In *Gə'əz* we find no palatalization in the accepted sense of the term; there is, however, a remark in Dillmann's *Ethiopic grammar* (para. 29) with which we shall have to deal for a brief moment: " A very ancient exchange of *t* and *k* appears in the pronouns of the 1st and 2nd pers." By this Dillmann no doubt refers to Ethiopic *-ku* and *-ka* and *-ki* compared to Arabic *-tu* and *-ta* and *-ti* or Hebrew *-ti* and *-ta* and *-ti* (so for later *-tə*) in the perfect suffixes. But in Arabic and Hebrew, as well as in other Semitic languages, the pronominal suffixes, verbal and nominal, have *-k* in the 2nd pers. In Amharic *kä-* means " from " and " to ", but in Shoa *tä-*, in the same meaning, is generally used for *kä*. Now, if palatalization has anything to do with this at all, then it only occurred as an intermediate, now wholly extinct, stage; i.e. $k > \check{t} > t$. The assumption that *k* and *t* are both old deictic elements does not necessarily render this palatalization-development invalid, as the connection between these two could be established by means of the missing link $\check{t}$, viz. the articulation was moved forward from the soft palate via the hard palate to the alveolus.[71]

By this I am not suggesting, of course, that palatalization necessarily occurred in Gə'əz, but I think we may assume that in the Semitic field in general[72] the process as such, though apparently very limited, was not wholly unknown; but in the ancient Semitic languages we only find the results and not the intermediate stage.

Apart from *y*, Gə'əz does not appear to have possessed any proper palatal sound at all, and Cohen (*Ét.*, p. 111) has rightly pointed out that it even eliminated, after the heyday of the Aksumite period (i.e. after the 7th century), the *š* sound known to all other Semitic languages, and proceeded to identify it with *s*. We do not know, of course, whether at a later stage of its life—for which we possess no documents whatever

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[71] Barth (*Pronominalbildung*) sees no connection between the two deictic elements *t* and *k*. Wright (*Comp. grammar*, p. 101) does not rule out the possibility of a connection between the two and compares *quis* to τίς, This list can, of course, be much amplified, e.g.: Hebrew *pṯḥ* and *pḳḥ*; *šḳy* and *šṭy*; Ethiopic *fkr* " interpret " and Hebrew *ptr* and *pšr*; *quattuor* and τέτταρες ; κόπτω and τύπτω.

It seems likely that the link between the *k* and the *t* sounds in these examples is palatalization.

[72] We shall see later on in what other Semitic languages palatalization proper has taken place.

—Gə'əz re-created a *š* sound such as we have in all the modern languages (ሸ).

In *Amharic* palatalization has found very wide application. It generally occurs, of course, in connection with sibilants and dentals, but there is also a fair number of velar palatalizations—with one significant distinction though: While palatalization of sibilants and dentals may take place alternately in the same root and be of morphological value, velars were palatalized at a past stage in the development of the language; there are no alternations nowadays, and either the palatalized or the simple pronunciation has been extended analogously over the entire root without regard to the nature of the neighbouring vowel.

Praetorius (*Amh. Spr.*, para. 43*a*) had already observed that in the case of the velars " haben wir es nur mit wenig zahlreichen Fällen zu tun. *k* geht bei der Mouillierung beständig in *t* über, aus *ky* wird *ty*; daher wird zur schriftlichen Bezeichnung des mouillierten *k*-Lautes das aus ት (*t*) gebildete Zeichen ቲ (ť) gebraucht."

This *ť* emanating from *k* + (*i* or *e*) had already been described in its sound value by Ludolf (*Gramm. ling. Amh.*, p. 4):

> " *ť* ni fallor est Bohemorum *T.* liquidum; *T.* Hungarorum cum apposito *Y.* quod quidem non auditur, nec syllabam efficit, sed tantum *T.* emollit, ut in monosyllabo *Tyuk* Gallina, quod Amharice scriberetur ቺ ክ : Germ. *Tjuck.*"

k is palatalized in Amharic *ťalä* (from Gə'əz *khl*) " to be able "; *ťär* " good " from *ker* (*ḫer*).[73] In the 2nd pers. fem. sing. of the pronominal suffix **-ki* became *-ť* and this is now always pronounced and written *-š* or *ši*.[74]

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[73] There are, of course, other examples, and I take it that Cohen and Leslau no longer stand by their assertion (*GLECS*, III, p. 12) that these are the only two cases. It is true, however, that palatalization of *k*, *k'*, and *g* is rare. Cf. also *GLECS*, III, p. 20, which, I assume, supersedes the remarks *ibidem* p. 12.

[74] I think that the transition *ť* > *š* developed from the verb where otherwise the 2nd fem. sing. and 3rd. fem sing. could not be easily distinguished—and in the bi-literals not at all: e.g. *läk'k'ämäť* " she gathered "—**läk'k'ämť* > *läk'k'ämš* " you (fem.) gathered "; *alläť* " she is "—**alläť* > *alläš* " you (fem.) are ".

As far as I know, not even the oldest Amharic documents extant have this original 2nd pers. fem. sing. ending in *ť*.

Cf. also note [81] below.

Cohen finds that *ki* > *ť* is most widespread in Gojjam, where even a traditional word like *kidan* is pronounced *ťədan* (*Traité*, p. 35).

Palatalization of *k'* to *ť'*: *Gəʿəz 'ank'et* " bird of prey "—Amharic *anť'ət*; *k'irk'os—ť'ərk'os*; *k'es* " priest "—*ť'äs*, etc., etc. The inverse process occurs as well, i.e. *k'* for *ť'*; Cohen mentions *täk'ärräsä* for usual *täť'ärräsä* " to be finished " (*Nouv. Ét.*, p. 37).

The ejective character of *ť'* is discussed in a special section below. Ludolf (*loc. cit.*):

" *ť'* est enim *t'* cum sibilo literæ *tsch* in voce *Teutsch*."

Palatalization of *g* to *ď* (Ludolf, *loc. cit.*, " Bohemorum *d* liquidum, Germ. *dj* "): Tña *'əngʷera*—Amh. *ənďera* " bread "; *arädďä* " senex " for *arägg*ʷ*e*; *däg'azmať* beside *däďazmať* which is normally pronounced in its abbreviated form *däďať*.[75] *ganhoy* " majesty " and *ďanhoy*.

ď (= *ǧ*) is also the sound which transliterates Arabic words with *ǧ*, e.g. *mawǧ* " wave ", etc., etc.

Cohen (*Études*, p. 399) mentions one or two cases of " mouillure complète " of *g* to *y*: *wagəd—wayəd* " hors d'ici "; *zələggit—zələyyit* " tamis pour la bière ".

For *Gurage* Cohen (*Études*, p. 109) notes that the velars (which he calls " palatales ") " passent facilement à une consonne prépalatale, pas seulement devant un *i*, mais dans d'autres positions et souvent de manière non expliquée."

The important factors distinguishing Gurage from the other languages are:

(*a*) Gurage has not lost the alternation between the simple and palatalized velar in the same root.

The vowels *i* and *e* still have active palatalizing power, not only with regard to dentals (as elsewhere) but also in the case of velars: *tənkʷäbšä* " you will find " (√*rkb*, Leslau, *Gurage*, para. 4).

(*b*) Gurage has maintained the distinction in sound between prepalatals of dental and velar origin (cf. footnote at p. 67 above).

Further details will be found below, pp. 142 *et seqq.* See also Polotsky (*BSL*, 1938, pp. 151 *et seqq.*) and Leslau (*Gurage*, p. 14).

In *Harari*, too, palatalization is frequent. *k*, *k'*, and *g* are affected

[75] Cerulli (quoted by Cohen, *Nouv. Ét.*, p. 35) is not correct in stating that *dägyat* is the form common in Tña; throughout the Tña speaking area *däďať* is almost invariably used.

in the usual manner, but—unlike Gurage—the sound of palatalized velars does not appear to be distinguishable from that of the corresponding palatalized dentals. Numerically the latter preponderate—just as they do elsewhere: Cf. Cohen, *Études*, pp. 256 *et seqq.* and Cerulli, *Harari*, pp. 74–5. Cerulli (*loc. cit.*) also observes that, while in many cases palatalization can be shown to be due to the influence of *i* or *e*, this does in no way apply to all instances; and there remain quite a few examples where we cannot explain why palatalization should have taken place.

The palatalization of velars and others in *Gafat* has been discussed by Leslau in his *Gafat Documents*. *k* is palatalized into *š* in the suff. pron. 2nd pers. fem. sg. (*ki* > *š*) and in a few other instances. *k'* > *ť'* in *bəť'lä* " mule ", Amh. *bäk'lo* and Gurage (Aymallal) *bəť'əl*.

In *Tigre* palatalization occurs in connection with certain dentals and sibilants when the suffix pronoun of the 1st pers. sing. is added. This will be further discussed on pp. 140 *sq.* below. Palatalization of velars does not take place for morphological reasons, and there are only a very few cases of palatalization which can be traced back to velars by attempting to establish their etymology. At present I can only think of *šämšäm* " place of assembly " and *kämkämä* " to assemble " (*ť* has generally become *š* in Tigre); cf. Amh. *kämmäťä* " assemble ". Tigre *ďärbäbä* " to inundate " is no doubt connected with Tňa *gärbab* " swelling ".

The position in *Tňa* is similar, except that even in the case of palatalized sounds of dental origin we have no morphological palatalization. Among the not very numerous cases of palatalized velars I would mention: *šälläla* "observe, spy "—*källäla* "guard"; *ďämmärä* " begin " (also in Amh., but not necessarily a loanword) should probably be compared to Gəʿəz *'agmärä* " complete, perfect " and the common Semitic root of this meaning (Acc. *gamāru*, Hebr. *gamar*); *ť'äläwä* " to put cereals into the sun for drying ", and Tňa and Gəʿəz *k'äläwä* " to toast cereals " (also a widespread Semitic root). Praetorius (*Tňa Spr.*, para. 91) remarks that " in ächten Tigriňa-wörtern ist indess dieser Laut äusserst selten ". This is indeed so, but Praetorius is not quite correct in stating that these " Quetschlaute " occur mostly in Amharic loanwords, since there are quite a few Tňa words with palatalized

sounds which have no parallel in Amharic. The above mentioned *ɬ'äläwä* and *šälläla*[76] are cases in point.

Summing up: we have seen that Gəʿəz possessed no palatalized sounds in the proper sense. In the South Ethiopian languages the system of palatalization is widespread, but even here there are only comparatively few cases involving velars. It should, perhaps, be emphasized again here that, while sibilants and dentals are still subject to the alternation of palatalized and simple sounds in a given root (particularly in the South), this is no longer the case with regard to the velars[77] with which alone we are concerned at this moment. Here certain changes had taken place in the past:—

(1) sometimes both forms still coexist in the same region without any noticeable difference in meaning (*'əngʷera* and *'ənɗera*; *dägäzmati* and *dädɗazmaɬ* in Tña);
(2) or each form is indicative now of a regional and dialectal difference *k'es*, *kidan* (Shoa) and *ɬ'äs*, *ɬədan* (Gojjam), though the former forms can also be heard in the latter region, but the tendency towards palatalization is most marked in the Gojjam province;
(3) or the palatalized version alone survives as in the case of *ɗämmärä*; and, finally,
(4) the two forms have acquired a specialized nuance of the basic root meaning, e.g. Gəʿəz *k'äläwä* " to dry ", " to warm up ", Tña *k'äläwä* " to toast cereals ", *ɬ'äläwä* " to dry cereals in the sun ".

While there is no doubt that the prepalatals are nowadays most typical of the South Ethiopian languages, there is no reason to ascribe the phenomenon as such exclusively to the South and to consider all words in the Northern languages containing palatalized sounds as loanwords from Amharic.

This has, indeed, been the approach from Praetorius (*Tña Spr.*, para. 91) to Leslau (*Word*, I, 1945: " the prepalatals of Tña are probably taken from Amharic "). It is true that quite a few Amharic loanwords exist in Tña and Tigre (though probably not as many as has often been supposed), but in some instances we have either no parallel in Amharic

[76] The verb *šälläla* occurs in Amharic, but it has an entirely different meaning here and is closely connected with Amh. *sälläla* " parlare con voce di falsetto " (Guidi).

[77] With the important exception of Gurage, where the vowels *i* and *e* regularly cause palatalization also in the case of velars.

at all or a non-palatalized one, e.g. Tigre *ť'äbäl* " ash "; Tña *k'äšši* (in Amharic *k'ʷes*).[78]

As far as the palatalization of velars is concerned it is even quite possible that the Northern languages show just as many instances as the Southern ones.[79] To be quite sure about this, one would have to trace back all existing words with palatalization to their dental or velar origin[79]—a formidable and partly impossible task. From a few samples taken in the various languages there would not appear to be any marked numerical preponderance in the Southern tongues—of course: only as far as the velars are concerned.

It should also be re-stated here that the alternation of palatalized and simple velar is just as extinct in the south—with the notable exception of Gurage—as it is in the north, and alternation for morphological reasons, especially in Amharic, applies only to sibilants and dentals.

The phenomenon of velar palatalization is not altogether unknown in other *Semitic languages*. Brockelmann (*Grundriss*, para. 79) points to the transition of *ki* to *š* (no doubt via *ť*) in the Arabic of the Muḍar and Rabi'a tribes: *'alaiki* > *'alaiťi* > *'alaiš(i)*. As a dialectal peculiarity the change from *ki* to *š* is known in a number of Arabic dialects; nowadays still in the dialects of 'Uman and Ḥaḍramawt (Brockelmann, *loc. cit.*).[80]

In modern South Arabian (Bittner, *Šḥauri Sprache*, p. 20) we find quite a few cases of velar palatalization: e.g. *ḥayč́* (I give Bittner's transcription) " coast " beside *ḥayq* (cf. Hebrew *ḥeyq* " sinus ", Ethiopic *ḥayq* " litus "); *čiret* " city " (cf. Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac √*qry*); *arčob* " Reitkamelinnen " (cf. common Semitic √*rkb*); *šibdit* " liver " (cf. Semitic *kbd*).[81]

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[78] The sound combination *s* + *i* does frequently occur in Tña without palatalization, e.g. *ba'əsi* " quarrel ", *wärasi* " heir ", etc., etc.

[79] Of course, always with the exception of Gurage where the resultant prepalatal has a distinct sound in accordance with its dental or velar origin.

[80] Dr. C. Rabin tells me that certain Central Arabian Bedouin dialects palatalize both *k* and *q*; the dialect of Hudayda and certain 'Uman coast dialects palatalize every *k* irrespective of position. See now also Rabin's *West-Arabian*, p. 50, and the references quoted there.

[81] The same process has occurred in the suffix of the 2nd pers. sing. fem. perf. in modern South Arabian, i.e. * *ki* > *š*. See also pp. 10 and 69 above.

Also in modern Syriac at Urmia *q* and *g* are sometimes palatalized to *ǧ* (Noeldeke, *N.S. Gr.*, p. 40).

In the *Cushitic languages* the same palatalized sounds exist as we have found in the Semitic Ethiopian field. Here, too, the ambiguity as to their origin from either a dental or a velar is just as marked as it is in Semitic Ethiopic. As etymological studies are, however, still less advanced in Cushitic than in Semitic, it is at present not possible to trace large numbers of palatalized sounds back to their origin. Both in Bilin (Reinisch) and in Kemant (Conti Rossini) *ť'*, *š*, and *ď* may be of either dental or velar descent, but here, too, dental origin seems far more frequent.[82]

According to Cerulli (*Sidamo*, pp. 56–7) Sidamo sounds are susceptible to palatalization in very much the same way as we have seen elsewhere: e.g. Amharic *k'alläfä* and Sidamo *ť'uf* " to close ".[83]

In conclusion we may then say that, although palatalization is not altogether unknown in the Semitic languages (where it occurs in certain Arabic dialects in particular), its spectacular extension over the entire Ethiopian field is, in all probability, primarily due to the influence of the Cushitic substrata, where the prepalatals occupy so prominent a place in the sound pattern of the various languages.

(For further details see section on the prepalatals below.)

Labio-Velars[84]

The labio-velar sounds have long been recognized as a feature peculiar to Ethiopic among all other Semitic languages. Many theories as to their nature and origin have been advanced, and it would be beyond the scope of this study to go into this problem in great detail. In particular, we cannot deal here with the somewhat longwinded

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[82] This is, of course, very largely in the realm of conjecture, as we know practically nothing about the history of these sounds in Cushitic, and it is feasible that here prepalatals always existed as a phonemic series and do not go back at all to either dentals or velars.

[83] For the dissolution of the liquid with resultant *u*-resonance cf. pp. 125 and 128 below.

[84] The chapter on the labio-velars was first published (in a slightly different form) in *RSE*, X, 1951.

dissertations on the labio-velars produced by Grimme, *ZDMG* 55,[85] and König, *Neue Studien*. Neither of those theories have found acceptance.

The phonetic nature of the Ethiopian labio-velars is not really in doubt. After earlier misconceptions Praetorius had already pointed out in *ZDMG* 47, p. 395, that *q*, *k*, *g*, *ḫ* are sometimes pronounced " mit gleichzeitiger *u*-Lippenstellung " and that the usual transcription *qu*, etc., was misleading; $\overset{w}{q}$ would be greatly preferable, but presented typographical difficulties.

And similarly Kurylowicz in *Rocznik Orjentalistyczny*, 9, in an interesting article:

> " L'arrondissement des lèvres accompagnant l'articulation vélaire de $\underset{w}{k}$, $\overset{w}{q}$, etc. est l'unique trait essentiel qui distingue les labiovélaires des vélaires pures."

The Ethiopian labio-velars present no particular difficulty of pronunciation for the European. It is only important to remember that they are spoken by two *simultaneous* movements[86]:

(*a*) the back of the tongue touching the soft palate in a manner fully identical with normal velar articulation, and

(*b*) a rounded protrusion of the lips as for *w*—articulation.

In other words: the labial element is present during the articulation of the velar.[87]

The velars seem to show what Reinisch (*Bedauye*, II, para. 44) called " eine gefrässige Gier nach Labialen "; similarly Polotsky (*Gouragué*, p. 148) who speaks of the velars as attracting and absorbing the labial element. I am not sure, though, whether it is necessary, as Polotsky (*op. cit.*, p. 144) thinks, to consider the anatomical constitution of the

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[85] Grimme's long article is marred by quite a few factual errors (cf. Cohen in *GLECS*, III, p. 6) of which not the least is the inclusion of Tigre among the " labializing " languages (p. 412). The burden of his argument is that the " labialized gutturals " in Ethiopic must be the descendants of similar sounds in proto-Semitic—" wenn eine Reihe von Semitischen Sprachen labialisierte Gutturale nicht enhält, so haben sie hier als ausgestorben zu gelten " (p. 415).

[86] I do not think we have to speak here of a labial off-glide ; I seem to perceive complete simultaneity of the velar and labial articulations.

[87] I think this simultaneity is absolutely essential, for otherwise we would have a syllable beginning with two consonants which would, of course, fly in the face of all Semitic conceptions. See also below in chapter iv.

Abyssinian lips, in order to understand the peculiar pronunciation of the labio-velars.

Phonemically, the labio-velars would appear to be independent of the ordinary series of velars[88]; this seems to be true at least of all those Ethiopian languages where reduction to the ordinary velar sounds has either not taken place at all or where the process is still not completed[88]: Gəʿəz: *kʷäsʿärä* " circumvallare "—*kʷåsʿärä* " colligare "; *gʷädälä* " to fight "—*ǧådälä* " to lack "; Amh. *kʷällälä* " delimit "—*kållälä* " to roll "; Tña *gäbbätʿä* " to take by force "—*ǧåbbätʿä* " to be a hunchback ", etc., etc. Labio-velars do not occur elsewhere in Semitic,[89] but they do exist in Agaw languages—as we shall see later on. Labio-velar sounds occur in many African languages: cf. Klingenheben, *Die Silbenauslautgesetze des Hausa*, *ZfES*, XVIII, 1928, p. 276. I am obliged to Professor A. Klingenheben for drawing my attention to their frequency as well as geographical extension over large parts of Africa.

These then are some of the principal general characteristics of the labio-velars, and we may now review this phenomenon in greater detail in the various Ethiopian languages.

The position in *Gəʿəz* is adequately described in the grammars. Many foreign words which came into Ethiopic from Greek, Syriac or Arabic have assumed this labial pronunciation. *kʷästʿäntʿinos*, *kʷərban*, etc., are cases in point. Labio-velars are already found in the earliest vocalized Ethiopic inscriptions (cf. Littmann, *Aksum Expedition*, IV, *passim*).

There was a tendency—or perhaps only a passing fashion—at one time to pronounce nearly all *u* and *u*-resembling sounds, i.e. the 2nd and 7th Ethiopian vowel orders, simultaneously with a preceding velar. A particularly fertile field for this mode were, of course, the passive participles. When the reaction set in, however, it brought under its axe those instances of " abuse " as well as some " justified " cases, with the result that the MSS, particularly those of more recent date which are further influenced by much uncertainty in Amharic, show considerable confusion of the labio-velar articulation with that of the ordinary 2nd and 7th orders. Dillmann (*Grammar*, para. 26, end) had already pointed out that sometimes such fluctuations occur in the various forms of the same root.

[88] See, however, at the end of this chapter.

[89] For some isolated labializations see below.

Abba Ya'qob Gebreyesus has no better name or explanation for the labio-velars than " the letters which are added in Gə'əz, Amharic, and Tňa" (p. 13 of his Gə'əz grammar written in Amharic).

We have no reason to think that the labialized articulation of *k'*, *k*, *g*, and *ḫ* ever extended further and included the laryngals. The only hint in such a direction would be the Mehri *ghulian* " children " which Maltzan (*ZDMG*, XXVII, pp. 261–2) apparently considered as a labialized *ġ*. Comparison with the Tňa equivalent *k'ʷâl'a* will, however, suggest that *ghulian* represents, in fact, a spirantized labio-velar such as we frequently encounter in Tňa (see below).

While Gə'əz showed its labio-velars as soon as they could be graphically depicted in the first vocalized inscriptions, there is no visible trace of them in any unvocalized text, and no attempt at expression appears to have been made by means of inserting a *w*. We may feel fairly confident though—in the light of the impact of the Agaw-substrata to be discussed later on—that no labio-velars existed in the South Arabian language from which Gə'əz developed.

We may then assume that the labio-velars were one of the distinctive marks acquired by that South Arabian language on African soil; they must have contributed notably towards the recognition of the emergence of a " new " and distinct language—Gə'əz.

The influence of a labio-velar on a following vowel is fairly marked. This applies especially to *ä* (the 1st Ethiopian vowel order) and *ə* (the 6th order); the former becomes short *o* (but is generally transcribed *â*) and the latter short *u* (rendered by the neutral *ə*).

Tňa no doubt inherited the state of affairs which prevailed in Gə'əz during the later stages of its existence as a spoken language. The evidence to be derived from the best Gə'əz MSS and the position as known to us in Tňa is, in fact, complementary: Tňa reflects the " uncertainty " (which we observed in Gə'əz) as regards labio-velar articulation and often either " reduces " the labio-velars to the ordinary series of velars, or, somewhat indiscriminately, produces new labio-velars. The result is that there are only comparatively few words where, on the one hand, the labio-velar is regularly and in all circumstances preserved and, on the other, where labio-velar pronunciation cannot occur instead of a simple velar followed by a 2nd or 7th order vowel. This, in turn, causes alternate pronunciation (and spelling) in the various forms of one root.

For instance: *kənätat* " situation " (*EWN* 375 of 10/11/49) beside *kunätat* (root *kwn*); *k'əs'ri* " number ", rarely *k'us'ri*; *k'ås'ärä* (so always—so far as I have observed) but *yək'ås's'ər* and, less frequently, *yək'os's'ər*. *kəllom* and *kullom*. *məgəzitənnät* (*ibidem*) " sovereignty ", root: *gäz'e* (a quaint form). *'akəsəm* (*EWN* 220 of 14/11/46, p. 2, col. 2) " Aksum ", where the *u* of the last syllable was absorbed by and " incorporated " into the velar sound of the preceding one.

As some of the above examples show, labio-velars are, under relevant conditions, spirantized in exactly the same manner as simple velars : *yək'əmmər* " accumulates "; *yək'åmmət'* " mutilates ", etc., etc.

Abba Ya'qob Gebreyesus in his Tña grammar (written in Tña) calls the labio-velars: " The four letters without the 2nd and 7th order." This is not an inapt description, for it is precisely the velar vowels of the 2nd and 7th orders which have been incorporated into the velar consonants.

Brockelmann (*Grundriss*, p. 124) already pointed out that the labialization of velars has been abandoned in *Tigre*. It is likely, though, that the labio-velars have at one time existed in Tigre and that only later on they were " wieder aufgegeben " (Brockelmann, *loc. cit.*). We cannot now say when this occurred, but the assumption is supported by the following considerations:

(*a*) Tigre—like Tña—probably inherited from Gə'əz (whatever the degree of their relationship) the labial pronunciation of some velars, as it would be difficult to explain how the labio-velars could have failed to gain admission in the particular geographical and historical conditions by which the beginnings of Tigre, as an independent language, were determined;

(*b*) the fairly considerable number of velars in the 2nd and particularly 7th order may, in many cases, be presumed to have arisen from an original labio-velar pronunciation: *ḥak'o* < *ḥak'a* " after "; *konat* <*kənat* " spear "[90]; *k'oslä* <*k'åslä* " suppurate "; *k'orə'* " frog ", Tña *k'ər'o*, etc.

There have been occasional doubts, probably arising from insufficient acquaintance with Tigre, about the total disappearance (or absence) of the labio-velars in Tigre, but the fact as such can hardly be seriously

[90] Munzinger in his Tigre vocabulary (appended to Dillmann's *Lexicon*) gives the latter spelling; it seems, however, probable that the pronunciation *kənat* instead of *konat* is due here to Tña influence.

disputed. Neither do labio-velars occur in any of Littmann's Princeton texts nor in any other Tigre publication. I myself have never heard the labialized pronunciation of velars by any Tigre speakers I have met.

The tendency to pronounce (and to write) the ordinary velar for a labio-velar, already known in Gəʿəz and Tña, has been further extended in *Amharic*. The position here is fairly complex, and a detailed investigation of this feature in all its manifold aspects would be beyond the scope of this chapter; nor —as we shall see later on—would it yield results that would have a bearing on the comparative investigation with which we are principally concerned. Moreover, M. Cohen has given us an excellent description in his *Nouv. Ét.*, pp. 41 *et seqq.* In the following the principal features only will be briefly summarized.

There are a few isolated instances where Amharic appears to have developed labio-velar pronunciations which did not exist in Gəʿəz. But in the overwhelming majority of cases the labio-velar series $\overset{w}{g}\ \underset{w}{k}\ \underset{w}{k'}$ has shown a distinct tendency towards elimination and reduction to the ordinary velars *g k k'*.[91] This applies to speech as well as to writing, though it is probably true to say that the former is somewhat in advance of the latter.[92] In some cases this process of elimination has been complete, i.e. without leaving any traces; in others neighbouring vowels still bear witness to an earlier labio-velar.

On the whole, the labial element ^{w} tends to merge in a following vowel: labialized velars followed by *ä* and *ə* generally become simple velars followed by *o* and *u*, i.e. the 1st order labio-velar turns into the 7th order simple velar and the 6th order labio-velar into the 2nd order simple velar. Thus, among numerous examples, *$\overset{w}{g}$ädana* " way " is often written *godana* and pronounced in either manner, and similarly *$\underset{w}{k}$ərat* " pride " as well as *kurat*. Polotsky (*BSL*, 1938, p. 145) has

[91] Afeworq (*grammar*, p. 12) states: ". . . . a differenza del Gheez, in cui sono [i.e. the labio-velars] indispensabili, in Amarico invece possono anche non adoperarsi, facendosi uso delle lettere originarie, da cui esse derivano. . . ." We have, however, seen that a certain degree of " reduction " had already taken place in Gəʿəz itself, but in general Afeworq's statement is accurate.

[92] Nonetheless, it often happens that a labio-velar is spoken where a simple velar is written. Pronunciation and spelling do not always reflect the prevailing confusion in a parallel manner. Polotsky (*BSL*, 1938, p. 145) has shown some of these discrepancies in Amharic and the way in which historical development has frequently been " camouflaged."

rightly pointed out that Amharic spelling " cache d'une façon très efficace le fait essentiel que, à l'inverse de l'apparence graphique, ce sont plutôt, en grande partie au moins, les anciens *o* et *u* qui sont devenus, phonétiquement, des ' appendices labiaux ' plus *ä* et *ə*."

It would be futile to try and find any regularity, in pronunciation as well as writing, in this confused picture of " unjustified " labializations and equally " unjustified " eliminations. Many well-known words with an old simple vowel have now received a labio-velar[93]: *ḫ͡wonä* " to be " as well as *honä*, *ʾəhud* " Sunday " and *ʾəḫ͡wəd*. However, on the whole Afeworq (in his above mentioned remark) is right in thinking that elimination greatly outnumbers secondary creation.

We also have a fair number of metatheses, i.e. the labial element is spoken before the velar.[94] The matter has already been sufficiently well described by Praetorius, Armbruster, and Cohen. These metatheses occur in particular in the conjugation of the verb: *fälläg-hu* " I sought " or *fälläguh*, *fälläg-aťťəhu* " you (plur.) sought " or *fälläg-aťťuh*.

For further details see the grammars.

The problem of labialization in *Gurage* has been treated in detail by Polotsky (*Gouragué*, pp. 144–50).[95] Labialization extends here much further than is the case elsewhere in Ethiopic, but at present we are only concerned with it as far as it affects the articulation of velars.

Gurage has consistently eliminated the labial element from all the *old* labio-velars. In the light of what we have observed in Amharic above—where we find no consistency whatever—such systematic treatment is noteworthy. Polotsky (*loc. cit.*) quotes a number of examples of which I give two:

Amh. *läg͡wgâmä* " bridle ", but Gurage *nəg'g'ämam*;[96]

Gəʿəz: *g͡wənd* " trunk ", Gurage *gənd* = Amh. *gənd*.

Nevertheless, Gurage does possess a large number of labio-velars, but these all appear to be of secondary origin and have to be considered

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[93] This happens even in the 3rd pers. masc. sing. of the gerund, if the last radical is a velar: e.g. instead of usual *fälləgo* rarely also *fälləg͡wâ*.

[94] I suppose English " who " or " when " from **qw* show the same process (i.e. in spelling only, *not* in pronunciation).

[95] Cf. now also Leslau, *Gurage*, pp. 12, 14, 15.

[96] In Polotsky's transcription.

in the same light (as Polotsky has pointed out) as the " new " series of palatalized consonants.

I am not quite clear whether these new labio-velars are supposed to be phonemically independent of the ordinary velars.[97]

Harari—like Tigre—possesses no labio-velars. Cohen (*Études*, p. 257) thinks this is due to " reduction " and that formerly Harari knew the labialized articulation of some velars.

Cerulli shares this view: ". . . nello harari tali suoni si siano tutti trasformati nella pronunzia moderna. . . ." (*Harari*, p. 66).

Cerulli (*loc. cit.*) has shown that a labio-velar in another Ethiopian language normally corresponds in Harari to a velar followed by *u*; e.g.

Gəʿəz *kʷʾâsʾəl*; Tña *kʷʾâsʾli*; Amh. *kʷʾətʾäl*; Har. *kʷʾutʾtʾi*, " leaf ".

Gəʿəz *kʷʾəmal*; Tña *kʷʾəmal* and *kʷʾumal*; Amh. *kʷʾəmal*; Har. *kʷʾumay*, " louse ".

Cerulli is, of course, right in stating that Harari thus preserves at least " traccia di labio-velari etimologiche ", but is hardly accurate in adding that in Amharic, on the other hand, these labio-velars " sono del tutto scomparse ". They have, indeed, vanished in the two instances quoted as well as in a number of other cases, but in general Amharic sometimes preserves (or creates afresh) and sometimes eliminates the labial element in velars without any apparent consistency —as shown above. Nor can one agree with Cerulli's conclusion, tentatively formulated though it is, that the labio-velars have shown longer resistance in Harari than in Amharic. This is only true in cases where Amharic shows total elimination, but many old labio-velars have, in fact, been preserved.

In looking through the *Gafat* part of *MS Bruce Or.* 94 (Bodleian Library) it seems to me that we find here a position broadly similar to that in Amharic.[98] The difference between the two languages appears to be one of degree only. While Amharic shows a distinct tendency to convert labio-velars 1st and 6th order into velars 7th and 2nd order, respectively, in Gafat this process has already been completed. Of course, we do not know whether in Gafat pronunciation invariably

[97] Cf. Cohen, *Études*, p. 110; see also below at the end of this chapter.

[98] Cf. Leslau, *Gafat*, para. 7. We may expect to hear more from Leslau on his recent Gafat researches in Ethiopia.

followed graphic expression or whether—as in Amharic—a labio-velar could still be spoken where a simple velar was written. We must also remember that some forms may not be attested simply on account of the limited extent of this Gafat text.

In *summing up* the details in the various Semitic Ethiopian languages the following picture emerges:

In Gəʿəz we can observe, on the one hand, a noticeable and "unjustified" extension of the labio-velar articulation and, on the other, occasional reduction of labio-velars to the 2nd and 7th order of the ordinary velars. Tĭa shows very much the same position. We may still witness today, as a living occurrence, the elimination of labio-velars as well as the birth of historically unjustified ones. Tĭa applies spirantization also to labio-velars.

Tigre and Harari have both eliminated their labio-velars. In both cases a following *u* or *o* generally offers an indication of such reduction.

In Amharic the tendency towards elimination is very marked, though —as in Gəʿəz and Tĭa—we may also observe the emergence of historically unwarranted labializations. And again, while also in Tĭa graphic expression of labio-velars is not necessarily indicative of actual pronunciation and vice versa (the same, we may conjecture, was probably the case in the later phases in Gəʿəz), Amharic has pushed this incongruity considerably further. Elimination of the labial element in Gafat seems to have taken place on much the same lines as in Amharic, only with far greater consistency. And, finally, Gurage has apparently done away completely with all its *old* labio-velars. It has, however, at the same time produced a prolific series of secondary labi^{o}-velars as part of a general development of widespread labializations.

This shows us that no Semitic Ethiopian language has taken a course which was not at least foreshadowed in principle by Gəʿəz, i.e. elimination, partial or total, of old labio-velars and, in some cases, creation of fresh elements. The difference is one of degree only, not of substance: Tigre and Harari have brought about elimination without building up fresh stocks; Gurage has both consistently eliminated as well as given rise to new labio-velar phonemes. The remaining languages, though varying in extent, have neither brought about total reduction nor piled up fresh supplies on any significant scale.

Before we draw any conclusions from this, it will be well to review briefly the position in Semitic and Cushitic.

In the *Semitic field*—outside Ethiopic—we have, with one or two insignificant exceptions, no labio-velars. Grimme's theory of the " ursemitischen labialisierten Gutturale " has been universally rejected. Brockelmann (*Grundriss*, para. 80) reports labialization of velars, in Tripoli and Morocco, " beim Übergang von *k* zu *ā* ": *ś̌kāl* " shackle ", *sḳāt* " silence ".

Cushitic is the language group which has brought the labio-velars to their most notable development (cf., in particular, Reinisch, *Bilin*, para. 11 *et seqq.*, and *Bedauye*, para. 44 *et seqq.*). Reinisch asserts that the labio-velars are "ureigentümlich " to the Cushitic languages and that the Ethiopian Semites must have borrowed these sounds from Cushitic, because they do not exist in any other Semitic language. Therefore, the Ethiopians could only have adopted the labio-velars after their migration into Abyssinia.

This view, in one form or another, is now generally[99] held and seems to be well founded on the facts at our disposal.

Bedauye and the Agaw languages (Bilin, Kemant, Quara, etc.), in particular, show an abundance of labio-velars. It is difficult to decide whether Agaw was, in fact, the source from which all labio-velar articulation originated and then extended to the other Cushitic tongues, or whether it was developed as a general Cushitic characteristic, but later suffered elimination[1] and reduction in Cushitic in very much the same manner as we have observed in the Semitic Ethiopian languages. This problem need not, however, detain us at present.

Examples: Bilin: *g̊i* "to get up " (as opposed to *gi* " to be ripe ")[2]; Quara: *daḫa* " clay "[3]; Bedauye: *ḫaḳ'ât*=Arab. *ḫuqqah* " small box ";

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[99] Cf. in particular—apart from Reinisch's writings—M. Cohen, *GLECS*, III, p. 7; M. Cohen, *Cham.-Sem.*, p. 129; M. Cohen, *Nouv. Études*, p. 47; Leslau, *Word*, I, 1945, pp. 61–2; Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, p. 124; Conti Rossini, *Storia d'Etiopia*, p. 220: " *Probabilmente per influsso cuscitico*, l'etiopico occupa una posizione speciale, isolata, per l'unione di suoni palatali col suono *u*. . . ."

[1] Cf. Cerulli, *Stud. Etiop.*, II, p. 51.

[2] Cohen, *GLECS*, III, p. 7.

[3] Cohen, *Cham.-Sem.*, p. 130.

Bedauye: *angil* "to hear"[4]; Kemant: *ǧazgu* "belly"[5]; Galla: *k'onk'o* "throat"[6]; Agaw: (general) *k'aḫ* "egg".[7]

Finally, it should be mentioned that in a few instances, both in Semitic and Cushitic,[8] the velar element is suppressed and the labial alone remains. Guidi (*Vocabolario*) has drawn attention to a few isolated cases, and Marcel Cohen (*Études*, p. 385; *Nouv. Études*, p. 47) has collected some such examples.

Amh. *ǧâlfat't'a* and *wâlfat't'a* "thin"; I have heard the name of the Eritrean village *'addi kala* pronounced, though rarely, *'addi wala*.[9]

As Kurylowicz (cf. p. 75 above) has pointed out, the nature and origin of the Ethiopic labio-velars had already been recognized, at least in all essential features, by Dillmann (*Eth. gramm.*, para. 26). It would appear that they have arisen from two different sources:

(1) The presence of a velar vowel somewhere in the word; there is no need of immediate proximity. This vowel is "attracted" by a velar consonant[10] and "swallowed" by it (with "gefrässiger Gier"—as Reinisch put it, *Bedauye*, para. 44). This migration of the vowel can extend over one or even more syllables; this is the measure of the absorptive power of the velar consonant.[11] In Gurage the number of consonants which by their phonetic nature are liable to attract an *u*-vowel extends beyond the velar group; nor is the migration of the vowel limited either in distance or direction (Polotsky, *loc. cit.*).

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[4] Cerulli, *Stud. Etiop.*, II, p. 52.

[5] Cerulli, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

[6] Cerulli, *loc. cit.*

[7] Cerulli, *Stud. Etiop.*, I, p. 66.

[8] Leslau, *GLECS*, III, p. 19.

[9] Dr. C. Rabin draws my attention to a note by H. B. Rosen in *Leshonenu* 17 (1951), p. 174, in which he suggests that Greek *Bublos* for Hebrew *Gəḇal* points to a local *ǧublu*, i.e. *ǧ* > *b*. The opposite process has occurred in several Romance words which have prefixed the velar element before the labial, in the case of Germanic roots (*werra* > *guerra*; cf. *war*: *guerre*) as well as Latin roots (*vastare*: *guastare*). Cf. Bourciez, §170.

[10] No doubt encouraged by the fact that both vowel and consonant have this velar basis.

[11] Polotsky (*BSL*, 1938, p. 148) has shown that the initiative for this migration must be attributed to the velar and not to the labial element (as Dillmann, *loc. cit.*, had thought).

(2) However, not all labio-velar formations can be explained by the presence of an *u*-vowel somewhere in the word. There exist many roots for which nothing but a " general preference in the language for such sounds " (Dillmann, *loc. cit.*) can be recorded. Dillmann has also pointed out, accurately, that it is impossible to indicate "the special motives " which have brought about the choice of roots. Thus it seems very puzzling why the same result, i.e. transformation of velars into labio-velars, does not uniformly apply to all cases in which it was apparently possible. I have considered in this connection the possible effect of stress and similar factors, but have been unable to find any evidence that the choice of words in which labio-velars have established themselves is other than purely fortuitous.

The evidence in favour of the assumption that Cushitic influence is responsible for the evolution of the labio-velars on Ethiopian soil seems to me very impressive. The salient features have been discussed in the foregoing, and it has been mentioned (on p. 83 above) that there is a surprising consensus of opinion supporting this theory. Leslau (*Word*, I, 1945) is the latest scholar to voice his opinion in the same direction.

At the same time, while I agree that Cushitic has to be saddled with responsibility for these labio-velars, this explanation alone is not wholly satisfactory. In particular, it is difficult to see why the introduction of labio-velars into Semitic Ethiopic should have been so selective. Had the distribution of labio-velars over the two language groups been more or less parallel, this difficulty would be largely overcome. But at present there is nothing to show that this, in fact, is so. As the substrate population, i.e. the Cushitic inhabitants of Ethiopia, themselves possess the full series of ordinary velars, it is not quite easy to see why Semitic velars should have been partially labialized, since they could have had no difficulty in pronouncing the simple velars. Phonetic changes of this character are normally brought about by the inability of the substrate population to pronounce correctly certain sounds of the superstratum non-existent in their own language.

I would suppose that there existed certain " inner " reasons in Semitic Ethiopic (such as, for instance, the strong attraction which an *u*-vowel apparently had for a velar consonant) which, combined with the existence of an active and prominent labio-velar series in the Cushitic substrate, brought about the state of affairs reviewed in the

foregoing. Cushitic may thus have played merely the part of a catalyst in this process of change.

Another difficult question is the extent to which the labio-velars in Ethiopic form a series phonemically independent of the ordinary velars. Leslau (*Word*, I, 1945) seems to have no hesitation in asserting this phonemic independence, and indeed a good *prima facie* case can be made out for it. One need only look at the examples given on p. 76 above.

Yet the opposition *k* : *k*$_{w}$ etc. does not exist before *u* and *o* (i.e. the 2nd and 7th Ethiopian vowel orders). Moreover, to later scribes of Gəʿəz and in the modern Ethiopian languages *k*$_{w}$*ə* and *ku*, *k*$_{w}$*å* and *ko*, respectively, were apparently phonemically equivalent (hence " elimination " occurred). In some languages the opposition ceased to be significant even before *i* and *e*. In Amharic, hand in hand with large numbers of " reductions " there nonetheless remained a few isolated instances of phonemic opposition, even before the 1st Ethiopian vowel order where normally the merger with the 7th order (simple velar) has been fully accomplished. In other words: on account of the similarity in sound between such instances as *k*$_{w}$*ə* and *ku*, *k*$_{w}$*å* and *ko*, etc., there has occurred a wholesale blurring, a neutralization of phonemic distinctions, which was further aggravated by the seemingly chaotic process of reductions, eliminations, and secondary creations of labio-velars. In the light of these facts, it would seem that velars and labio-velars are not two independent series, but that they constitute an archiphoneme.[12]

This means that their phonemic opposition is not constant, but is subject to neutralization.

Trubetzkoy (*Principes*, p. 81) has drawn attention to the psychological difference between such constant and neutralizable oppositions. While the former are clearly perceived even by the phonetically uninitiated members of a speech community, the latter are subject to much hesitation, and doubt often arises as to the " correct " pronunciation or accurate perception of alternative forms. This, in fact, is precisely what I have constantly noticed in contact with Tña and Amharic speakers; Gəʿəz MSS and written documents of the modern

[12] I.e. " l'ensemble des particularités distinctives qui sont communes aux deux phonèmes " (Trubetzkoy, *Principes de Phonologie*, p. 81).

languages bear eloquent testimony to the uncertainty and ambiguity by which the labio-velars are affected.

Important as this new valuation of the labio-velars vis-à-vis the ordinary velars is, it does not, unfortunately, open up new vistas for an assessment of the relationship of the Semitic Abyssinian languages to each other. It is interesting to follow in detail the, at least partially, different treatment the labio-velars have experienced in the various languages, but as a criterion of dialectal distribution all this is not immediately relevant, because the same development of labio-velar repression and fresh creation can take place *independently* in different and from each other completely divorced circumstances and places.[13]

At the same time, it has become evident that, in broad outline, the way taken by Gəʿəz, for internal reasons as well as under the impact of Agaw and related Cushitic languages, has been followed, in one form or another, by all other Semitic Ethiopian languages[14] (i.e. as far as the labio-velars are concerned). The emphasis on either reduction, elimination, or secondary development differs, often not inconsiderably, but the existence, past or present, of labio-velar sounds can be recognized in all these languages, even if sometimes only by the presence of peculiar vowel nuances.

In conclusion we should have a look at the surprisingly analogous development in the *Romance languages*. This comparison supports in every aspect the analysis offered in the foregoing.

In the Latin and Germanic elements k^w and g^w the labial component has received different treatment in the various regions.

In French the labial element has been lost altogether, but apparently at different periods[15]: *quatre*, *guerre*, *garder*, etc.

Italian has kept the labial component more tenaciously than any other Romance language: *quale*, *quando*, *guerra*[16], *guida*; but Latin k^w loses it, initially, before *e* and *i*: *cheto*, *chi*, *chiedere*, etc. Dialectally ^{w} seems to disappear in an unstressed syllable also before *a*.[17]

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[13] Cf. M. Cohen, *Études*, p. 5.

[14] So apparently also Polotsky (*BSL*, 1938, p. 145): " . . . il semble qu'en amharique (et en guèze de basse époque) se sont effectués des processus en large mesure analogues à ceux qui seront décrits pour le gouragué. . . ."

[15] Cf. Bourciez, *Éléments de Linguistique Romane*, p. 302.

[16] See footnote [9] on p. 84.

[17] Meyer-Luebke, *Romanische Lautlehre*, p. 352.

Spanish and Portuguese, but especially the former, would seem to take an intermediate position between French and Italian. k^w and g^w preserve the labial element before *a* (*cuando*, *guardar*), but give it up before the other vowels (*guerra*, *guisa*). In Portuguese there is a tendency, in popular speech, to do away with it also before *a*.[18]

Secondary labializations—in much the same way as in Gurage—occur in Italian *buono* or Spanish *cuerpo*.[19]

These few data show how in the Romance languages elimination and re-creation of labialization proceed in much the same—seemingly haphazard—manner as we have observed in Semitic Ethiopic. The only important difference would appear to lie in the fact that in the Romance tongues stress seems to have, at least in some instances, an influence on elimination.

There only remains to add a brief word on the phonetic aspect of the process of " elimination " which we have encountered in both language groups. It seems that the labio-velars lose their labial element by a slight forward move in the place of articulation[20] which, in turn, also causes the abandonment of lip-rounding. The basis of articulation is being advanced from the velum a little more towards the centre of the palate; the suppression of rounding in these circumstances is an automatic concomitant of the main articulatory process.

LABIALS

(Cf. Inventory at pp. 33–34.)

As distinct from Hebrew and Syriac, *p* and *f* are separate phonemes in Ethiopic. On the other hand, *v* (= *b̲*) is not phonemically independent of *b* and only occurs under relevant conditions in certain modern Ethiopian languages—just as we found the spirantized velars to be phonemically identical with their respective plosives.

Early *Gəʿəz*, i.e. the epigraphic evidence furnished by the Aksum inscriptions, reflects, perhaps accidentally, the position as it obtained in South Arabian. *b*, *f*, and *m* are represented in the inscriptions, but neither *p* nor *p'* occur. Littmann (*Aksum*, IV, p. 78) had already

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[18] Bourciez, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

[19] This is sometimes also referred to as diphthongization.

[20] Cf. Grammont, *Traité*, p. 157.

pointed out that " ihr Fehlen in den Inschriften mag auf Zufall beruhen ". This is indeed possible, as also today both *p'* and *p* are only very infrequently encountered.[21] When the two *p*-sounds were finally introduced into Gəʿəz, they must obviously have expressed two different aspects of this sound. Their precise character cannot now be determined with absolute certainty, but if the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz offers any reliable indication at all, then this distinction would seem to lie in the strongly ejective nature of one of them. This means that

$$p' : p = k' : k \text{ (or } t' : t).$$

Doubts have been raised about the accuracy of this equation, since nowhere else in Semitic do we find an ejective *p'*.[22] We may, perhaps, be justified in making Cushitic responsible for this development for reasons which will be discussed in the comparative part below. I find the alternative suggestion of ascribing to *p* the sound of Greek ψ quite unacceptable—and on these grounds:

(*a*) the name *Psa* which would appear to co-exist with *Pa* means absolutely nothing as a piece of evidence, because—as I have shown[23]—the Ethiopic letter-names are of comparatively recent origin;

(*b*) ፕ in its shape is clearly derived from π and not from ψ;

(*c*) there exists no evidence whatever that it was ever pronounced other than *p*; the fact that ፕ never transcribes ψ does not by itself support my contention, as I can find no instance at all where ψ is transliterated into Ethiopic.

We are, I think, fully justified in assuming that the ejective element was the mark of distinction between the two *p*-sounds—just as is the case in modern Ethiopic.

The list of " genuine " Ethiopic words in which *p'* occurs (given by Dillmann, *Grammar*, para. 28) has to regarded with great caution. Apart from the fact that the Semitic etymologies adduced by Dillmann seem rather doubtful, it would appear that the meanings of at least

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[21] See p. 108 below; cf. also my article in *Africa*, 1951, pp. 208, 209, 211.

[22] The two *p*-sounds occurring in Syriac (Brockelmann, *Syr. Gramm.*, para. 10) cannot be compared to this strongly ejective phoneme. Mittwoch (*Proben*, p. 191) errs here.

[23] *Africa*, 1951, pp. 211–4.

some of these words are obscure and their reading not always above suspicion.

Nor does the transcription of Greek words offer a clue that might lead to a precise distinction between *p* and *p'*. Rather on the contrary, Greek π may appear in Ethiopic in four different forms:

ጰ :	ጠርጴዛ :	τράπεζα
	ጰርስፎራ :	προσφορά
ፕ :	ፒሳ :	πίσσα
	ስናፕ :	σίναπι
በ :	ኦብረክሲስ :	πράξεις
	ኦበቅቴ :	ἐπακτή
ፊ :	ቆፍርያ :	κόπρια
	ስፍንግ :	σπόγγος

Nor would it be possible to detect any phonetic laws behind these various modes of transcription,[24] since there exists a good deal of fluctuation : ቆጵሮስ, ቆብሮስ, Κύπρος, etc., etc. Ethiopic *f* also transcribes φ, but so do *p'* and *p*, though more rarely.

In some of the modern Ethiopian languages, as well as in certain Semitic and Cushitic languages, *b* may pass into the fricative *b̲*— under conditions which will be discussed in the following. The question arises, of course, whether *b* was subjected to such treatment also in Gəʿəz. It should perhaps be said at once that we do not possess linguistic evidence of a character that would allow us to arrive at definite conclusions. Such views as will be put forward are necessarily tentative, since all evidence in this examination is merely circumstantial. In the first place, Ethiopic words transcribed into Arabic or Greek, or loaned to Arabic, would be of little or no assistance, since neither language possesses a character expressing *v* (Greek *digamma*, in any event = *w*, was hardly any longer in use at the operative period). Secondly, European transcriptions (Portuguese, etc.) are of no value, since they originate from a period when the ascendancy of the modern Ethiopian tongues was already complete.

In a few instances *b* alternates with *w* without any change of meaning: *s'äbsä* and *s'äwåsä* " to be weak "; *k'änt'äbä* and *k'änt'äwä* " to per-

[24] In some instances, where a word was not taken over directly from Greek, the transliteration adopted in the intermediary language (Syriac, Coptic, Arabic) was probably followed in Ethiopic.

forate ", as well as a few others enumerated by Dillmann (*Grammar*, para. 28).

In the case of a similar phenomenon in Syriac (ܪܒܪܒܝܢ—**raḇrəḇin*; ܟܒܟܒ[25]—**kaḇkab*) we may possibly assume that the intermediate stage between *b* and *w* was *b̲*, i.e. spirantized *b*. The Ethiopic examples above would appear to point to a parallel development. We shall later on see what light the modern Ethiopian languages are able to shed on this problem as far as Gəʿəz is concerned. In this connection there seems hardly any point in invoking the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz in support of spirantization of *b* in Ethiopic—as Cohen (*JA*, 1921, p. 265) and Mittwoch (*Trad. Ausspr.*, pp. 11 *et seqq.*) have done. To speak—as they do—of " weakening " of *b* in this connection merely reflects the prevailing habit in some of the modern languages, but constitutes no genuine evidence whatever for Gəʿəz itself. In general, the so-called traditional pronunciation of Ethiopic is simply Tňa, Amharic, etc., in the disguise of Gəʿəz (see above in the introductory part). I myself have never heard *b* spoken as a fricative in the recitation of Gəʿəz, but this is, perhaps, mainly due to the fact that most of my informants did not make use of this facultative variant in their vernacular; hence they would certainly not use it for reading Gəʿəz.

Finally, attention has to be drawn to an occasional interchange of *m* and *b*, and *m* and *w* (for the interchange of *b* and *w* see p. 90 above) —well known also in other Semitic languages. Already in South Arabian we have *bn* " from " for **mn*. In Ethiopic itself we find *nmr* " tiger " as well as *nbr*. Gəʿəz *zämän* " time "—Tňa *zäbän* (*zämän* also occurs in Tňa), Syriac *zbn*. *mʿd* " counsel "—*wʿd*. We shall have occasion to return to this interchange later on in this chapter.

In *Tňa* we find the same labials as in Gəʿəz, but the problem of the spirantization of *b* requires careful attention here. In the first place, it should be mentioned that the pronunciation of *b* as a fricative seems one of the very few instances where we are justified in speaking of dialectal divergences in Tňa.

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[25] ܟܒܟܒ is, of course, in view of Hebrew, etc., not a particularly convincing example.

Praetorius (*Tña*, pp. 87 *et seqq.*) states that the pronunciation of *b* and *v* (= *b̲*), as plosive and fricative respectively, exists side by side. However, the fricative can—according to Praetorius—only take place if a vowel precedes. Spirantization is facultative, there is never a necessity for it to take place. As distinct from *k* and *k'*, *b* cannot be articulated as a fricative either at the beginning of a word (where the preceding one ends in a vowel) or at its end. Praetorius' remarks refer to the language as spoken near Aksum and Adwa.

Leonessa (pp. 6 and 7) says that " la *b* non ha suono ben definito, eccetto quando abbia a pronunziarsi doppia, nel qual caso ha suono assolutamente identico al nostro doppio *bb*." But, if on the other hand, " se deve pronunziarsi semplice ha suono variabile tra la *b* e la *v*." In finally deciding to transcribe this Ethiopian character always as *b* he asserts that " la pronunzia col *v* non è troppo certa e varia col variare degli individui." In other words, while Leonessa appears to have noticed the pronunciation of *b* as a fricative in a few, not very certain, cases, he attributes it to individual whim rather than to a geographically definable habit, i.e. he does not ascribe to it the status of a dialectal variant.

Leslau in describing the language of his informant from the Akkele Guzay correctly states (*Doc. Tña*, p. 3): " La spirantisation de *b* est presque inexistante dans la langue." We shall discuss presently what we consider to be the significance of this " presque ". Conti Rossini (*Lingua Tigrina*, p. 18) finds that " il *b* è pronunciato come in italiano ; in mezzo di parola, e purchè non sia doppio, può anche avere un suono come di *v*." And (*op. cit.*, p. 21): " *b* [si pronuncia] talvolta *v* se si trova fra vocali." These two statements convey that " sometimes ", provided there is no gemination, *b* may be pronounced as *v*. It seems that Conti Rossini did not think of dialectal differences, but merely had in mind some form of individual preference. As to the conditions in which the fricative pronunciation may take place, Conti Rossini's two requirements are not identical. In the first quotation he simply demands that *b* should occur " in mezzo di parola ", whereas in the second it requires to be placed between vowels. Neither is entirely correct: Firstly, because " in the middle of the word " would include position after a consonant which is not the case; and, secondly, only the preceding sound has to be a vowel, but not the following—although in most cases this second " condition " is also fulfilled.

Leslau, in an article on Tña dialectology (*JA*, 1939) with which I

disagree in several of its major aspects, has collected some information on the spirantization of *b* which must be briefly discussed here:

" Dans le dialecte d'Adoua un *b* simple (non géminé) est spirantisé en toute position. Entre deux voyelles: *yəḇäl'u* ' ils mangent '; en groupe après voyelle: *käḇkab* ' mariage ';[26] avant voyelle: *kälḇu* ' son chien '."

" Dans le dialecte d'Akkele Gouzay, le *b* est rarement spirantisé; on le spirantise surtout dans le mot *yəḇəl* ' il dit '."

" Pour le dialecte du Hamasen la spirantisation du *b* n'est pas marqueé dans les textes de Kolmodin. . . ."

Whether the expression " Adwa dialect " is tenable, we shall discuss presently. From Leslau's " est spirantisé " one must infer that spirantization occurs invariably ; and although the tendency may justly be said to gain ground, it is still not uniformly practised—even at Adwa. Furthermore, spirantization " en toute position " is not quite accurate, and Leslau's own example *käḇkab* proves the contrary. Spirantization does not take place either at the beginning or the end of words nor *before* vowels (unless the preceding sound is a vowel as well); and I have grave doubts about Leslau's *kälḇu*.[27] The fricative does, however, usually occur—as Praetorius had already correctly stated in his Tña grammar in the passage quoted above—*after* a vowel (i.e. in the Adwa region).

Leslau's view on the Akkele Guzay dialect[28] conforms with my own experience in that province—except that I never heard *yəḇəl*. It seems probable that the pronunciation of *b* as a fricative in that one word was a peculiarity of Leslau's single informant.

And, similarly, spirantization of *b* does not take place in the Hamasen province.

It is clear from this summary of largely contradictory views that Leonessa, Conti Rossini and others tend to ascribe to individual whim a speech feature which in reality transcends purely individual arbitrariness and can be observed to originate in a more general setting of definable regional limits. Leslau, on the other hand, goes too far in

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[26] This must be an error; *käḇkab* is " feast ", but not marriage, nor even marriage celebrations in particular.

[27] Even though liquids are known to favour spirantization in other Ethiopian languages (cf. p. 59 above).

[28] " Dialect " is not a very happy term for such minimal distinctions.

assigning to it unduly rigid frontiers, in substance as well as in geography.

Now, we shall see presently that in Amharic the tendency to pronounce *b* as a fricative—though still far from being universal—is gaining momentum. It is this Amharic feature of the " weakening " of *b* to *b̲* which has, in my view, intruded into those southern parts of the Tña domain which were, and are, in close contact with Amharic speakers. Spirantization of *b* in Tña is thus not a feature peculiar to the Adwa region (Leslau), nor is it due to purely individual caprice (Conti Rossini, Leonessa), but rather a tendency imported from Amharic and noticeable all along the southern fringes of the Tña speaking territory. This also explains why Conti Rossini, Leonessa and others have " sometimes " heard the fricative, but generally not: their contact was normally with the inhabitants of the Hamasen and only " talvolta " will they have met a Tigrean from the South. Since his language is not otherwise noticeably different, they seem to have failed to ascertain his place of origin and thus to recognize this phenomenon as definable within geographical limits.

As to the conditions pre-requisite for the spirantization of *b* it seems that only Praetorius (cf. p. 92 above) has stated them accurately. This seems the more surprising as—unlike some of the other scholars —he had never himself heard Tña spoken:

(1) The fricative can only occur if the *b* is simple, i.e. not geminated.
(2) The fricative carries no phonemic value; the plosive can always be used instead, but not vice versa.
(3) The preceding sound must be a vowel.
(4) *b* is never spirantized, even if condition (3) is fulfilled, if it stands at the beginning or end of a word (as distinct from the spirantization of *k* and *k'*).[29]

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[29] These pre-requisites are not only borne out by actual " living " experience of Tña as it is spoken today, but an interesting light is thrown on these facts by the evidence of an untrained, yet acute, observer who travelled in the southern Tña speaking region in the first decade of the 19th century: Henry Salt. In the list of Tña words in the appendix to his work he notes: *Amba* " hill " (which, incidentally, shows that there seems no justification for *kälḫu* (page 93 above), i.e. spirantization of *b before* a vowel, but *after* a consonant). Similarly, *kulbe* " dog ". *Saboite* " woman " and *Shubate* " seven " prove (as stated under (2) above) that, even if the necessary conditions are fulfilled, the plosive can always take the place of a possible fricative. Salt heard spirantized *b* in: *Rivai* " river "; *Assavette* " fingers "; *Avee*

Spirantization might, I think, be assumed to have been a stage in a process which has led to the disappearance of *b* in certain cases:

(*a*) In the gerund of some verbs mediæ *b* the group *-bi-* generally becomes *y*; e.g. *näbiru* > *näyru*; *gäbiru* > *gäyru* ; *säbiru* > *säyru*, etc. This occurs only, of course, when the medial radical is not geminated. The first two examples above are the standard cases (being the verbs " to be " and " to make "), and, with the exception of a rare *säyru*, I cannot recall any other instance. This process is only facultative, and *näbiru* as well as *gäbiru* can still very occasionally be heard. The development which has occurred here[30] was probably something like this[31]: *näbiru* > *näḇiru* > *näwiru* > *näyru*.[32] Leslau (*JA*, 1939) errs in making this phenomenon a dialectal peculiarity. Nowadays it occurs everywhere all over the Tña area. His *Doc. Tña.* should be amended in this sense, since *näyru* and *gäyru* are just as frequent in the Akkele Guzay province as elsewhere.[33]

(*b*) Besides *šobʿattä* " seven " we also find *šåwʿattä* and *šoʿattä*; and as the form *šåwʿattä* seems to confirm, here too the process was: *šobʿattä* > *šoḇʿattä* > *šåwʿattä* > *šoʿattä*. To assign the last form

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" big ". In *Savva* " milk " the double *v* must not be taken as an infringement of the generally acknowledged rule that only non-geminated *b* can be spirantized. This word is properly *sʿäḇa*, and Salt's transcription underlines the frequent difficulty in Ethiopic in distinguishing a geminated sound from a simple one. To the " naked " ear the transition is frequently very fluid.

Salt's transcriptions—as compared with present-day conditions—show us that since his days there has been little or no change in either substance or extent of the spirantization of *b* in Tña.

[30] It was presumably originally confined to the area of southern Tña where spirantization takes place. But transformations of such a striking character in verbs of such importance and frequency could not for long remain dialectal: they spread to, and were accepted by, all other areas of Tña speech.

[31] I only just notice that Littmann (*WZKM*, XVI, p. 221) had already stated for the " dialect of Tanben ": " Ebenso kann ursprüngliches *abi* durch die Mittelstufe *avi* zu *ai* werden."

[32] The group *wi* became *y* also in the case of the verbs mediæ *w*, e.g. *måwitu* > *moytu*, *sʿåwiru* > *sʿoyru*. The latter are the more usual forms, but the former continue to co-exist.

[33] The reasons which presumably led Leslau to overlook this phenomenon are set out in my article in *Africa*, 1950, pp. 338–9. It is very largely due to the great (but often inevitable) drawback of working with one single informant, and often even through the medium of the Ethiopic script.

to the Adwa region (as Leslau, *JA*, 1939, p. 65, does) might have some historical justification, but is not quite applicable to present-day Tǐna where *šoʿattä* occurs everywhere in preference to the other two possible forms.

(*c*) The gerund of *bälä* is generally *ʾilu*, although *bilu* may still be heard. Here the *b* has fallen away without leaving any trace or reason for its disappearance, unless it is what Arab grammarians call *taḫfīf lilkaṯrati* " weakening on account of excessive use " (Zamakhshari, *Mufaṣṣal*, 153).

(*d*) Spirantization may again have been an intermediate stage in the facultative disappearance of *b* in the word *gäbrä* " servant " when it stands as part of a name, e.g. *gärä-maryam*, *gärä-mikaʾel*, etc. This frequent variant is not confined to the Hamasen (as Leslau, *op. cit.*, p. 66, thinks), but occurs in most parts of the Tǐna territory.

Exchange of *b* and *w* takes place in some rare instances; the above quoted *šåwʿattä* : *šobʿattä* (or *šoḇʿattä*) is a case in point.

Interchange of *b* and *m* is somewhat more frequent: *ʾəmni* " stone " —Gəʿəz *ʾəbən*; *zənab* and *zənam* " rain "; *däbäna* and *dämäna* " cloud "; *zämän* and *zäbän* " time "[34].

An occasional interchange of *m* and *w* (shown for Gəʿəz on p. 91 above) can also be observed in Tǐna: *mänbär* " seat " as well as less frequently *wämbär*. *m* > *n* in *ʾənno* " mother ", Gəʿəz *ʾəm*, Amh. *ʾənnat*.

p I only know in *posta* " post " and similar European words. *pʾ* in *pʾapʾas* " Pope ", *pʾagumᵛen* " the supplementary month in the Ethiopian calendar ", or *ʾityopʾya* " Ethiopia ". The essential feature of the latter is the strongly ejective release of air by the lips.[35]

In *Tigre* the position with regard to the spirantization of *b* is not quite clear. Neither Littmann or Leslau nor the Missione grammar make any reference to it, and I myself have never heard *ḇ* in Tigre

[34] Dr. C. Rabin draws my attention to the possibility that *n* might have been responsible for the change in all these examples. At the same time, it has to be pointed out that the influence of *n* has been exercised in no consistent manner: in *ʾəmni* we must probably see an assimilating tendency since the original form was *ʾəbni*, whereas in *zämän* we may observe a dissimilating move to *zäbän*.

[35] See also below in section on ejectives.

(at least not in those areas where I heard Tigre spoken).[36] Munzinger (*Voc. Tigre*, p. v), on the other hand, declares: " *b* tient le milieu entre le *b* et *w* allemands, p. ex. *nebari* et *newari*."

Praetorius (*Tŭa*, p. 87) accepts this statement on Munzinger's authority: " Das Tigre kennt ebenfalls beide Aussprachen des *b*." Among the large number of Tigre words transcribed in Munzinger's Vocabulary I can find none where he actually indicates a pronunciation other than *b*. The position requires further investigation in the various Tigre speaking areas of Eritrea and the border provinces of the Sudan.

The same interchanges which have been recorded for Gəʿəz and Tŭa also occur in Tigre: *zämän* as well as *zäbän* " time ", *dämäna* as well as *däbäna* " cloud ". Otherwise I can at present only think of *bälsä* " return, reply " for *mälsä*; *wänna* " to be disgusted " should be compared to Gəʿəz *mänänä*. I have never heard or read either *p* or *p'* in Tigre. Leslau (Tigre grammar) gives *p*, but not *p'*.

Tigre data have often to be regarded with some caution, as foreign influence—notably that of Tŭa—has always to be kept in mind. It seems to me that Munzinger's assertion of a fricative *b̠* in Tigre might be a case in point, although it should be remembered that the Tŭa spoken near Kärän (Munzinger's H.Q.) does not spirantize *b*.[37]

For *Amharic* we are much better placed, and investigation of the alterations to which labials may be subjected here is much further advanced (as is the case with Amharic in general). At the same time, M. Cohen (*Études*, pp. 384 *et seqq.*) has voiced the opinion that even in Amharic the position requires further examination and that it is difficult to arrive at definite conclusions " dans l'état actuel de nos connaissances ".

A review of the spirantization of *b* as it appears in Amharic grammars,

[36] Cohen, *Études*, p. 17: " L'affaiblissement habituel du *b* en *b̠* se rencontre partout sauf, semble-t-il, en tigre."

[37] I am very greatly obliged to Professor Littmann for the following information contained in a letter: " . . . I never heard in Tigre the sound *v* (or *b̠*) as in Tŭa and Amharic. Carefully expressed *v* (or *b̠*) does not exist in Mänsaʿ Tigre; I only spoke with Mänsaʿ people, but my authority would have known such a pronunciation in other Tigre dialects, because he often mentioned to me forms used in other dialects. Munzinger lived at Kärän most of the time, and at Kärän there seems to have been Tigriña influence . . ."

in roughly chronological sequence, will prove to be of rather more than historical interest, as it will show us the state of fluctuation in which we find this matter.

Gregory, in the 17th century, does not appear to have known (and certainly not to have used) spirantized *b* in Amharic since, as far as I can see, all the names transcribed by Ludolf have *b* only. The same applies to the names contained in the even earlier (16th century) *Historia da Etiopia* by Pêro Pais where I cannot detect a *v*, even when *b* stands between vowels. This is also true of Bruce's writings (late 18th century).

Salt, writing in the early 19th century, mentions among his list of Amharic words: *mebruk* " lightning ", *amba* " hill ", *tebot* " lamb ", *anbasa* " lion ", *anbata* " locust ", *lib* " heart ", *devra* " mountain ", *gulleva* " straw ", *Abbeva* " flower ", *niv* " bee ", *corvette* " skin ".

From Salt's examples one might draw the following conclusions:

(1) There was little consistency as regards the spirantization of *b* in the Amharic of Northern Ethiopia of which Salt had experience at about 1810 (*mebruk*—but *devra*);
(2) Spirantization did not take place if *b* was geminated (*abbeva*);
(3) With the exception of *corvette*,[38] *v* only occurred after a vowel;
(4) The sound following fricative *b* did not have to be a vowel (*niv*, *devra*).

We shall return to this when later on we come to consider the incidence of spirantization today.

Isenberg (*Dictionary* and *Grammar*, about 1840) says that *b* is in " its pronunciation in Tigre,[39] and some other parts of Abyssinia, the same as that of the modern Greek *b*, the Hebrew *b*, and English *v*, with a soft pressure and a little aspiration; the rest of the Abyssinians pronounce it like our *b*." Isenberg thinks that " this double character " of *b* " must have been more general formerly than it is now, for it is owing to this [spirantization] only that in several instances it has been exchanged for the *w* and even for the mere vowel *o*."

E.g. *näbärä* > *näḇärä* > *näwårä* > *norä*.

In general I find myself in agreement with this view—except that

[38] Liquids frequently seem to facilitate spirantization (see p. 59 above).

[39] This presumably refers to Tña, as Amharic is not, at least indigenously, spoken in the Tigre province. Alternatively, " Tigre " is here used to signify Northern Ethiopia in general. One would also have preferred an indication somewhat less vague than " some other parts of Abyssinia."

earlier documents reveal no direct traces of spirantization. At present we are quite unable to prove that spirantization " must have been more general formerly than it is now."

Praetorius (*Amh. Spr.*, pp. 55 *et seqq.*) says:

> " *b* hat den Laut des deutschen *b*; es ist indess wie im Tĭa dem Übergang in die homorgane Spirans *v* ausgesetzt. Während aber im Tĭa diese Erscheinung ausserordentlich häufig auftritt und nur dialektisch im Südosten nicht vorhanden zu sein scheint, so ist im Amharischen dagegen das Eintreten der Spirans *v* für die Muta *b* ganz bedeutend seltener."

This passage is of some interest. The first sentence is, of course, impeccable, but the second part is a complete reversal of the true position.[40] Praetorius had to rely very largely on documents in the Ethiopic script which, in the case of *b*, has no special mark for the fricative. And even the few transcriptions at his disposal came predominantly from untrained travellers. In particular, the specimens of Amharic and Tĭa available to Praetorius did not cover or represent the speech areas of these languages to any reasonable degree of geographical completeness. Thus Praetorius was precluded from knowing that spirantization of *b* only occurs as an isogloss along the southern fringes of the Tĭa area.

G. Massaia, who himself travelled in those parts about the middle of the last century, has summed up the position in Amharic as he found it then (*Lectiones grammaticales*, p. 10): ". . . . prætereo hic alias litteras, quæ habent duplicem sonum, uti *b*, quæ valet pro *b* et pro *v*, et pro utraque indiscriminatim accipitur et pronunciatur. . . ."

Guidi (*Gramm. amar.*, para. 4) says: " Il *b* quando non è doppio, è pronunciato spesso con aspirazione e quasi come il *v* italiano, p. es. *igavāl* entra."

Guidi makes no attempt at defining the matter further; he seems to convey that spirantization may occur in every position—except when *b* is geminated. " Spesso " is all he is prepared to commit himself to.

Afeworq (*Gramm. Amar.*, p. 14) mentions three possible pronunciations of *b*: " un suono semplice, un suono doppio ed un suono dolcissimo che arriva quasi alla *v* italiana." He then promises to mark

[40] We can only marvel at the small number of such errors in Praetorius' Ethiopian writings. Having never himself travelled in those countries it is astonishing with what accuracy he described the living phenomena in those "remote" Semitic tongues—a supreme vindication of " armchair linguistics."

gemination by a dot on top of the letter *b*, and spirantization by means of a line. Unfortunately, this marking is so inconsistently applied in his book that no reliable conclusions can be drawn from it.

Armbruster, who had a good knowledge of Amharic as spoken in many parts of the country, sums up as follows (*Amh. gramm.*, p. 32): " *b* when doubled always *bb*; beginning a sentence usually, and after *m* always, *b*; otherwise *b* or *v*: *yəbbalal* " it is said ", *wâmbär* " chair ", *täbalä* or *tävalä* ' it was said ', *anbässa, ambässa* or *anvässa* ' lion '."

And, finally, we must consider M. Cohen's views. Some of his pronouncements on this point are so important to a clarification of the matter that they will have to be given in full.

Traité, p. 31, states:

" Le *b*, occlusive sonore, est articulé (ou fait l'effet d'être articulé) comme un *b* français, quand il est solide. Il est toujours solide lorsqu'il est géminé. En dehors de ce cas, il est articulé le plus souvent d'une manière lâche; souvent, surtout entre deux voyelles, le relâchement est tel qu'il ne se produit pas d'occlusion; on entend alors la spirante bilabiale sonore *b̲*; "

" En raison du flottement de la prononciation suivant les individus et suivant les moments, le mieux est de noter en transcription *b* chaque fois que *b̲* n'est pas très net ; mais il faut tenir compte dans la prononciation de l'affaiblissement, même peu marqué, de *b*. D'autre part il faut nettement distinguer *b̲*, spirante bilabiale plutôt faible, de *v*, spirante labiodentale solide (sonore de *f*) qui n'existe pas en amharique."

Here we have what is, in my view, the most lucid exposition of the pronunciation of *b* in modern Amharic.[41]

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[41] There are, of course, others who have dealt with this problem. Klingenheben (*ZfES*, X, p. 191) reports:

" *b* wird von meinem Gewährsmann durchweg noch explosiv gesprochen. Nur in nachlässiger Aussprache, und wohl nur unmittelbar nach einem Vokal, kommt auch bei ihm gelegentlich einmal . . . bei nicht geminiertem *b* frikative Aussprache vor. Es tritt nämlich dann nach dem Öffnungslaut, dem Vokal, kein völliger Verschluss ein, sodass eine . . . bilabiale Frikativa entsteht. . . . Jedesmal, wenn ich die äusserst flüchtige frikative Aussprache gehört zu haben *glaube* und meinen Gewährsmann zwecks genauerer Feststellung das Wort wiederholen lasse, spricht dieser wieder ein echtes Verschluss—*b*. . . ."

Mittwoch (*Proben*, p. 192): ". . . *b* ist bald *b* bald *v*. Die Regeln sind ungefähr wie im Hebräischen und Syrischen. . . ."

From the above quotations it might appear that Amharic did not evolve a spirantized *b* until the late 18th century. Or more accurately: spirantization does not seem to have made a sufficiently strong impression on the European ear to warrant its graphic expression. As far as I can see, Salt was the first to produce transcriptions of *b* which clearly point to fricative articulation.

Whatever the precise historical setting might be, the present position may be summarized as follows:

— *b* is always a plosive when geminated;
— outside gemination *b* is generally articulated rather feebly;
— this weakness is not always sufficiently pronounced to result in a proper fricative (cf. Klingenheben's description above) ;
— often—and above all between two vowels—this " laxness " (relâchement) prevents proper closure and the resultant sound is the bilabial fricative *b̲*;
— this fluctuating pronunciation seems to be conditioned by individual habit or other circumstances prevalent at the moment of speaking. In Amharic—as distinct from Tña—it has not been found possible to delimit this phenomenon geographically.

As in Tña we find also in Amharic some instances of disappearance of *b*. In the case of the similar phenomenon in Tña I suggested spirantization as a possible stage in this process.

Examples for the disappearance of *b* in Amharic: *t'ut* " nipple " for **t'əbt* (root: *t'bw*). Disappearance here is not complete, since the labial element *u* has taken the place of *b*. The same is true of *dur* " forest " to which *däbər* should be compared (Praetorius, *Amh. Spr.*, p. 57). *s^{v}et* " woman " for **sab'ayt* (Tña *säbäyti*), and similarly *arat* "four" for Gə'əz *'arba'tu*. Guidi (*Vocabolario*, col. 435) takes spirantization as a stage in this development (*'arba't*, **'arb̲a't*, **'arwat*, *'arat*). Guidi gives precisely the same chain for *t'at* " finger " (*s'ab'at*, **s'ab̲'at*, **s'awat*, *s'at*).

There are a few more examples, among them notably *yəl* " he says " for *yəbəl*.

Interchanges: *b* : *m*. Cohen (*Études*, pp. 387 *et seqq.*) has dealt with this exchange in some detail; its seems impossible at present to diagnose a common underlying cause in all the fairly numerous instances, and Cohen, after an exhaustive investigation, can only say: " Les conditions exactes du flottement *b—m* restent donc à déterminer; il

semble toutefois que le voisinage agissant comme cause de trouble, dans un sens ou un autre, n'est pas indifférent." In Amharic we find the same instances of interchanges which we have encountered in Gəʿəz, Tňa, and Tigre. As pointed out in note [34] on p. 96 above, *n* seems to have been at the root of many of these changes, sometimes having a dissimilating and often an assimilating effect. It is, however, impossible to saddle *n* with responsibility for all these changes, since there exist also a few instances in which *n* does not occur (e.g. *kʾälämä* and *kʾäläbä*, Guidi, *Voc.*, cols. 236 and 240, " prendere al balzo una palla ", etc.). Moreover, the interchange *b* : *m* occurs also elsewhere in Semitic, and not always in the presence of *n*: e.g. Hebr. *btr* " to cut ", Arabic *btr* and *mtr*, Gəʿəz *mtr*. There is also Amh. *məsraʾ* for Gəʿəz *bəsrat* " good news "; Amh. *bäräbärä* and *märämärä* " examine " (identified by Praetorius, *Amh. Spr.*, p. 58, with Hebr. *brr*). I do not think that the presence in *kʾlm*, *btr*, *bsr*, *brbr*, of a liquid (*l*, *r*), either in an immediately neighbouring position or otherwise, can be more than a coincidence.

The exchange of *ma* and *wa* (prefixed) has been treated by Cohen (*Études*, pp. 389 *et seqq.*), and there is no need for any repetition here; nor have I anything useful to add.

Among examples for the change *m* : *w*, Praetorius (*Amh. Spr.*, p. 59) quotes Tňa *ʾəwwä* " yes " which he connects with the root *ʾmn*. This is as ingenious a suggestion as many of Praetorius' etymologies, but I am not sure that *ʾəwwä* is not simply an exclamatory element of obscure origin.

None of the other labials require any mention here. All that has been said on p. 96 above about Tňa *p* and *pʾ* applies equally to Amharic.

In *Gurage* we find the same labials as in the Ethiopian languages already discussed. According to Cohen (*Études*, pp. 17 and 113 *et seqq.*) *p* seems rather more frequent here than elsewhere in Ethiopic.

b may be spirantized to *b̲* (" spirante bilabiale qui sonne presque comme *v* ", Cohen, *loc. cit.*), generally when it stands between two vowels, but in some rare cases also otherwise.[42] E.g. *šəb̲əňňä* " poil

[42] Polotsky (in his recent monograph *Notes on Gurage Grammar*) deals in detail with Leslau's *Gurage Documents*. He has found that *b̲* is a free variant only of *postvocalic b*. Leslau's texts show that *w* is sometimes found instead of *b̲*; and inversely also *b̲* for *w*. This applies in particular to *-äbo*, the enlarged personal ending of the 3rd m. pl. perf. and impf. (*-äb̲o* and *-äwo*). See Polotsky, *Notes*, p. 13.

de pubis "; *at'eḇät* " finger "; *gulḇät* (here after a liquid) " knee "; *dəḫ̱ər* " forest " (cf. p. 101 above).

For interchanges of *b* : *m*, *b* : *w*, etc., see again Cohen, *Études*, livre V, chap. 2.

As to the appearance of an occasional *p* in Gurage,[43] Cohen (*loc. cit.*) cites *epa* " to make ", *dapwa* " bread ", *agapu* " they married ", and there are also quite a few cases of geminated *p* elsewhere in livre II of Cohen's *Études*. Klingenheben (*Meinhof Festschrift*, 1927, pp. 134 *et seqq.*) has observed loss of voice in the case of geminated voiced sounds in Amharic (e.g. *bb* > *pp*); Cohen (*op. cit.*, p. 124) thinks that the appearance of *p* in Gurage may, at least partly, be explained in a similar manner.

Leslau (*Gurage Doc.*, p. 13) cites a good many instances of devoicing of primitive voiced geminates in Chaha, among them also labials (which are further affected by aspiration). E.g. *qäpʰäräm* " to bury " —impf. *yəqäbər*.

Harari labials comprise *b*, *m*, and *f*. There is neither *p* nor *p'*.

Harari *b* is subjected to a number of changes. It rarely appears in its plosive form—except at the beginning of words; but even here it may, through combinatory effects (assimilation, dissimilation), change into *m*. While *b*, generally between two vowels, becomes a fricative, Cerulli (*Harari*, pp. 63–4) has shown that both intervocalic *b* and *m*, in the vast majority of cases, pass into *w* and ultimately into *u*, and sometimes even disappear altogether. Often postvocalic position suffices to effect the change; liquids not infrequently fulfil a " catalytic " function in this connection. This treatment of *b* and *m* has naturally had a profound effect on original triliterals in which *b* or *m* were part of the root.

A few examples will suffice to demonstrate this (cf. Cerulli, *loc. cit.*):

(1) Spirantization of *b*: *aḫ̱əle* " à mon père " (Cohen, *Études*, p. 258);

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[43] " Le *p* ne fait pas partie du système phonétique régulier des langues sémitiques méridionales en général, éthiopiennes en particulier, ni des langues couchitiques." (Cohen, *Études*, p. 114).

(2) *b* or *m* (intervocalic) > *w*, *u*, zero: Gəʿəz, Tña *näbärä*, Amh. *näbbärä*, Harari **nabara* > *nāra* " to be ". Cf. also Amh. *norä*[44] (< **näwårä*).
Gəʿəz *samantu*, Tña *šummuntä*, Amh. *sammənt*, Harari **samett* > *sūt* " eight ".

(3) *b* or *m* (postvocalic) > *w*, *u*, zero:
Semitic *'ab*—Harari *aw* " father ";
Semitic *kbd*—Harari *kūd* " liver ";
Semitic *'bn*, Tña *'əmni*, Harari **əbn* > *ūn* " stone ";
Semitic *dbs*, Harari *dūs* " honey ".
The same happens also at the end of the word: Semitic *qrb*, Harari *qurrā* (< **qurrab*) " near ".[45]

In *Gafat* we have the same labials as elsewhere in Ethiopic. *p'* only occurs in traditional Gəʿəz words, and *p* not at all.

b may be weakened to *w* in every position[46], probably by way of spirantization. E.g. *wärärä* " to escape "—Amh. *bärrärä*, Arabic *farra*, Bilin *fir*, Bedja *fir* and *bir*, Qemant *barar*.

əwawi and *əbab* " serpent "—Amh. *əbab*.

zənaw " rain "—elsewhere in Ethiopic either *zənab* or *zənam*.

Final *b* or *m* have occasionally disappeared. For the interchange of *b* and *m* cf. Cohen *Études*, pp. 387 *et seqq.*, and Leslau, *Gafat*, para. 2.

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[44] Amh. *näbbärä* " to be " and *norä* " to stay, remain " are of some interest. Both are derived from Gəʿəz *näbärä*. *näbbärä* went the way of all Amharic verbs in having its 2nd radical geminated in the perfect stem, whereas *näbärä* > **näḫärä* > **näwårä* > *norä* developed along this line and produced a new aspect of the root meaning. Since we know that only simple *b*, and not *bb*, is spirantizable, we may deduce that *norä* had evolved before the new tendency of middle-radical-gemination in the perfect had permeated the Amharic verb system.

[45] The almost complete dissolution which a Semitic root may suffer is impressively demonstrated by the two following examples involving labials: Semitic *ḥlb* " milk ", Harari *hay* (< **ḥalib*), i.e. weakening of the laryngal, palatalization of *l*, and weakening of *b* leading to its ultimate disappearance.
Semitic *ṣlm* " dark ", Gəʿəz *s'alim* " black ", Amh. *t'äyyim* (with palatalization of *l*), Har. *t'ayyi* (with eventual apocope of *m*).

[46] This is no doubt how Leslau's (*Gafat*, p. 16) " *b is* weakened into *w* . . ." should read, since we encounter quite a few solid *b* in Gafat which have not undergone this change.

Summing up some of the principal facts assembled in the foregoing the following picture emerges:

The Ethiopic labials are *m b f p p'*. *p* occurs in European words only and is extremely rare. *p'* is slightly more problematic, because it has been asserted by some that it does not exclusively belong to Greek loanwords, but may also be found in some rare genuine Ethiopic roots. None of these, however, can be considered to be entirely above suspicion. Neither *p* nor *p'* occur in the Aksum inscriptions. *p* and *f* are separate phonemes in Ethiopic (as distinct from some North-Semitic languages). Neither *p* nor *p'* play any significant part in the Ethiopic phonological system—with the possible exception of Gurage (see page 103 above) where some secondary *p*-sounds have developed due to devoicing of *b*, generally in the case of primitive geminates.

f presents no particular problems.

We have observed the interchange of *b*, *m*, and *w* in the nouns of instrument and place as well as elsewhere. There are already one or two instances of the exchange of *b* and *w* in Gəʿəz (p. 90 above). Interchanges of this nature are, of course, not confined to the Ethiopic field, but also occur elsewhere.

Our main attention has been given to the spirantization of *b*, a non-phonemic, facultative variant. We have no proof of its existence in Gəʿəz, and even in the modern languages its appearance is not always beyond doubt, mainly because it has never received graphic expression (as distinct from *k* and *k'*). In Tĭna the fricative *b̲* has so far only penetrated the southern fringes, and its incidence is still restricted to a position in which a vowel precedes, and where it does not stand at either the beginning or end of a word. Only a few isolated cases, in which spirantization has brought about a profound change, have found ready acceptance over the entire Tĭna area: *näyru*, *šoʿattä*, etc. In Tigre spirantization of *b* is apparently unknown; Munzinger seems to be alone in asserting the existence of *b̲*. No other evidence for the spirantization of *b* in Tigre has come to light. In Amharic positive proof of the labial fricative *b̲* does not, as far as I can see, antedate Salt's transliterations (about 1810). However, although earlier transcriptions seem silent on this point, we must—for a variety of reasons—assume that either spirantization of *b* was a passing fashion in Amharic, appearing and disappearing and leaving only a few unobtrusive traces, or that its articulation was so indifferent and hesitating that distinction from the plosive did not impress itself upon the ear

of the early untrained European traveller. For, it would appear, forms like *norä* " to stay " (from *näbärä*) or *hod* " belly " (< **ḵawd* < **ḵaḇd* < *kabd*) admit of no other interpretation.

This point has been strongly underlined by the vigorous development towards the fricative and beyond (*w*, *u*, zero) which we may witness in Gurage, Harari, and Gafat.

Before drawing our conclusions from these facts, we should glance at some Semitic and Cushitic parallels:

There is no need here to go into the well known Semitic phenomenon of the interchange of *b* : *m* : *w*.[47] The reason, in Accadian as well as elsewhere, may sometimes be found in dissimilating (or assimilating) tendencies (*marḥešwan*) and often by assuming spirantization to be an intermediate stage.[48] Spirantization of *b* in postvocalic position is, of course, well known in Hebrew and Syriac. In Nestorian Syriac (see above, p. 91) *b̲* and *f* " scheinen schon früh ganz wie *w* gesprochen worden zu sein " (Noeldeke, *Syr. Gramm.*, para. 27). If the Syriac process can be taken as an indication, then perhaps also the occasional exchange of *b* and *w* in Gəʿəz may point to *b̲* as an intermediate stage ?—as has already been hinted on p. 91 above.

Modern Syriac has gone much farther. Here—as in some of the modern Ethiopian languages—*b* seems in almost complete dissolution: *zaḇna* > *zona* " time "; *gaḇra* > *gora* " husband ", etc. Cf. only Amh. *dur* " forest " (< *dḇr*) or *saw* " man " (< *sḇ'*).

In modern South Arabian, Šḥauri, *b* is being subjected to profound changes (cf. Bittner, *Šḥauri*, paras. 10 *et seqq.*). It disappears initially: *eden* " belly " (*bdn*); *ine* " sons " (*bine*); *ut* " house " (*bt*); *ʿal* " lord " (*bʿl*). Similarly in medial position: *gel* " mountain " (*gbl*); *lun*

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[47] This sometimes includes also *p*: Ugaritic *špš* " sun " for *šmš*.

In the Amarna tablets " a voiced bilabial spirant is varyingly represented in the orthography as *b*, *m*, *w* or zero " (Gordon, *Orientalia*, 1947, p. 6); e.g. *mušelmu* " surveyor " appears as

mu – še – el – bu – u
mu – še – el – mu
mu – še – el – wu
mu – še – el – u

[48] " Im Babylonischen wurde *m* nach Vokalen zunächst vielleicht zur Spirans *v*, dann aber zum konsonantischen Vokal *w*; " hence *simanu* — *siwan*. (Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, I, p. 138).

See also *op. cit.*, para. 85.

" white " (*lbn*). And terminally *b* frequently becomes *y*: *ey* " father " (*'b*).

This sweeping disappearance or transformation of *b* appears to be at least partially compensated by many instances of original *w* turning into *b*; e.g. *labaḥ* " board " (*lwḥ*).

It would be easy to produce many more Semitic examples, but the above will suffice to show that we have Semitic parallels to the development recorded for the modern Abyssinian languages.

In *Cushitic* we encounter, as far as *p* and *f* are concerned, a pattern not unlike that in South Semitic. It has been assumed[49] that North Semitic (Phœnician, Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Accadian) originally only possessed *p* and not *f*, whereas South Semitic (Arabic, South Arabian, and Ethiopic) had *f* and not *p*. Cushitic in general reflects the situation as we find it in South Semitic, although as a secondary sound *p* is sometimes met in Cushitic—just as is the case in Semitic Ethiopic.

Reinisch (*Bedauye*) and Conti Rossini (*Kemant*) have not encountered *p* in those languages, but it does occur in Central and South Agaw (Khamir and Quara)[50] though I am unable to say whether as a primitive or secondary phenomenon.

For Galla we have the somewhat conflicting testimony of Praetorius and Moreno (see Bibliography). According to the former (*Galla*, pp. 53 *et seqq.*): " *p* sowohl wie *v* scheinen im Galla überhaupt nur als Entartungen von *b*, nicht aber als ursprüngliche Laute, vorzukommen."

Praetorius asserts that *p* only evolves, through combinatory effects, by the influence of neighbouring sounds, *s* in particular. It does not seem to occur at all at the beginning of words. *f*, too, exists, but generally alternates with *b*.

Moreno, on the other hand, hears in addition the ejective *p'* which " rappresenta una *p* italiana sforzata, quasi raddoppiata e leggermente staccata dal suono che segue " (*Galla*, p. 24). According to him, both *p* and *p'* " si alternano con *b*: *qapu* e *qabu* ' tenere '." He does not seem to think, though, that *p* is only a secondary sound in Galla in the manner described by Praetorius.

Sidamo only knows the ejective sound and no simple *p*.

The interchanges *b* : *m* : *w* encountered in Semitic are likewise found in the Cushitic domain: e.g. Bedauye *bluk* and *mluk* " date ",

[49] E.g. by Cohen, *Cham.-Sem.*, p. 166.

[50] Cf. Conti Rossini, *Kemant*, p. 43.

Arabic *balaḥ* (Reinisch, *Bedauye*, para. 58). " *m* ist häufig aus einem *b* hervorgegangen" (*op. cit.*, para. 68). Gəʿəz *bdn*, Agaw *wadan* " belly ". For Galla cf. Praetorius (*Galla*, pp. 53 *et seqq.*). There are numerous examples also in Sidamo (cf. Cerulli, p. 47).

The fricative *b̲* does not exist in Bedauye : " Die Aussprache des *b* ist stets wie in ' leben ' " (Reinisch, *Bedauye*, para. 56). For some Agaw languages Reinisch has, however, shown that *b*, in postvocalic position, passes into *v* (Khamir and Quara). The same is the case in Galla, where the change is purely facultative.[51]

In Sidamo *b* quite frequently passes into *w* (by way of spirantization) and then further into *u* and zero. Cf. the examples given by Cerulli (*Sidamo*, p. 48).

Without amassing further documentation we may state that the weakening of *b* to *b̲* (and beyond this to *w*, *u* and zero) is a feature commonly encountered in Cushitic.

In conclusion it may be said that

(1) despite an occasional occurrence (probably of a secondary character) *p* is as alien to Ethiopic as it is to South Semitic and Cushitic[52]; *f*, on the other hand, is found with some frequency.

(2) It might seem then that the absence of *p* and *p'* from the Aksum inscriptions is more than mere accident. We have reason to suppose that ፐ was taken over from Greek for the transcription of some Greek words and placed at the tail of the Ethiopic alphabet. Through some rare words of Cushitic origin a quite different sound, the strongly ejective *p'*, which we have seen to exist in some Cushitic languages, penetrated into Ethiopic. For the purpose of its graphic expression the form of another ejective (though quite different in its basis of articulation) was slightly modified, and thus ጰ was born and placed, in the order of the alphabet, next to the

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[51] " . . . *b* intervocalica o finale di sillaba è pronunziata in qualche dialetto come *v*; e.g. *waravu* " attingere " da *warabu*; *avdi* " speranza " da *abdi* . . ." (Moreno, *Galla*, p. 27).

According to Praetorius the transition to *b̲* is not dialectal, but occurs facultatively everywhere in Galla.

[52] I cannot, however, confirm Mittwoch's assertion (*Proben*, p. 191) that: " *p'* and *p* können, weil dem Abessinischen ursprünglich fremd, von Leuten aus dem Volke vielfach nicht gesprochen werden. Diese ersetzen sie durch *b* (wie im Arabischen)."

character whose *shape* it had imitated. It seems soon to have overstepped its original function, and most of the Greek words were now no longer spelt with the (originally) Greek ፐ, but with ጰ. By virtue of the influence of the Cushitic substrate, *p'*, in its full ejective force, acquired home rights in many Ethiopian languages, while *p* almost completely disappeared.

See also the section on the glottalized ejectives below.[53]

(3) The interchange *b* : *m* : *w* which generally exists in Ethiopic is equally prominent elsewhere in Semitic and Cushitic. This labial " debility " may, perhaps, be considered a common feature of primitive Hamito-Semitic.

(4) Finally, weakening of *b* to *b̲* (and often leading, by way of vocalic labial elements, to total disappearance) exists in all modern Abyssinian languages—with, apparently, the sole exception of Tigre. This absence of labial spirantization in Tigre may possibly offer a valuable clue: since both Semitic and Cushitic possess this characteristic in about equal measure, there is, *prima facie*, no possibility of knowing whence it entered into modern Ethiopic.[54] However, Tigre is the only Ethiopian language whose substrate, Bedauye, does not know fricative *b* (the same is true of Tigriňa— except in the South). The inference I would draw from this is that Cushitic above all (though not necessarily exclusively) has encouraged the development of spirantization of *b* in modern Ethiopic. A general Semitic predisposition in this direction was probably a helpful element. A similar view, though apparently on different evidence, is taken by Leslau (*JAOS*, 1943, p. 5): "It is possible that the weakening of certain consonants [i.e. *b* in this case] in Ethiopic took place under the influence of the Cushitic substrate."

The nature and development of the labial changes which we have

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[53] I cannot deal here with the stimulating articles by Grimme and Moeller on the Semitic *p*-sounds (*ZDMG*, 1914 and 1916 respectively). Their conclusions, however, seem to me quite inadmissible, mainly perhaps because their premises are based on an erroneous interpretation of the Ethiopic material which plays so prominent a part in their investigation. The nature of the Ethiopic *p*-sounds cannot be fully appreciated without some reference to Cushitic.

[54] Cushitic and Semitic might, of course, both be responsible for this, but it must be remembered that we possess no evidence of *b̲* in either South Arabian or Gəʿəz.

seen to occur in Gurage, Harari, and Gafat have convinced me that spirantization is, indeed, the cause *par excellence* nearly everywhere in these mutations and alternations. Gurage *dəḇər*, for instance, provides precisely that otherwise missing link between Amh. *dur* and *dbr* " mountain, forest ". And similarly Harari *aw* " father " or Gafat *zənaw* " rain "—as compared with *ab* and *zənab*, respectively.

In Semitic Ethiopic spirantization of *b* developed from an originally only intervocalic position to a stage in which, in some languages (notably Amharic), its incidence is now greatly extended. Southern Tǐa received fricative *ḇ* from Amharic at a time when even the latter had not gone further than postvocalic spirantization. Since travellers in the first half of the 19th century report an extended occurrence of *ḇ* in Amharic, we are fairly safe in assuming that Southern Tǐa borrowing of this feature did not take place later than the early 19th century.

It has been stated above (p. 94) that the tendency to pronounce *b* as a fricative in Amharic is still gaining momentum. This, I think, is due to the fact that spirantization corresponds to a fundamental trend innate in the Amharic speaker: an inordinate laxity in articulation. This has led (or at least been a principal contributory factor) to the dissolution of the laryngals; in our present case it prevents total closure of the lips and thus encourages a continued, though constricted, flow of the air stream, i.e. spirantization.

At the same time, we are able to observe different layers in the Amharic language as well as the approximate duration of each phenomenon. Spirantization of $k > \underline{k} > h$ is now an extinct process: all present *k*-sounds are preserved unaltered, whereas spirantization of *b* is still an active phenomenon giving rise to ever further alternations.

I am strongly inclined to agree with M. Cohen in his view (*Études*, p. 384) that " il est probable que l'ouverture de *b* en une spirante sur une partie du domaine éthiopien est ancienne." Although we have, in the absence of graphic expression, no proof that this was indeed so, all circumstantial evidence (modern Abyssinian languages, the Cushitic substrata, certain Semitic languages, etc.) points in this direction. Perhaps the Gəʿəz *dabtara* " canon " which appears in Greek as διφθερα (cf. Cohen, *ibidem*) supports this contention.[55] If such a development did in fact take place, it probably occurred in the later stages of the history of the Gəʿəz language.

[55] I am not, of course, entering in this connection into the problems of the origin of this word, Persian, Arabic, etc.

DENTALS AND SIBILANTS

(Cf. inventory on pp. 33–34.)

The Ethiopian languages present, as far as the dental-sibilant class is concerned, a microcosm of the position in Semitic in general: uncertainties, changes, and decline, i.e. the surrender of distinctive characteristics. In the dental category proper there is no difference between Gəʿəz, on the one hand, and Amharic, on the other, but of the five sibilants once distinguished in Gəʿəz no more than two survive in modern Amharic.

It will be convenient to treat dentals and sibilants together for a variety of reasons, not least among these is the fact that the interchanges which occur do not stop short of the borderline between these two categories. In Amharic, for instance, the sibilant *s'* regularly turns into the dental *t'*, a phenomenon well known elsewhere in Semitic (Arabic *ẓaby*, Hebrew *ṣəḇi*, Syriac *ṭaḇyā*, etc.).

All Semitic Ethiopian languages have in common:

the alveolar character of *d*, *t*, *t'*;

the glottalized ejective nature of *t'* and *s'* (to be further discussed on pp. 151 *seqq.*)

The present purely orthographical difference between *s* and *ś*,[56] and *s'* and *ẓ'* can be shown to have reflected a real distinction in sound only in the earliest stages of Gəʿəz.

Trumpp's assertion (*ZDMG* XXVIII, p. 518) that " kein Abessinier wird je in der Aussprache *s'* mit *ẓ'* verwechseln; *ẓ'* hat den Laut von *ts* und unterscheidet sich von *s'* dadurch dass es nicht explosiv gesprochen wird " may have been true at the time of the earliest Aksum inscriptions, but became quite meaningless ever after. Praetorius

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[56] My transcription is a little confusing here. For reasons of etymological comparison with South Arabian and other Semitic languages I have to transcribe 𐪩 as *ś* and not as *š* (as indicated in the transcription table). In the transcription table, which is concerned with sound and not alphabetical shape, I had to reserve *š* for ሸ which evolved in the modern languages as a secondary *š*-sound. In the following pages, however, which deal with early Gəʿəz, *š* often transcribes the primitive *ś*-sound (contrary to the transcription table). In actual fact, there can hardly be any serious difficulty, as the secondary *š* appears only many centuries later and the context will make clear which is meant.

(*Æth. Gramm.*, p. 8) follows Trumpp in this error. In reality, of course, *s'* and *ʒ'* have long been absolutely indistinguishable.

Littmann (quoted by Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, I, p. 132) is right in saying that *s'* is not an affricate, although it should, perhaps, be added that the glottalized and ejective character of this sound may sometimes deceive one into perceiving it as an affricate.

d (voiced)	*t* (voiceless)	*t'* (ejective)
	correspond to	
ʒ	*s*	*s'*

Ethiopian dentals are articulated against the alveolus; a slight aspiration can be heard. Their pronunciation is thus very much like that of English dentals and distinct from the French (cf. also Cohen, *Traité*, p. 32, and Littmann, *Princeton Tigre texts*, vol. III, p. ix).

Comparison of the *Gəʿəz* dentals and sibilants[57] with the corresponding sounds in South Arabian[58] shows that four SA phonemes were not taken over into Ethiopic—or at least they no longer existed at a time for which we possess epigraphic evidence, i.e. the early 4th century A.D. These are: *ṯ*, *ḏ*, *ẓ*, and *ś*.[59] With the probable exception of the last (its precise sound is still a matter of controversy among scholars[60]) the discarded sounds are all interdentals.[61] In a similar way many modern Arabic dialects have given up interdental pronunciation.

Etymological correspondences are as follows:

SA *ṯ* 𐩢 = Eth. *s* [62]

SA *ś* 𐩦 = Eth. *s* [63]

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[57] Cf. my observations in *Africa*, 1951, p. 208.

[58] Cf. now also A. F. L. Beeston's important article on the unvoiced sibilants in ESA (*TPS*, 1951).

[59] I.e. 𐩦 .

[60] I find Hoefner's views on this point (*ASA Gramm.*, pp. 18 *et seqq.*) suggestive. I have long been wondering if this SA sound might not be compared to Ugaritic *ś* (or *š*). See also Gordon in *Orientalia*, XIX, fasc. 3, 1950, pp. 374–6. Both are likely to have had a lateral articulation.

[61] Some interdental instability may already be noticed in late Minæan where *ṯ* sometimes interchanges with *ś* (𐩦), and in Ḥaḍrami where the alternation *ṯ* : *s* is frequent.

[62] E.g. SA *ṯbr* " to break "—Eth. *sbr*.

[63] Here I know only two safe instances :

SA *śmk* " to support "—Eth. *smk*;

SA *ślb* " to remove "—Eth. *slb*.

SA ḏ 𐩦 = Eth. ẑ [64]
SA ẓ 𐩧 = Eth. ṣ' [65]

In this connection it is interesting to examine those of the Aksum inscriptions which are written in South Arabian script, but in Ethiopic language. This scrutiny shows that both SA ḏ and ẑ are used for Eth. ẑ, but the latter rather more frequently. Eth. *s* is expressed in the SA alphabet by no fewer than three symbols: *ś*, *ṯ*, *s*; most frequently by the last and very rarely by the first.

While the early Aksum inscriptions rigidly observe the distinctions between the eight dentals and sibilants inherited from South Arabian, the difference between *s* and *š*, on the one hand, and *s'* and *ẑ'*, on the other, soon became blurred, and *š* and *ẑ'* assumed the pronunciation of *s* and *s'* respectively.[66] These interchanges—just as we have previously seen in the case of the laryngals—can already be noticed in the inscriptions dated by Littmann (*Aksum*, IV) 7th–12th centuries. E.g. *ngs*[67] for *ngš* (*op. cit.*, 14, 1); *mẑ'* for *ms'* (13, 7).

This phenomenon is, of course, well known to anyone who has looked at Ethiopic MSS. While some confusion may already be observed in the earliest MSS extant, it grows in both scope and frequency the more recent a MS is.[68]

Words borrowed by Arabic from Ethiopic in pre-Islamic days (probably between the 4th and 6th centuries) have Ethiopic *š* regularly rendered as *š* in Arabic: *šayṭān*, *naǧāši*, etc.[69] At a later date, however, some time in the 3rd century A.H., an Ethiopian is said to have pronounced Arabic *ša'artu* as *sa'artu* (Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, I, 32).[70] Other in-

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[61] SA *'ḏn* " obedience "—Eth. *'zn* " ear ".

[65] SA *ẓlm* " to be dark, black "—Eth. *s'lm*.

[66] So already Ludolf (*Gramm. Æth.*, p. 6): *š* and *s*, *s'* and *ẑ'* " non differunt pronunciatione ". And in the 2nd ed. of this work he adds (p. 5): " Olim procul dubio differentem sonum habuerunt."

[67] This is noteworthy, for even the MSS hardly ever spell this important word other than in the traditional (and etymologically correct) manner.

[68] There are only a few roots of either great importance or frequency which are generally exempt from this confusion; e.g. *ngš*, *nš'*, *lbs*, *nfs*, *msl*, etc. The same hardly applies to *s'* : *ẑ'* where the preponderance of the former seems very marked.

[69] Cf. also Noeldeke, *Neue Beiträge*, p. 47.

[70] Cf. also Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, I, p. 133.

formation to this effect is available from Arabic sources of about the same period.

The evidence of the later Aksum inscriptions combined with this Arabic testimony makes it very probable that the shift from *ś* to *s* (with the resultant confusion in written documents) occurred between the 7th and 9th centuries A.D.[71]

As to the traditional pronunciation of the interchanging sibilants Mittwoch (*Proben*, pp. 190 *et seqq.* and *Trad. Ausspr.*, p. 11) has rightly shown the error in Trumpp's article (see p. 111 above) and has once more stressed the fact of an absolutely identical pronunciation of *s* —*ś*, and *s'* — *z'*, respectively. According to Aläk'a Tayyä (quoted by Mittwoch, *loc. cit.*) indigenous scholars have no knowledge of an original pronunciation of ሠ as *ś*, but a tradition is said to live among them according to which this letter was in old times pronounced *ṯ*. The same informant also alleged an original pronunciation of *z'* as emphatic *ṯ*. I have had occasion to question many of Ethiopia's foremost scholars on this point with, I fear, wholly negative results. Ethiopians generally assume that ሠ was always pronounced like *s*, and only a handful have heard, through contact with European scholarship, of an original articulation *ś*.[72]

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[71] This seems to be further borne out by the common Ethiopian word for "meat" *śəga* (pronounced, of course, *səga*) which at a fairly early date was taken over in this form from Cushitic (cf. Kemant *siya*, Conti Rossini, p. 247; Bilin *zega*, Reinisch, p. 296; see also Brockelmann, *Abess. Stud.*, p. 11). As the Cushitic words show, the sound required was *s*, and it is very likely, therefore, that confusion of these two sibilants is of very long standing in Ethiopic. I am not entirely convinced, though, that it is this word *śəga* "meat" which occurs at *Aksum*, IV, 6, 10—as is generally supposed.

[72] Aläk'a Tayyä's assertion (quoted by Mittwoch) is inherently unlikely, for there are no philological traditions of this nature among indigenous scholars. Nor have I ever encountered a learned Ethiopian who had heard of a sound *ṯ*, so alien to his own conception.

M. Cohen, in commenting on Aläk'a Tayyä's report (*Pron. trad.*, p. 229), observes that, while it cannot be excluded that sometimes such opinions reflect reality,

"le plus souvent on doit craindre de n'avoir affaire qu'à une fantaisie pédante de quelque lettré qui cherche à résoudre par des imaginations ou des comparaisons hâtives les difficultés de la phonétique guèze. . . ."

This indeed sums up the position succinctly.

Tigriňa—unlike Gəʿəz—never possessed either primitive *ś*[73] or *ẓ'* as sounds distinct from *s* and *s'* respectively,[74] because it emerged at a time when these differences had already been completely blurred in Gəʿəz. Both *ś* and *ẓ'* are still found in historical orthography, but they are not pronounced differently.

d and *t* have the common Ethiopian alveolar articulation; *s'* and *t'* are the glottalized ejective counterparts to *s* and *t*; *s'* is not an affricate.

This would have been all there is to say about Tňa, had the language not been reduced to writing and had its speakers not comprised a relatively high percentage of literates. This has caused the question of historical orthography (Gəʿəz spelling) to become a burning cultural problem to surprisingly large numbers of Tňa speakers. The matter can be studied in the records of the *Tigriňa Language Council* which were published in the Tňa *Eritrean Weekly News*, Nos. 99 and 102 of 1944.

The champions of traditional spelling do not maintain for the sibilants—as they do for all the laryngals (cf. p. 38 above, note [12])—that there actually exists a difference in sound between *s* and etymological *ś*, *s'* and *ẓ'*, but they argue that the observance of historical spelling is not only necessary to maintain the connection of Tňa with Gəʿəz, but essential to avoid misunderstanding.[75]

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[73] The secondary *ś* which developed in Tňa and other modern Ethiopian languages will be discussed in the chapter on prepalatals below.

[74] Cohen (*Études*, p. 10) quotes Abba Jerome as asserting that in the Tňa of the Akkele Guzay province *ẓ'* is pronounced like *ť'*, and that ancient *ś* is still preserved; e.g. *nägäšä*.

Cohen (*ibidem*) voices justified doubts as to the accuracy of this statement; and, indeed, I can testify that it has no basis in actual fact. Abba Jerome's fanciful assertion has to be considered in the same light as Aläk'a Tayyä's view on the originally interdental pronunciation of *ś* (cf. p. 114 above).

[75] To underline this point one solitary instance is constantly paraded: *šäräḳ'ä* (i.e. spelling, but pronunciation of course *säräḳ'ä*) " to rise ", and *säräḳ'ä* " to rob ". This is, as far as I can see, the only homophonic example. If the former were not only pronounced (as, of course, it is) but also written as the latter, it would still be fairly simple to gauge the meaning from the context. Homography is, of course, a not infrequent phenomenon in other languages. Moreover, through confusion with another Semitic root of similar meaning and appearance *säräḳ'ä* (" to rise ") has now regularly been turned into *bäräḳ'ä* in modern Tňa. *məsraḳ'* " east " is definitely felt to be archaic today, and the normal word is *məbraḳ'*.

For the present the controversy is continued on mission school lines: the Protestants discarding *ś* and *ẓ'*, while the Catholics employ all characters of the Gəʿəz alphabet—irrespective of the phonetic position.

Reference should here be made to an observation by Leslau (*JA*, 1939, p. 67) concerning an occasional interchange of *z* and *d* in Tña.[76] I have examined the two examples adduced by Leslau and think they require a different explanation:

(1) Tña *zäḵtämä* — Gəʿəz *däktämä* " to become an orphan " ;

(2) Tña *zaḵ̱ʾänä* " to become a deacon " — Gəʿəz *diyakʾon* " deacon ". In the case of the second example the *d*-form is obviously the original one, and the verb is derived from the noun. As will be seen in the chapter on the prepalatals below, an *i*-sound following a dental or sibilant is liable to cause palatalization. And this is clearly what has happened in the present two cases. The resultant palatalized sound could be written *ď* or *ʒ́*[77]; many such sounds were later restituted to what was believed to have been their origin. In both instances restitution proved to be erroneous, i.e. to *z* instead of *d*.[78] In this connection it hardly matters whether or not one accepts Littmann's etymology of *däktämä* as *däkʾ-yätam* " orphan-child " (*ZA*, 1911, p. 321).

There is very little that has to be added for *Tigre*. We have here the same six dentals that have been described for Tña. Reference has already been briefly made above (p. 112) to Littmann's indirect statement on the alveolar character of the dentals:

". . . die Mundartikulation des *t* fällt weg, und es bleibt nur der nachfolgende leise Hauch. . . ." (*Princeton Tigre texts*, III, p. IX).

Of course, this is very largely a tendency rather than a regular process.

For historical orthography the same problems arise in Tigre as have been described for Tña in the preceding section. However, even the Missione Cattolica admits with regard to the question of *s* — *ś* and *sʾ* — *zʾ*: ". . . non se ne sente la differenza . . ." (*Tigre Gramm.*, p. 9).

Munzinger alone, while very sensibly taking *ś* and *s* together in his vocabulary, finds that ". . . la prononciation en diffère totalement. . . ." He equates ሠ with *z* (*Vocabulaire*, p. v). There is, of course, no foundation whatever for such an assumption; and it is difficult to

[76] Leslau's view of dialectally conditioned interchanges cannot be accepted. Apart from other cogent considerations, the phenomenon (limited, it seems, to two instances in Tña) is too rare and insignificant to allow any far-reaching conclusions to be drawn from it.

[77] But their pronunciation is now identical (see under prepalatals below).

[78] I now notice that this process in the case of *diyakʾon* had already been recognized by Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, I, p. 207.

understand why Munzinger should have taken both together in his dictionary, if he had really believed that their phonetic character was different. He provides a similarly erroneous explanation for *s'* and *z'* which, though also treated under the same entry in the vocabulary, are transcribed by him as *ts* and *ds* respectively.

In *Amharic* the problems connected with dentals and sibilants are of somewhat greater interest. In the first place, the position in Amharic is not quite uniform for all parts of the Amharic speaking area. Differences which can roughly be circumscribed in their geographical extent—just as we have seen in preceding chapters in the case of the spirantization of *k*, etc.—make a dialectal examination possible. Secondly, the considerable area covered by Amharic accounts for the fact that it shares some features with the North Ethiopian languages and some with the Southern branch.[79]

The alveolar nature of the Amharic dentals has not, as far as I know, been called in question. Different descriptions and names have been applied to it, but they all amount roughly to the same: " Le *t* tend à se prononcer aspiré, *par conséquent* plutôt comme en allemand que comme en français " (Cohen, *Traité*, p. 32); similarly Klingenheben (*ZfES*, X, p. 192) who speaks of " coronal articulation ", and Mittwoch (*Trad. Ausspr.*, p. 10) who uses the term " cerebral ".

The identity in sound of *s'* and *z'* need not be re-affirmed here; it holds good for all Semitic Abyssinian languages. The matter has often been presented in a different light, possibly under the influence of Trumpp's erroneous remarks (p. 111 above) echoed by Praetorius (*Amh. Spr.*, p. 83). Ludolf had already understood (*Amh. Lexicon*, p. 95) that ". . . *s'* et *z'* pronunciatione non differunt . . . promiscue usurpantur . . ." and so most scholars including the Amharic speaking Afeworq.

More controversial are assertions made by some scholars as to the affricate character of *s'* and *z'*. I agree with those who deny that this is an affricate sound. Leslau (*Doc. Tña*, para. 3) has described its nature and articulation succinctly: ". . . spirante emphatique; se prononce comme un *s*, mais avec une plus forte tension buccale suivie

[79] The very important question of the palatalization of dentals will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.

d'une occlusion glottale, donc *s'*. . . ." I do not think one can easily improve on this definition.

Nevertheless, it must be re-emphasized (cf. p. 112 above) that the ejective nature of this sound, coupled with the glottal closure immediately following it, seems liable to create the acoustic illusion that it is an affricate. This probably explains why " beaucoup d'Européens transcrivent *ts*, donc notent une articulation affriquée qui serait intermédiaire entre *s'* et *t'*. . . ." (Cohen, *Nouv. Études*, p. 27). Cohen himself closely observed Abba Jerome's pronunciation (whose mother tongue is Tĭna) and found that the articulation of this sibilant was always " très vigoureuse ". In the majority of cases he noted down *s'* (i.e. non-affricate), but also " assez souvent . . . une petite occlusion initiale, donc *ᵗs'*." At the same time Cohen also worked with two young men from Shoa who know *s'* only in traditional words taken over from Gəʿəz. Their articulation of *s'* was weaker and was never affricate.[80]

It is from the allegedly affricate character of *s'* that some scholars, notably Praetorius, have attempted to explain the general substitution in Amharic of this sibilant by the dental ejective *t'*.[81] This phenomenon —passage of *s'* into *t'*—is particularly prominent in Southern Amharic and in South Ethiopic generally. Praetorius (*Amh. Spr.*, p. 83) states that this transition " pflegt nur fakultativ einzutreten, indess sichtlich bei diesem Wort mit grösserer, bei jenem mit geringerer Häufigkeit. . . ."

Since I doubt (in common with the majority of scholars) that the alleged affricate nature of *s'* can be held to be more than a rare and individual speech feature, we shall have to look elsewhere for an explanation of the process *s'* > *t'* in South Ethiopic. It will be shown presently that the Cushitic substrata of the South Ethiopian languages furnish an acceptable solution.

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[80] Polotsky (quoted by Cohen, *loc. cit.*) has been led to consider (on the strength of observations made on " Abyssins résidant à Jérusalem ") this phoneme as an affricate. I do not know from which part of the country these Abyssinians came, but Polotsky confirms in a recent letter that none of his informants ever had any difficulty in pronouncing the affricate occurring in his name.

[81] " Der vor den ursprünglichen Zischlaut sekundär vorgetretene Dental verdrängt ersteren sehr oft ganz, d.h. *s'* geht in *t'* über." (Praetorius, *Amh. Spr.*, p. 83.)

While Praetorius is right, in the broadest sense, that the passage of *s'* to *t'* is facultative, its occurrence in the centre and south of Ethiopia is so overwhelming that in those regions at least the use of the term " facultative " has become meaningless. It can be noticed, though, that this phenomenon has gained momentum in the relatively short space of time since Praetorius wrote, some 70 years ago.

Unfortunately, an historical outline of the passage *s'* > *t'* cannot be given for two main reasons:

—nearly all literary documents in Amharic, European and indigenous, originate from the north of Ethiopia, where the cultural centre used to be until the latter part of the 19th century;

—the overwhelming influence and importance of Gəʿəz caused all modern " deviations " in roots, which possess Gəʿəz equivalents, to be regarded as inferior and corrupt. This was particularly true of the written language.

Thus we find that neither the Portuguese, nor Ludolf, nor subsequent travellers and scholars give us any hint of the transition *s'* > *t'* which must long have been discernible in the centre and south of the Amharic speaking area.[82] Pais, Ludolf, or Bruce only mention lake *Zana*, *Sana* (for lake *Tana*), and Salt's Amharic list of words contains *Tsai* " sun ", *Tsegur* " hair ", *Dimts* " voice ". Of course, most travellers until the second half of the 19th century generally stayed at Gondar or thereabout (which accounts for the consistent *s'*), and their contact was almost exclusively with the learned rather than the ordinary people.

Amharic MSS are sometimes a trifle more instructive, though most of them, until recently, were written in the northern parts. Nevertheless, we find the occasional *t'* for *s'*, often corrected back to *s'* by a pedantic teacher or reader. In the case of 19th century MSS in Amharic it is generally possible to determine their place of origin (north or south) by this criterion.

One of the first European writers to remark on the substitution of *s'* by *t'* was Isenberg (*Amharic Dictionary*, p. 188): ". . . its (i.e. *s'*)

[82] Cerulli (quoted by Cohen, *Nouv. Ét.*, p. 26) observes that ". . . la carte génoise de 1447 . . . (Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze) porte la mention: ' In hoc lacu est insula Tenis nomine '; ce serait une indication ancienne de la prononciation *t'*; mais à quelle région l'attribuer ? " This question is, indeed, pertinent. If " Tenis nomine " is really indicative of *t'*, then we have no alternative but to assume that the informant came from the south and that pronunciation there was already *t'*.

pronunciation resembles that of *t'* adding only a little sibilation; therefore it is often exchanged for *t'*. . . ."

Guidi's great Amharic vocabulary betrays a certain Shoan bias; nonetheless the position is accurately reflected in col. 859: ". . . . Nel Goggiam per lo più si mantiene il *s'* nelle numerose parole nelle quali, altrove, è cambiato in *t'*. . . ." Armbruster (*Grammar*, p. 35) gives both *t'afä* and *s'afä* " to write ", but adds for the latter " Gojjam and learned ". In a footnote (*loc. cit.*) he declares that *s'* is used elsewhere by those with some knowledge of Gəʿəz, while in Gojjam it is a genuine survival.

Today the position is roughly as follows: *t'* reigns without challenge in the centre and south, notably in Shoa—with the exception of the Church orthodoxy, a handful of intellectual and affected speakers, and some learned words whose association with Gəʿəz is felt to be particularly strong and vivid.[83] In Gojjam, the Gondar region, and the northern fringes *s'* survives. How long it will do so, it is difficult to say at present, for this will depend on events and pressures of a political rather than a linguistic nature. There can be little doubt, though, that the northward pressure of *t'* is increasing, under the wings of Shoan political supremacy, at a pace more accelerated than that with which linguistic changes are normally credited. Thus the linguistic map of Amharic *t'* and *s'* which Cohen (*Nouv. Ét.*, p. 26) considers desirable[84] would, in present circumstances, be liable to very frequent adjustments.

Of all that has been written on the purely orthographical question *š* : *s* and *s'* : *ṣ'* (cf. for instance Afeworq's remarks (a champion of historical spelling in Amharic) in his *Gramm.*, p. 12) Praetorius' observations (*Amh. Spr.*, p. 80)[85] seem most pertinent and should, in my view, be considered the final verdict in this controversy.

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[83] However, even this is beginning to crumble: *mät'af* " book " is nowadays at least as often spoken and written as *mäs'ḥaf*.

[84] ". . . en écartant les informateurs pédants, et en choisissant des mots qui ne sont pas d'usage savant . . ." (*loc. cit.*).

[85] " Es liegt keinerlei Veranlassung vor, in der amhar. Grammatik aus etymologischen Rücksichten beide Zeichen getrennt zu behandeln, denn beide haben, schon seit alter Zeit gleichlautend, auch in der lautlichen Weiterentwicklung ganz gleichen Schritt gehalten. Zur schriftlichen Wiedergabe des aus ሀ wie ሠ gleichmässig enstehenden palatalen Zischlautes hat man dementsprechend auch nur ein Zeichen ausgebildet, nämlich ሸ, durch Modifikation aus dem häufigeren ሀ abgeleitet."

In Amharic newspapers and other modern writings the tendency prevails of using *ś* and *ẓ'* in accordance with Gəʿəz etymology. One need not, therefore, be surprised to find that quite frequently the writers' ambition in this respect is not matched by their erudition.[86]

Gurage today possesses neither *s'* and *ẓ'* nor primitive *ś*. For the two former *t'* alone appears as in Southern Amharic. There exists a *ś*-sound in Gurage, but this is a secondary phoneme which has arisen from palatalization.

The same applies to *Harari*.

In *Gafat* it does not become clear from the documents at our disposal to what extent *s'* was merely an archaizing feature and an orthographical device. In the written sources *s'* and *t'* still coexist.

For further details see the chapter on prepalatals.

From the data assembled above the following picture emerges:

The earliest documents in Gəʿəz show that of the twelve dentals and sibilants in South Arabian eight only were in use when Ethiopic had emerged as a fully independent language. The group of dentals not developed in Gəʿəz (nor in any of its successor-languages) were the interdental fricatives. We have observed (on p. 112) how etymological correspondences worked after the soundshift had occurred. These eight Gəʿəz dentals (and sibilants) were soon to be further reduced in number by the coalescence of *ś* with *s*, and *ẓ'* with *s'*, respectively, so that of the twelve South Arabian dentals only half that number were actually sounded throughout most of the effective life of the Gəʿəz language.[87]

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[86] The following examples are chosen at random:
— *mängəšt* " government " (*Sändäk' ʿAlamaʧʿən* of 4th Hamle 1937, Ethiopian era); a traditional word, hence *ś* for *s*.
— *dəməs'* " voice " (*ibidem*): (*a*) Gəʿəz has *ẓ'*, and (*b*) the last sound should be *t'* in Amh.; this is either an affectation or the writer of this paper hails from the north or the Gojjam.
— *wəšt'* " inside " (*ibidem*); a good example of false erudition, since the Gəʿəz and Semitic root is *wsṭ*.
— *näẓ'a* " free " (*Addis Zämän* of 30 Säne 1937, Ethiopian era); Gəʿəz has *s'*.

[87] I am unable to accept all the conclusions (as far as the Ethiopic sibilants are concerned) at which J. Cantineau arrives in his extremely interesting and valuable article *La Mutation des Sifflantes en Sudarabique*. It seems to me in particular that he has not attached sufficient weight to the evidence of the Aksum inscriptions and to early transliterations (or loans) into other languages, notably Arabic. Also, the construction put on the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz does not appear to me fully warranted.

The evidence assembled on pp. 113–114 above is, I think, sufficiently conclusive to show that the shifts *ś* to *s*, and *ẋ'* to *s'* occurred between the 7th and 9th centuries A.D.

We have no reason to suppose that the mode of articulation of any of the Ethiopian dentals (*s'* included)[88] has altered perceptibly.

Tĭña, Tigre, and North Amharic have taken over *in toto*, and fully preserved, the dental inventory of Gəʿəz. South Amharic, Gurage, and Harari, on the other hand, have further reduced the number of dentals and sibilants to five by the shift *s'* > *t'*.

The elimination of the interdentals in Ethiopic has a parallel in the similar development which took place in Hebrew and Aramaic. There are, however, two specifically Ethiopian questions which require an answer:

(*a*) How can the coalescence of *ś* and *s* be explained?

(*b*) Where else do we find the process *s'* to *t'*, and can any external influence be detected?

The *Cushitic* languages did not develop as large a number of dental and sibilant phonemes as we find in some Semitic languages (South Arabian, Arabic, Ugaritic—and probably proto-Semitic). We do not at present know enough about the history and development of Cushitic languages to determine whether they had a "primitive" *ś* sound or whether this phoneme arose only later through palatalization before a front vowel. Since the various Cushitic populations could scarcely have experienced any difficulty in pronouncing *ś*, we might be tempted to suppose that early Gəʿəz *ś* (ሠ) represented, in fact, a sibilant of a type that was not found in Cushitic which, in the course of time, became instrumental in letting Gəʿəz *ś* fall into desuetude. It would hardly be profitable to speculate on the nature of that sound, but see in this connection A. F. L. Beeston's article in *TPS*, 1951, especially pp. 25–6.

Alternatively, we would have to conjecture that Gəʿəz gave up its original *ś* sound (whether or not under the influence of Cushitic) at one stage and identified it fully with *s*. But in later Gəʿəz the emergence of a new and secondary *ś* may almost certainly be ascribed to the influence of Cushitic. This is a palatalized phoneme which evolved by contact with front vowels (see prepalatals below).

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[88] I refer here to the alleged development by *s'* of an affricate articulation.

The second problem, the passage $s' > t'$, has, I believe, a similar background. The sound s' appears in North Cushitic in very rare cases only[89] and in the south not at all. In the latter it has regularly passed[90] into t', i.e. the same state of affairs as we have observed for South Amharic, Gurage, and Harari which are in contact with Sidamo, Somali, and Galla.

On the other hand, it is significant that in Khamir and Khamta (Agaw languages underlying Northern Amharic) the phoneme s' occurs with some frequency (Conti Rossini, *Kemant*, p. 41) which tallies well with the fact (recorded on preceding pages) that North Amharic has proved generally immune to the shift s' to t'.

In the Semitic Abyssinian languages of the North s' has thus been preserved. This is, perhaps, due partly to the fact that in North Cushitic s' does exist in more than a few instances, and partly to a far lesser receptiveness to substrate influences in the Tigre province. The strong traditionalism is, of course, more associated with the North, the real home of the Aksumite people and culture, than with the central and southern regions which have only of late achieved emancipation and even political power.

While the linguistic and historical developments which brought about this Cushitic impact upon the Semitic Ethiopian sound system might seem, in this particular case, to follow a fairly simple and transparent pattern, it is conceivable, and even likely, that the actual processes which wrought these changes were far more devious and complicated than we are able to see at the present time.

LIQUIDS

(See inventory on pp. 33–34)

The kind of treatment to which liquids are subjected in the general Ethiopian domain is, in all its essential features, well known to us from the Semitic[91] as well as Cushitic spheres.

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[89] Reinisch (*Bilin*, p. 11) thinks it cannot be considered indigenous here; but it also occurs, though rarely, in Kemant (Conti Rossini, p. 40).

[90] Or always been t'; this cannot now be determined.

[91] Cf. Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, I, para. 48. Incidentally, Gurage must be excluded from this general statement—as far as Semitic is concerned.

The instability of the liquids is a commonplace and requires no reiteration here, but one type of change, i.e. palatalization, by which some liquids are affected will be discussed in some detail in the following chapter.

There exists only one *l*-phoneme in Ethiopic, the alveolar-dental type.[92] Sometimes—as the rules of spirantization have shown us (cf. p. 59 above)—liquids occupy an intermediate position between consonant and vowel.

Liquids form part of what Cohen calls a " stock chamito-sémitique ancien "[93] with interchanges and eliminations occurring in a parallel manner throughout the entire Semitic-Hamitic field.

The mutations which liquids are liable to undergo in *Gəʿəz*[94] are described by Dillmann (*Gramm.*, pp. 65–7) in some detail and need not be reiterated here. It is only necessary to enter a plea of caution against some of his more adventurous etymologies.

There are no special features of the liquids in either *Tigriña* or *Tigre* which would merit mention here. *l* is a very sonorous sound; *r* is a rolled alveolar; *n* is a dental liquid.

Munzinger (*Tigre Vocabulaire*, p. v) finds that *l*, *r*, and *n* " correspondent aux mêmes lettres françaises " which, in view of French uvular *r*, is scarcely accurate.

The liquids in *Amharic* share the general characteristics set out above. Two of the three liquids (*l* and *n*) are liable to palatalization before front vowels, as will be seen in the next chapter.

Cohen (*Nouv. Ét.*, p. 41) refers to an exceptional pronunciation of *r* (as distinct from the usual alveolar and rolled *r*) which he observed on

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[92] Cf. the interesting general exposition on liquids in Grammont's *Traité de phonétique*, pp. 71 *et seqq.*

The different kinds of *l* and *r* are also well described in Westermann-Ward's *African Phonetics*, pp. 69 *et seqq.*

The intermediate position of *l* in particular is, of course, well known from other language groups. Cf. only Italian *fiore* from Latin *florem* (i.e. with *i*-resonance, clear *l*) or French *autre* from Latin *alter* (i.e. *u*-resonance, dark *l*). And similarly general Ethiopic *slst* " three "—Amharic *sost*. Further details below.

[93] *Cham.-Sem.*, p. 177.

[94] *l* disappears completely in Gəʿəz *yəbe* " he says " (from *yəbel*).

two young informants in Paris: ". . . . il s'agit d'un *r* profond (région du voile du palais ?), non roulé . . ." I have never heard such an articulation.[95]

Mention must here be made of the disappearance of *l* in Amharic *sost* " three " from Ethiopic *slst* (see note [92] on p. 124 above). This would appear to be the only case in Amharic where *l* takes on " *u*-Klang, der in verschiedenen Sprachen den eigentlichen *l*-Klang ganz verdrängt " (Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, I, para. 48, d). Other instances quoted by Praetorius (*Amh. Spr.*, para. 48, c) are either doubtful or not relevant in this connection. The same phenomenon seems to have extended much further in modern South Arabian: e.g. *kalb* > *kob* " dog ", *alf* > *of* " thousand " (Brockelmann, *loc. cit.*).[96]

l and *n* occasionally interchange in Amharic, particularly in the pronominal element *'əllä* or *'ənnä*; e.g. *'əllant* and *'ənnant* " you " (pl.).

In *Harari l* disappears with considerable frequency in all positions, except initially. In many cases this is due to palatalization and will thus be referred to in the following section. However, the instability of *l* goes rather beyond that, and often nothing remains but a faint *i*-trace—as compared with the *u*-resonance remarked upon on preceding pages. In many of these instances we have, in fact, a phenomenon parallel to the disappearance, with or without trace, of non-initial *b* referred to on pp. 103–104 above. E.g. *šišti* " three " (*šlš*); *k'ut't'i* " leaf " (*k's'l*), etc. Two Harari examples with *u*-resonance have been collected by Cohen (*Études*, p. 259): *baw* " rich " (*b'l*); *ko'ot* " two " (*kl'*).

Gurage has developed a veritable art of interchanges and eliminations in the liquid class—far beyond anything known to me elsewhere in

[95] " Les informateurs interrogés en même temps que ces deux jeunes gens (dans l'ensemble des hommes du Choa) m'ont dit que cette particularité de prononciation est assez fréquente; on prétend que les gens qui articulent ainsi ont été nourris de miel dans leur petite enfance." (Cohen, *Nouv. Études*, p. 41.).

[96] Further details may be found in Bittner, *Šḥauri Studien*, I, pp. 16 *et seqq.*: *ḥob* " to milk " for *ḥalb*; *tof* " hunger " for *talf*; etc.—*l* also disppears without leaving any trace: *ṭaṭet* " three " for *ṭalṭet*. Similarly, I see one instance of *r* disappearing and leaving *u*-resonance in Mehri: *qōn* " horn " for *qarn* (Jahn, *Mehri Wörterbuch*, p. 205). Or Soqoṭri *gad* " skin " for *gld*. *l* frequently falls at the end: *ma* " riches " for *mal* (Leslau, *Soqoṭri*, pp. 38–9).

Cf. also the similar position in the case of labials described on p. 106 above.

Semitic or Cushitic.[97] The position is further complicated by differences in the various Gurage dialects. It is not my task here (nor is my Gurage equipment sufficiently good) to set out in detail the manifold interchanges or the conditions underlying these fluctuations. I shall only briefly mention such results of previous investigations as are likely to assist us in our comparative assessment.

Mondon-Vidailhet (*Revue Sémitique*, 1900–01), who was the first to obtain a reasonably complete picture of Gurage, thought that the exchanges of liquids in this language were absolutely chaotic. M. Cohen (*Études*, p. 116) arrived at a similar conclusion.[98]. Polotsky (*BSL*, 1938, pp. 140 *et seqq.*) has, however, succeeded in disentangling some of these puzzling alternations by a close examination of the Chaha dialect.[99] The result of this investigation may be summarized as follows:

(1) *n*, *r*, or *l* of general Ethiopic appear as *n* when at the beginning of words[1]:

e.g.	*napparam*[2]	"stay"	(*nbr*)
	nakkabam	"find"	(*rkb*)
	nāxam[3]	"send"	(*l'k*)

(2) *n*, *r*, or *l* (if non-geminated) appear as *r* in either inter-vocalic position or post-vocalic position at the end of words:

e.g.	*taxaddäram*[3]	"clothe"	(*kdn*)
	qaṭṭaram	"kill"	(*qtl*)
	zirab	"rain"	(Amh., Tña *zənab*)
	yiqaṭir	"he kills"	
	zabar	"time"; Amh., Tña, Tigre *zäbän*	(*zämän*)
	mäsqär	"cross"	(*sql*)

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[97] For Sidamo (spoken in immediate proximity of Gurage) see below.

[98] ". . . on rencontre des *échanges capricieux* de ces liquids. . . ."

[99] While Leslau's recent work on Gurage (see Bibliography) seems to present "genuine" Chaha, Polotsky's informant appears (on Polotsky's own evidence, *Notes*, p. 12) to have spoken a "sub-dialect" of Chaha, called Äža. (Cf. Bryan, *Distribution*, p. 11.)

[1] There are a few exceptions in this category which need not detain us here.

[2] In the following examples I give Polotsky's transcription in a somewhat simplified manner.

[3] Polotsky uses *IPA* symbols: *x* = fricative *k* (*ḵ*).

(3) *n*, *r*, or *l*, when geminated, appear as *nn*.

e.g.	*zannabam*	" rain "	(*znb*)
	fannadam	" judge "	(*frd*)
	bannām	" eat "	(*bl*')[4]

These facts have been lucidly summarized by Polotsky (*op. cit.*, p. 143): " Somme toute, on voit que *l* tend à se perdre dans *n*/*r*, et que *n* est à *r* comme est une occlusive à une spirante ".

While Polotsky's important discovery has introduced an element of order into this seemingly chaotic state of affairs, it lends, at the same time, additional colour to the extreme instability of the liquids in Gurage.

These then are the most important facts which have *resulted* from our brief review:

—Common to all Ethiopian languages are the sonorous character of *l*, the rolled alveolar nature of *r*, and the dental liquid *n*.

—Two of the liquids, *l* and *n*, are liable to palatalization in some Ethiopian languages, notably those of the South (see next chapter).

—In a few cases *l* is " dissolved " leaving either no trace at all or *u*- (or *i*-) resonance.

—In Gurage *l* is generally lost; *n* and *r* are assigned a role parallel to that normally assumed by plosive and fricative respectively.

All *Semitic* languages share, to a greater or lesser degree, the instability of the liquids. Assimilation and elision are less frequent in Gəʿəz, ancient South Arabian, and Arabic where *Systemzwang* exerts a powerful influence. Liquid fluctuations, in their manifold forms, are common in North Semitic: Hebrew, Phœnician,[5] Aramaic, and Accadian.[6] The same is true of modern vernacular Syriac (cf. MacLean, paras 114 *et seqq.*).

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[4] " In some African languages *l* and *r* are interchangeable. To European ears they are distinct sounds because they distinguish words, and it is difficult to realize that they can ever be thought of as anything but different. But they resemble each other in the fact that both are sonorous, liquid sounds and are articulated with the same part of the tongue in the same part of the mouth." (Westermann-Ward, p. 73.)

[5] Harris, *Phœnician grammar*, p. 23.

[6] Ryckmans, *Gramm. Accad.*, p. 19. Cf. also for Ugaritic Gordon's *Handbook*, paras. 5.11 ; 5.15 ; 5.27.

For the vocalization[7] of *l* with subsequent *u* or *i* resonance (occurring in one important Amharic case and a fair number of Harari instances) we have already adduced quite a few parallels from modern South Arabian (cf. p. 125 above).

In *Cushitic* I have not been able to find very many examples showing vocalization of *l*: cf. especially Sidamo *ľ'uf* " to close " which is to be connected with Amh. *k'alläfä* (p. 74 above); Galla (and Gurage) *goga* " skin " which I am inclined to put together with the Semitic root *gld*.[8]

Inter-liquid exchanges are widespread in Cushitic. Cf. for instance Bedauye (Reinisch, para. 12):

bile and *bire* " to rain "
delif and *derif* " dark "
lehay (Eth. *näga*) " in the morning ".

The extraordinary development in Gurage has a close parallel in the Sidama languages (cf. Cerulli, *Stud. Etiop.*, II, p. 47; III, pp. 3 and 120). Here we encounter the same seemingly " chaotic " treatment of the liquids. The Polotsky rules for Chaha do not apply, and we are still at a loss to see through the complexities of the situation. It is, however, clear that it is Sidamo which is principally responsible for the present state of affairs in Gurage. Nothing else was to be expected in the prevailing geographical conditions of close proximity.[9] The influence of Sidamo on Gurage is well attested also in other linguistic features of the latter.

The order of liquid stability in the Ethiopian languages would be like this:

(1) Gəʿəz; Tňa; Tigre
(2) Amharic
(3) Harari
(4) Gurage

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[7] This term is here used not in the sense normally reserved for it in Semitics, but in its connotation in general linguistics, i.e. passage from consonantal to vocalic character.

[8] This is more fully explained in my note in *Africa*, 1950, p. 343.

[9] Geographical proximity by itself is, of course, not the cause, but is merely facilitating the action of the substratum (Sidamo) on the superstratum (Gurage).

In Gəʿəz, Tňa, and Tigre, despite the occasional uncertainty, we may observe the common South Semitic sound-stability, brought about largely by great rigidity in the root conception. Amharic exhibits a greater degree of instability (including palatalization of *l*). Harari has carried this tendency considerably farther—and in Gurage, finally, all liquid distinctions seem to have become almost meaningless.

Leslau (*Gafat*, p. 19) is certainly right in saying: " The weakening and the interchangeability of the liquids is a South-Ethiopic feature."

It is difficult to say precisely to what extent the influence of Sidamo can be discerned in this process in the various South-Ethiopian languages, but there seems little doubt that it has a more or less direct share in it.

Cf. now also Leslau in *Language*, vol. 28, 1.

PREPALATALS

(cf. inventory on pp. 33–34).

We have already dealt with the palatalization of velars (pp. 66–74) and have, in that connection, discussed such general problems of palatalization as have a direct bearing on our Ethiopian phenomena (cf. the definition on p. 66 above). The matter is greatly complicated by the fact that the Ethiopian prepalatals—or rather some of them, i.e. *ǰ*, *ǰ'*, *ď*—may be of dual origin,[10] a problem that cannot be solved by reference to their present sound,[11] but only through research into their history, viz. their etymology.

The most important difference between the palatalization of velars and that of the dental-liquid group lies in the fact that the former is now completely extinct, whereas the latter is still very active and of considerable significance in the morphology of some of the Ethiopian languages.

We shall deal here with the palatalized phonemes which have arisen from the dentals *d*, *t*, *t'*, the sibilants *s*, *z*, and the liquids *l*, *n*, generally through the influence of *e*, *i*, *y*.[12] The resulting prepalatals are represented as *ď*, *ǰ*, *ǰ'*; *š*, *ž*; *y*, *ň*.[13]

[10] I.e. velar or dental.

[11] See, however, footnote on p. 67 above and pp. 142–143 below, referring to the different position in Gurage.

[12] ". . . mit Vorausnahme der dem *i* eigenen Zungenstellung . . ." (Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, I, p. 207).

[13] Cf. *Africa*, July 1951, p. 214.

The *sound* of these prepalatals is roughly the same in all Abyssinian languages and may be briefly described:

ď — voiced palatal plosive, pronounced like English *j* (*joy*); changes frequently with the quite differently sounding *ǯ*.[14] The dictionaries present this confusion to its full extent; [ɟ] or [dʒ]

ť — voiceless palatal plosive, pronounced like English *ch* (*church*); see, however, p. 139 below; [c] or [tʃ]

ť' — voiceless ejective plosive, pronounced like the preceding sound, but " avec plus forte tension buccale, suivie d'une occlusion glottale " (Leslau, *Doc. Tña*, p. 5);

š — voiceless palato-alveolar (" hush ") fricative, pronounced like English *sh* (*share*); [ʃ]

ǯ — voiced palato-alveolar fricative, pronounced like French *j* (*jour*); very frequently confused with *ď* (see above); [ʒ]

y — will be discussed more fully under " semi-vowels " in the following chapter. Here it applies in its consonantal function like English *y* (*yes*);

ň — nasal prepalatal, pronounced like Italian *gn* (*ogni*). [ɲ]

The *Tigriña* prepalatals have generally been considered as loans from Amharic (Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, I, p. 207; Leslau, *Word*, I, 1945, note 17), but, though there would appear to exist a certain amount of *prima facie* evidence in seeming support of this contention, the position is not so unambiguous as has commonly been supposed. Certain doubts with regard to the palatalization of velars have already been raised on pp. 72–73 above.

We shall first have to find out to what extent prepalatals in Tña may legitimately be considered as " indigenous ". This is rendered very difficult, mainly because it is generally a very invidious undertaking to draw the borderline between the indigenous and the borrowed feature.[15] For Tña and Amharic there are added difficulties in that traces of Amharic influence are generally fairly easily discernible on account of

[14] It might be remarked here that Arabic *jim* is transliterated into Amharic as either *ď* or *ǯ* (Littmann, *ZA*, 1908, p. 52), although only the former properly describes the Arabic sound.

[15] Cf. on this problem A. Meillet's article entitled " Le problème de la parenté des langues " in *Linguistique Historique et Linguistique Générale*, Paris, 1948; also the chapter " Mutual Influences " in Vendryes' *Language* (Engl. translation), London, 1949.

a number of peculiarly Amharic phonetic features, while the opposite process cannot be detected with comparable assurance. This is owing to the difficulty in determining which of the "North Ethiopic" features of Amharic are due to the original stock of proto-Amharic, which to Gəʿəz, and which to Tňa influence.

Polotsky (*JAOS*, 1947, pp. 143–4) is, as far as I can see, the only one to have called in question the common assertion that words containing prepalatals in Tňa must be borrowings from Amharic. He argues, rightly in my view, that: ". . . . in all likelihood *ň* is not genuinely Tňa, and there is room for doubt with regard to *ǰ*. But so far as the other prepalatals are concerned, the facts seem to militate against Leslau's opinion[16] that these sounds are borrowed from Amharic."

On p. 73 above I have cited a few words containing prepalatals which have no parallel in Amharic. Polotsky (*ibidem*) gives further examples: Tňa *ḥariǰ'* (Gəʿəz *ḥaris'*) "flour" does not exist in Amharic; Tňa *ʿiǰ'ǰ'a* (Gəʿəz *ʿəs'a*) "lot" (*sors*) is *ʾət'a* in Amh. And, of course, the cardinal numbers from five to nine.[17]

To these I would add: Tňa *šəm* "name"—Amh. *səm*; Tňa *šälbäbä* "to burn", *ǰärrämä* "to be insatiable" have, to the best of my knowledge, no Amharic parallel. There are a good many other instances.

Isenberg (*Amh. Dict.*, p. 63) expressed the view that "in the Amharic and the Tigre[18] languages [a palatalized sound] generally originates where the sibilant . . . meets with a *y*. . . ." This shows us that Isenberg had not realized the important difference between Tňa and Amharic in that the latter alone has maintained active palatalization, whereas in Tňa, at least nowadays, *s* + *i* is a perfectly possible, and indeed frequent, sound-combination. It also shows, incidentally, that he did not think in this connection of an Amharic influence, but rather of a similar tendency in both languages. It appears that Praetorius

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[16] *Doc. Tňa*, p. 4: "Les prépalatales sont rares en tigrigna; ces phonèmes semblent être empruntés à l'amharique. . . ."

[17] These will be discussed in greater detail later in this section.

[18] Isenberg means Tňa when he writes Tigre, i.e. the language of the Tigre province.

first introduced the conception of a prepalatal wave having been emitted by Amharic—an idea which has found many adherents.[19]

On the evidence at present before us (cf. especially the examples given on p. 131 above) we must fully agree with Polotsky that " the facts seem to militate against . . . the opinion that [the prepalatals] are borrowed from Amharic."[20]

We must now briefly examine the possibility of dialectal divergences entering into the sphere of palatalization in Tňa. This has been suggested by Leslau in his article in *JA*, 1939 (to which reference has previously been made). With regard to š Leslau finds (*op. cit.*, pp. 66–7) that this phoneme is " rare " in the Akkele Guzay and occurs mostly in borrowings from Amharic; that it is " plus fréquent " in the Adwa dialect; and that it is " très fréquent " in the Hamasen " probablement sous l'influence de l'amharique."

I would submit that this conception of dialectal differences regarding the prepalatals in Tňa has no basis in fact. Not only can I vouch for this from actual living acquaintance as well as from large numbers of transcriptions taken down in the various regions of Tňa speech, but Leslau's statement (based on investigation with one or two informants) is inherently unlikely, because it is precisely the southern provinces of Akkele Guzay and Adwa which might, in theory, show some Amharic influence. But the Hamasen, the northernmost part of the Tňa area, is least likely to come " sous l'influence de l'amharique "—being hundreds of miles away from the nearest Amharic region.

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[19] Among others Leonessa (*Gramm.*, pp. 11–12), and M. Cohen, though the latter in a cautious and much qualified passage (*Ét.*, pp. 16–17) which deserves serious attention. Also Conti Rossini followed this lead in a somewhat strange passage (*Ling. Tňa*, p. 19): ". . . il tigrino *non ama* [my italics] questi suoni [i.e. the prepalatals]. . . ." If indeed it were true that Tňa does not " ama " these sounds, then, one can only rejoin, the large numbers she had to accept against her will would suggest wholesale violence.

[20] Statistical samplings have shown me that in the case of the prepalatals common to Tňa and Amh. (in all positions in the root) there is no marked numerical preponderance in favour of Amh. In initial position (which can easily be checked in the dictionary) I have found the following facts (using the dictionaries of da Bassano and Guidi): š — Tňa 25 cols.; Amh. 31 cols. ǯ and ž — Tňa 6 cols.; Amh. 6 cols. č' — Tňa 20 cols.; Amh. 20 cols. And that despite the richer vocabulary of Amharic.

The suggested dialectal distribution of *š* does, therefore, not only fly in the face of all probabilities given by the geographical situation, but there simply exists no case which can or need be answered in terms of dialectal delineation. Such fluctuations between the basic and palatalized pronunciation as do occur have nothing whatever to do with either the Akkele Guzay or the Hamasen, but are simply due to individual manifestations, often of a social character. Leslau's (*loc. cit.*) Adwa *kulluša'* " always " as compared with Akkele Guzay *kullusa'* has no connection with either of these places, but certain individuals in both will produce one or the other in accordance with their personal preference.

The same applies to *šəm* " name " (*ibidem*) which is not typical of the Hamasen, but may be heard wherever Tña is spoken. Likewise the pronunciation *'addəš 'abäba* (*ibidem*) has no regional ties, but will be rendered thus by the less educated who know nothing of Amh. *'addis* as opposed to their own Tña *ḥaddəš*[21] " new ". Similarly, *bəzäy*[22] or *bəzäyka* (compared with the usual *bəďäkka*) " without, except ", or *ḥezi* (opposite *ḥəďďi*) " now ", belong to no definable geographical setting.[23]

From an examination of (*a*) fairly large numbers of Tña letters written by people of varying social background in many parts of Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia, (*b*) many issues of Tña newspapers, and (*c*) transcriptions made in most regions of the Tña speaking area, I would conclude as follows:

While educated people make rather sparing use of certain palatalizations, the opposite is true of the socially and intellectually less advanced.[24]

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[21] Another addition to the list given on p. 131 above: Tña *ḥaddəš* — but Amh. *'addis*.

[22] This vocalization is more usual than that given on p. 66 of *JA*, 1939.

[23] The remaining two instances produced by Leslau (*ibidem*): *dk's* and *gsgs* I have never heard anywhere in the palatalized version, but see p. 134 below. Cf. also the Tña *Eritrean Weekly News*, No. 132, p. 1, col. a, line 29.

[24] In a letter from the " Coptic " Bishop of Eritrea I find *səmkum* " your name " for usual *šəmkum*, and *məllas* " reply " for *məllaš*. In a letter from Eritrea's premier Ras I see *ḥezi* " now " for *ḥəďďi*, and *məsfan* " covering " for normal *məšfan*. On the other hand, a junior clerk in the British Information Services, Eritrea, writes *məšgana* " thanks " for *məsgana*, and *šayt'an* for *sayt'an*. I have heard Eritrean beggars shouting *məškin, məškin* and a passing nobleman questioning them: *bəḥak'k'ido məskin nəssəḫa* ? " are you really poor ? "

It is also interesting to note that generally the palatalized sound is more in vogue among the very young and the very old.[25] I do not know whether this can be satisfactorily explained by accepting Cohen's verdict (*Études*, p. 11): " La mouillure des dentales peut être interprétée comme impliquant un certain relâchement de la prononciation."[26]

The sound that is most commonly subject to such palatalization is *s* (passing into *š́*); for *z* > *ž́* (*ǰ́*) we have only a few examples. *š́* occurs in many spontaneous instances, and I have gained the impression that the tendency to substitute *š́* for *s* is on the increase in the every-day speech of the " people ".

Before we come to consider the conditions, past and present, for the incidence of palatalization, we have to refer to the special phenomenon of the *Tǐa numerals* from five to nine. These numerals have *š́* in the cardinal series, while the corresponding ordinals as well as the cardinals from 50 to 90 show the usual *s*. As the list below illustrates, no other Abyssinian language exhibits *š́* in the numerals from five to nine.

SA	Gəʿəz	*Tǐa*	Tigre	Amharic	Harari	Gurage	Gafat
šlṯ	šälästu	*sälästä*	säläs	sost	šəšti	sost	sostä
ḫms	ḫaməstu	*ḫammuštä*	ḫamäs	ammməst	hammisti	aməst	hamistä
sdṯ	sədəstu	*šəddəštä*	səs	səddəst	səddəsti	sədəst	sedistä
sbʿ	säbʿatu	*šobʿattä*	säbuʿ	säbat	sabatti	säbat	sebettä
ṯmn	sämäntu	*šommontä*	sämän	səmmənt	sut	sumut	semintä
tsʿ	təsʿatu	*təšʿattä*	səʿ	[zätʿäň]	[zəhtʿäň]	[žätʿä]	[zetenä]
ʿšr	ʿašärtu	*ʿassärtä*	ʿasər	assər	assər	asər	asser

Gəʿəz *š́* = ሠ Tǐa *š́* = ፘ

The reason for this change is not easily discernible. Yushmanov,

[25] Under what phonetic conditions the palatalized sound substitutes the usual dental will be further examined presently.

[26] This will be further discussed in the concluding part of this chapter.

in an article[27] on this sibilant "anomaly" (see Bibliography), has correctly stated that Tña has free interchange between the hiss and hush sibilants.[28] The hush sibilants are usually explained as a result of palatalization near front vowels. Yushmanov, however, holds that this explanation is not possible in the case of these numerals, for *sälästä* and *'assärtä* preserve their *s* despite "phonetic conditions absolutely identical with those obtaining in the cardinals from 5 to 9." Having dismissed all reasons of a phonetic character Yushmanov arrives at the somewhat surprising conclusion that the "anomalous *ś* of Tigriña is a survival of the old South Arabic *ś*, defended from the free interchange of sibilants by the firm and constantly repeated system of the little numerals, while the *s* of other kinds of numerals is retained by the Gə'əz and Amharic influence. . . ."

A glance at the comparative list above shows: (*a*) that the position in ancient South Arabian and Gə'əz is fully identical; (*b*) that the situation in Tña is precisely opposite to that in South Arabian and Gə'əz, i.e. "three" and "ten" having *ś* in South Arabian (and early Gə'əz) show *s* in Tña, while "five" to "nine" have *s* in the ancient languages but *ś* in Tña. Since the sibilant correspondences between ancient South Arabian and Ethiopic (including Tña) are direct[29] and not in an inverse relationship (such as exists, for instance, between Hebrew and Arabic), Yushmanov's above-quoted explanation appears to be baseless.

It is clear, of course, that Gə'əz *ś* had become *s* (see chapter on sibilants) some time before the emergence of Tña as a distinct language, i.e. Tña is likely to have inherited all numerals with *s*. It should also be stated at once that an explanation of the peculiar *ś* in Tña need not take the possibility of Cushitic influence into account, for in Cushitic the numerals are derived from entirely different roots.

To my mind, the explanation of this troublesome *ś* in Tña cannot remain in doubt if we look at the following facts:

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[27] I have only read the English summary appended to this article written in Russian.

[28] This is, perhaps, a slight exaggeration, but—as shown in the foregoing—this is decidedly the trend underlying present developments.

[29] No weight must be attached to the single exception, when *ślst* is spelt *slst* in Littmann, *Aksum*, VII, 20. In view of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary in that same as well as all other Aksum inscriptions of that period, Littmann has justly had no scruples in correcting the first *s* back into *ś*.

(*a*) The Gəʿəz and Tigriňa numerals given on p. 134 are largely identical; in any event, there exists a greater resemblance between them than between Gəʿəz and any other language.

(*b*) The Gəʿəz and Tigriňa numerals for "three" and "ten" are fully identical (the Gəʿəz *ś* was, at the operative period, only of etymological and not of phonetic significance—as pointed out on p. 121 above).

(*c*) It will be observed that the relevant vowel in the Gəʿəz numerals for "three" and "ten" is *ä* (or *a*, i.e. the first order), while in the Gəʿəz numerals for "five," "six" and "nine" the vowel preceding the crucial *s* is *ə* (i.e. the sixth order).

(*d*) It will also be noticed that in the two remaining numerals, "seven" and "eight", the sibilant is followed by a labial: *b* and *m* respectively.

If we recall that not only does *ə* etymologically very often stand for short *u*, but that its sound in modern Ethiopic almost invariably approaches *ŭ* (see below in the chapter on vowels), then it becomes clear that in the five Tňa numerals concerned the general labializing trend of Tňa has received support from either a preceding *ə* (in the case of "five", "six" and "nine") or a following labial (in the case of "seven" and "eight") thus resulting in the change *s* > *ś*. In other words: *s* has undergone partial assimilation, either regressive ("seven" and "eight") or progressive ("five", "six", "nine"), and become *ś*. In this way the entire numeral has been affected and been instilled with a strongly labial character. This will be obvious to anyone who has ever heard the Tňa words for "five" to "nine" pronounced.[30]

The fact that the corresponding ordinals and the cardinals from 50 to 90 have not been similarly affected is easily explained by:

(*a*) the totally different impact of the accent which in those instances has not been favourably placed to effect such a change, viz. *ḥammuštá* vis-à-vis *ḥámməs* or *ḥàməsáy*;

(*b*) the comparative infrequency of those numerals as compared with the cardinals from "five" to "nine", in which latter case the Tňa trend of labialization appears to have found a particularly favourable field.

[30] ". . . the *ś* of the cardinal numbers from five to nine (*accompanied by a strong labialization of the whole word*) is peculiar to Tňa. . . ." (Polotsky, *JAOS*, 1947, p. 144.)

This explanation of the *ś* " anomaly " in some of the Tña cardinals shows us at the same time that the frequent change *s* > *ś* noticed in present-day Tña (see pp. 133–134 above) is not, in the first place, a question of palatalization, but much rather an expression of the Tña hankering after labialized forms. In this respect we may notice a characteristic difference between Amharic and Tña: while in the former the phenomenon is conditioned (or at least primarily so) by the palate, in the latter it is more concerned with the lips. Protrusion of the lips is a mouth position peculiarly characteristic of the Tña speaker.

With the exception of *s* > *ś* the *process* of palatalization is no longer active in Tña. Words which possess palatalized phonemes retain them in all possible forms, and there is no alternation between the basic and the palatalized sound. If phonetic or morphological conditions require the presence of a front vowel (*i*, *e*, *y*, *ə*[31]), no change occurs in a dental which is in contact with such a vowel, e.g.: *fərdi* " justice ", *rə'əsi* " head ", *'azzazi* " commander ", *təbäls'i* " you (fem.) are superior ", etc. The position is quite different in other modern Abyssinian languages, where alternation between the simple and the palatalized sound, under the influence of a following front-vowel, occurs in the same root and where this change may be of morphological significance.

The assumption of a large-scale borrowing process from Amharic (rejected in the foregoing) has been accepted by so many scholars without resistance because it would satisfactorily explain the existence of palatalized sounds in Tña. Otherwise it might seem difficult to reconcile the absence of actual palatalization in Tña with the presence of fairly considerable numbers of prepalatals.

One possible, and even likely, explanation for this seemingly paradoxical state of affairs is, of course, that this process, while originally fairly active and widespread, has now been extinct for some time. We would thus have to visualize a stage in the development of Tña[32] when palatalization was operative in very much the same way as it still is today in, for instance, Amharic. If this assumption is correct, then we are likely to encounter different stages and layers in Tña, i.e. at least two:

[31] ə can, of course, also be a back vowel.

[32] Unfortunately, the complete absence of written documents or of any information about Tña's past prevents us from assigning any, however approximate, date to such a development.

(1) up to and including the period of active palatalization, and
(2) the stage when palatalization was no longer operative.

This indeed appears to be the case as the few examples of noun and verb formation given on p. 137 show. In actual fact, further intermediate stages very probably existed, but today it is neither possible, nor of any particular importance, to disentangle all those different layers.

This explanation of the origin of the palatalized sounds in Tña (i.e. the impact of a front vowel, active at one stage,[33] but inoperative at another) may possibly not be sufficiently far-reaching in that it leaves out of account a phonetic phenomenon which is of considerable importance in Tña and which might, in order to facilitate its own development, have brought about a good many palatalizations. I am referring to labialization which has already been described (on p. 136 above) as a primary aspect of the Tña sound pattern.

Among the palatalized phonemes in Tña one notices the absence of *ñ* and *y* (the latter as the result of palatalization of *l* > *y* as we know it in Amharic). The reason for this absence has, in my view, to be seen in the fact that *ñ* and *y* do not lend themselves to simultaneous rounding of the lips in the same way as it can be effected in the case of *š*, *ž*, *ď*, *ť'* (and possibly *č*). The latter sounds can more easily be pronounced with labial protrusion in their palatalized than in their simple form.[34] This means that palatalization in Tña may possibly to some extent have acted merely as a stage, a facilitating factor, towards labialization. If this explanation is correct, then we shall have to see

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[33] I have not seen it pointed out that the negative particle (*'ay—n*) in Tña is very likely a remnant of original palatalization of *l* (as is common in Amharic). The original form of the Tña negation was, in my view, *'al* (as in Amharic and other Ethiopian languages), but since it was most frequently prefixed to a verbal form beginning with *y-*, palatalization took place and the resultant element *'ay-* survived in this fossilized form. Amharic *'al-* is still palatalized to *'ay-* before the 3rd pers. masc. in the impf.

This seems to me an instructive instance of the erratic manner in which palatalization has been operative in Tña (as well as elsewhere in Ethiopic).

(I just notice that, in a somewhat different form, this has already been suggested by Conti Rossini, *Proverbi*, p. 33.)

[34] " If the lips are rounded at the same time as the tongue is raised towards the hard palate, and these two articulations added to the primary articulation of a consonant, that consonant is labialized and palatalized." (Westermann-Ward, p. 106.)

in this phenomenon a significant difference between Tña and Amharic. In the latter palatalization exists *per se*, as a characteristic aspect of the Amharic sound pattern, whereas in the former it also fulfils an auxiliary task.

Listening to Amharic speakers one notices the ever recurring *ich* sound [ç], while in Tña it is a prepalatal accompanied by rounding of the lips [ʃ] (like the German *sch* in *Schuh*) that strikes the listener's ear. The sound *ť* is pronounced in Tña like *ch* in *church* [tʃ,] but in Amharic it is rather like [tç], i.e. the characteristic aspect of the Amharic sound is produced by pressing the tongue strongly against the hard palate and simultaneous *spreading* of the lips. As far as I know, this important distinction in the Tña and Amharic sound patterns has not hitherto been remarked upon.[35]

Tigre—like Tña—has a fairly full prepalatal series. The sounds *š̌*, *ť*, *t̓*, *ď* (*ž̌*) occur, while *ň* has not been observed, nor *l* > *y*[36]; i.e. we find here almost the same prepalatals which are current in Tña. The sound of these prepalatals is also very nearly the same as we have stated for Tña (in this connection Munzinger's observations on *š̌* (= French *j*) in his *Tigre Vocabulary*, p. v, may be safely discarded). Cohen (*Études*, p. 16) thinks that Tigre only possesses *š̌*, *ď*, *t̓*. As *ď* and *ž̌* interchange, this leaves out only *ť* for which quite a few instances are attested: cf. the frequent *'əťťe* " to me " (see last footnote). Leslau, on the other hand, adds *ň* to the five above-quoted prepalatals.[37] I

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[35] M. Cohen (*Nouv. Ét.*, p. 30) has mentioned (but not further elucidated) the fact that ". . . les chuintantes comportent, en même temps que le relèvement de la langue dans une position spéciale, un avancement et arrondissement des lèvres. . . ."

A good example for this characteristic labial influence in connection with palatalization is Tña *wəšt'i* " inside " in contrast to Amh. *wəst'* (Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 31).

[36] Leslau (*JAOS*, 1948, p. 128) is not, to my mind, justified in thinking that the two isolated examples cited by him (*'əyyä* " to me " for *'əlyä*, and *'əgəyyä* beside *'əgəlyä* " to me ") present palatalization of *l*. This seems to me a case of assimilation, especially as in all other instances the combination *l*+*y* is maintained (Leslau, *ibidem*; *dəmmälye* " my vengeance ", Littmann, *Princeton Tigre texts*, vol. III, No. 633, 11). I wonder whether Leslau's *'əyyä* is not possibly a mishearing for *'əťťä* " to me " which is very frequent in Tigre (derived from *'ət*); cf. Leslau himself, *loc. cit.*, and Littmann, *op. cit.*, No. 159, 6: *mässəl 'əťťe təlhəya* " to me it seems a joke "—and *passim*.

[37] *JAOS*, 1945, p. 165.

have never encountered *ň* in Tigre, nor does Leslau himself appear to have done so, for *ň* is no longer mentioned in his *Supplementary Observations on Tigre Grammar*[38] which were published after he had worked for a month with an informant at Keren.

The prepalatals in Tigre[39] cannot be regarded as borrowings from Amharic or any other language, but—just as we have seen for Tňa in the earlier part of this chapter—must be taken as an indigenous development in Tigre.

As distinct from Tňa (where palatalization has no morphological significance) and from Amharic (where it appears only in the conjugation of the verb), Tigre makes use of palatalization for morphological purposes in connection with the pronominal suffix of the 1st person sing. when attached to a noun ending in certain dental sounds. These dentals are: *d* > *ď* (*ʿad* " country " — *ʿaďďe* " my country ", Littmann, *Princeton Tigre Texts*, vol. III, 570, 1); *t* > *ť* (*nəyät* " desire " — *nəyäťťe* " my desire ", *Ps.* xl, 8 and Littmann, *loc. cit.*, line 9); *t'* > *ť'* (*səmət'* " side " — *səmət'ť'ä* " near me ", Leslau *JAOS*, 1948, p. 128) ; *s* > *š* (*bə'əs* " husband " — *bə'əšše* " my husband ", Littmann, *op. cit.*, 266, 4); *s'* > *ť'* (*gäs'* " face " — *gäť'ť'e* " my face ", *Ps.* xxvii, 3). On the other hand, *n* and *l* are not palatalized, e.g. *dəḥinye* " my salvation " (*Ps.* xxvii, 1); *mənye*[40] " from me " (*ibidem*, v. 9); *käfänye* " mein Leichentuch " (Littmann, *op. cit.*, 287, 8). Examples for *l* have been given in note [36] above.

There are also a few isolated cases of a plural ending *-äť*: *ḥamäť* " parents in law ", *ʾabäť* " fathers ", *fatäť* " friends ", etc. The prepalatal will in this case have originated from **-ti* in the same way as the Amharic plural ending *-oť* developed from an original **-oti*.

This seems to me a more probable process than that suggested by Littmann (*ZA*, XIII, p. 149), i.e. *w* > *y* > *ď* > *ť*.

According to Littmann (*ZA*, XIII, 149) palatalization is rather more widespread in the Massawa area, and he cites *gays* " he walks " > *gaiš*, *ḥänkase* " to limp " > *ḥänkaše*, etc. I have noticed this palatalization, generally of *s*, only in that part of the Massawa province which borders

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[38] *JAOS*, 1948, p. 128.

[39] They are by no means rare.

[40] It is, of course, exceedingly difficult to distinguish *mənye* from *mäňe*, etc. It is, perhaps, mainly the absence of palatalization in the case of *l* which supports the accuracy of perceiving *mənye*.

on the Tña speaking area, i.e. in the Ginda' region. In any event, *s* is the sibilant which is most subjected to palatalization in both Tigre and Tña.[41]

The fact that in *Amharic* palatalization is still an active phenomenon and of considerable importance in the morphology[42] of the language has no doubt brought about the impression that it is from here that all palatalization in the Ethiopian sphere has emanated. Perhaps this impression has been further strengthened by the fact that Amharic has long been the best known of the modern Abyssinian languages.

However, there are quite a few instances where palatalization is less developed in Amharic than elsewhere. We have already mentioned (pp. 73 and 131 above) a number of Tña and Tigre words whose Amharic equivalents employ the simple and not the palatalized sound. A still more significant aspect is the absence of palatalization in Amharic from the pronominal suffix (1st pers. sing.) attached to the noun (in contrast to Tigre). Palatalization in Amharic—as elsewhere—has worked in stages and layers, and instances like *'addis* " new " or *k'älil* " light " illustrate this.[43]

Palatalization in Amharic appears in all documents, MSS, etc. known to us. Pais (early 17th century) speaks of the *Bahar Nagax*[44] (i.e. *Nagaš* for *nagasi*), and Ludolf (late 17th century) in his Amharic grammar provides an accurate description of the sound of the various prepalatals.[45]

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[41] Also in this question of palatalization our knowledge of the position in Tigre is not satisfactory. In particular, an investigation of dialectal differences, if any, is needed. See above in the Introduction.

[42] *Examples*:

kädaň (*kdn*) " covering " for *kädani* (participle)
gädəyye (*gdl*) " I having killed " for *gädəllye* (gerund)
təmärť (*mrt'*) " you (fem.) choose " for *təmärt'i* (impf.)
ləbäš (*lbs*) " dress yourself " (fem.) for *ləbäsi* (imp.), etc., etc.

[43] The regular treatment is: *'ať'ť'ər* " brief " (<*'at't'ir*<*ḫas'ir*); *räžžəm* " long " (<*räzzim*); etc.

[44] Portuguese *x* = *š*. Among many other examples I would only add here: *Azax* (i.e. *Azzaž*) " commander, judge, prince "; *Azmach* (i.e. *Azmať*) " corps commander "; *Xum* (i.e. *Šum*) " chief ", etc. The same is the case in Alvarez's writings which are even earlier.

[45] Cf. also pp. 130, 139 above.

Only a few remarks have to be added to this: Armbruster (*Grammar*, pp. 34, 35) correctly speaks of an interchange of *ž* and *ď*, but adds that "initial *ď* interchanges with *ž* in Shoa." This restriction is hardly borne out by the facts; interchange does occur in every position and is definitely not limited to the Shoa province. Armbruster's second reservation (that *ž* arising from *zi*, *zy*; and *ď* arising from *di*, *dy*, do not interchange with *ď* and *ž* respectively) is true only in theory, but in practice the origin of a form is quickly forgotten and *ď* and *ž* are soon mixed up, both in sound and script. This is hardly surprising for, after all, nearly every *ď* and *ž* have originally arisen from *d* + *i* and *z* + *i*, respectively, even if the circumstances of this sound sequence are no longer always transparent today. Armbruster himself cites *ləž* beside *ləď* "son" (though the latter alone is etymologically justified as derived from **wəludi*), and among the many actually "living" instances *'azzaž* as well as *'azzaď* (from *'azzazi*) "commander" (cf. Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, I, p. 207), and *räďďəm* as well as *räžžəm* (from *räzzim*) "long", might be mentioned.

M. Cohen (*Nouv. Ét.*, pp. 31–3) has carefully examined the material with a view to discovering phonetic reasons or dialectal patterns behind the seemingly chaotic interchange of *ž* and *ď*. There can be little doubt that *ď*, in pronunciation as well as spelling, is gaining ground everywhere at the expense of *ž*. But on the whole it must be admitted that the position is entirely arbitrary. This is particularly true in writing, while in pronunciation *ž* is being increasingly limited to the Shoa region.

I think Praetorius (*Amh. Spr.*, para. 54, b) was right in stating: "Man kann sagen, dass für *ž* überall auch *ď* erlaubt ist."

M. Cohen (*Nouv. Ét.*, p. 31) makes reference to an interesting phenomenon:[46] Some of his informants (among them Ato Aklilu) appear to have pronounced *ď* also with "une articulation mouillée *ǧ'* et même quelquefois *gᵛ*, avec conservation de la position de *g*." This is of some importance, even if the articulation of the informants was somewhat influenced by speaking particularly slowly and carefully, as they had to repeat a word "plusieurs fois sur ma demande" (*ibidem*).

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[46] This has not been otherwise observed as far as I know. I myself have never noticed in Amharic the distinction explained in the following, but cf. Gurage where the difference in sound is reported to be clearly audible (cf. footnote on p. 67 above).

This might conceivably constitute a remnant of an earlier differentiation in *pronunciation* (in contrast to the writing) between palatalized velars and dentals. Their coalescence has been described (on page 67 *seq.* above) as a disturbing complication in the investigation of etymologies. However, for all practical purposes this coalescence exists ; and even if in a few isolated instances a slight differentiation may seem perceptible,[47] its importance would lie more in its historical significance than in an actual distinction imparted to the pronunciation of these Amharic sounds.[48]

While palatalization in Amharic, under relevant conditions, is far more frequent than non-palatalization, there are nevertheless quite a few such instances which, in their cumulative effect, show that there were periods in the history of the Amharic language when palatalization was not an active force.

Examples: *nargi* beside *narď* " nard " is an instructive instance: the common oriental word nard must have come into Amharic originally in that form; the pronunciation *narďə*[49] then led to the palatalization of *d* and *narď* emerged. At another stage palatalized sounds were again restituted, and *narď* (instead of being restored to *nardi*) emerged as *nargi*.[50]

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[47] Further investigation of this feature appears desirable.

[48] The reality of the alleged pronunciation g^{v} in Amharic can only be fully established if many such articulations produce no erroneous etymological connections. Only then could we justifiedly speak of a genuine remnant of an earlier distinction between prepalatals of dental and velar origin. If, for instance, *ďəb* " hyæna " were sometimes pronounced $g^{v}əb$ (instead of $z^{v}əb<z'b$), then little credence could be given to the reality of such a pronunciation; or, alternatively, it would be historically meaningless as well as inexplicable.

[49] Or it was brought about by the accident of *nard* having been followed by a front vowel in the sentence-context. It is also not inconceivable that Amharic, at one stage, shunned the sequence of two consonants in final position in the word—as Tña still does today with much consistency—and added a " euphonic " *i* (*nardi*). See under Combinatory Effects below.

[50] Cf. last footnote but one.

lik'ä mät't'ani (instead of *mät't'aň*) " giudice supremo " (cf. Guidi, *Vocabolario*, col. 115).[51]

k'älil and *'addis* have already been mentioned. To these *t'älik'* " deep " may be added.[52]

The nominal element *-ya* causes the palatalization of a preceding dental: *buk'aya* (root: *bk'l*) " germ "; *but mäk'äbbälya* coexists with *mäk'äbbäya* (root: *k'bl*) " instrument for receiving ", and similarly *ǧəlləbätiya* " rotule " (Baeteman, *Dictionnaire*, col. 1055 and Cohen, *Nouv. Ét.*, p. 29). *Miyazya*, the 8th month of the Abyssinian calendar, has to be understood (with Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 48) as " un mot de type savant."

In many cases, on the other hand, a prepalatal might appear today quite unwarranted. This is notably the case with the 3rd fem sing. perf. which in Amh. ends in *-äť*. E.g. *läk'k'ämäť* " she collected ". It would not be impossible to explain this through contact with a front vowel in the sentence-context, or as the action of a " furtive " *ə* spoken after the original *-t*. The Agaw languages show us, however, that the " original " form is likely to have been *-äti*. Thus Kemant, Bilin, and Quara have *-äti*, while Khamir has *-äť*. The *-ti* ending of the 3rd fem. sing. perf. is still preserved in Harari.

These few examples will suffice[53] to show that not only in Tňa and Tigre, but also in Amharic palatalization was a somewhat erratic process; active at some periods but less so in others, operative with elements attached to the verb but insensitive towards similar elements when added to the noun.

A greater understanding of the vagaries of palatalization can only be attained by a complete analysis, as far as that is possible, of most prepalatals occurring in Amharic, their restitution to either dental or velar origin, the influence of a front vowel either in permanent contact or within the fleeting sentence-context, the vexed problem of inter-Ethiopian borrowings, and the impact of the Cushitic substrata. Such an analysis might go some way towards elucidating the complex effects of palatalization as it presents itself today, and we might be

[51] This might have been considered a " learned word " of Gəʿəz origin which generally prevents palatalization.

[52] Praetorius (*Amh. Spr.*, para. 50, c) was, I believe, the first who saw that by an erroneous restitution of *y* to *l* in *k'äyy* " red " (for Gəʿəz *k'äyəḫ*) the language formed the " faulty " root *k'älla* " to be red ".

[53] For a more detailed documentation see Cohen, *Nouv. Études*, pp. 27–30.

able, at least to some extent, to disentangle the various stages and layers in the development of the language.[54]

Harari, too, possesses the full prepalatal series, except that *ǯ* seems to have become *ď* in all cases (possibly under the influence of Arabic), and I can now find no record of the former. Some prepalatals have even gone further, and it happens not infrequently that *ť*, *ť'*, and *ď* (in addition, of course, to *l*) become *y*[55] (cf. Cerulli, *Harari*, para. 11). While in many cases the influence of a front vowel is obvious, in others it is not easy to detect the original cause of palatalization. In such instances we have to fall back on either preceding or succeeding words in the sentence, analogy, and similar causes.

Cerulli (*loc. cit.*) finds that palatalization " rappresenta . . . una delle tendenze fondamentali della lingua." While this is no doubt correct, it is necessary to emphasize that in Harari—just as in the other languages—palatalization has not shown a consistent or uniform development; this is particularly noticeable in the question of palatalization for morphological reasons. On one side we find forms like *sək'al* " hang " (imp.), fem. *sək'ayi*,[56] and on the other *gədal* " kill ", fem. *gədali*.[57] Similarly, it appears that neither the suffix of the possessive pronoun, 1st pers. sing., attached to the noun nor "euphonic" *-i* added to groups of consonants at the end of words exert any influence on a preceding dental. In Harari, too, we have to assume different stages and layers, but a chronological analysis would even be more difficult here than in Amharic and Tña, as our knowledge of this language is still fairly limited[58]—despite Cohen's and Cerulli's great pioneering efforts.

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[54] M. Cohen, *Nouv. Ét.*, p. 28: " Sans doute pourrait-on essayer d'établir une chronologie, les règles de mouillure ayant dû être différentes suivant les périodes; malheureusement on n'a pas de documents pour une histoire continue. D'autre part l'influence du substrat couchitique a dû s'exercer d'une manière capricieuse."

[55] For some isolated instances of this kind in Amharic see Cohen, *Études*, pp. 399–400, and for Sidamo cf. Cerulli, *Stud. Etiop.*, II, p. 57.

[56] Cohen, *Études*, p. 283.

[57] Cerulli, *Harari*, p. 95.

[58] " Il faudrait beaucoup d'exemples pour élucider les conditions du phénomène [de la mouillure] et savoir s'il y a des cas où il est facultatif" (Cohen, *Études*, p. 284).

In *Gurage* palatalization covers a still wider field. In the first place, there is a distinction in sound between palatalized velars and palatalized dentals,[59] with the result that the prepalatal series is further extended in Gurage: g^{v} k^{v} k'^{v}, $ǯ$ $č$ $č'$, $ǯ$ $š$.[60] As in Amharic, palatalization is of considerable importance in the conjugation of the verb; in fact, its manifold effects are even more widespread throughout the morphology of the verb than is the case in Amharic. The matter has only recently been investigated again by Leslau (*Gur. Doc.*) and Polotsky (*Notes*) so that no repetition is necessary here.

In *Gafat* we find the same prepalatals as in Amharic. There also exists frequent and widespread interchange between a number of palatalized phonemes. Palatalization occurs likewise in the morphology of the verb, but not of the noun. Details on the prepalatals in Gafat will be found in Leslau's *Gafat Documents*, paragraph 5.

It has generally been held that, since palatalization exists in Semitic only within very narrow limits in some Arabic dialects and modern South-Arabian languages,[61] the prolific development of this phenomenon in modern Abyssinian languages—in contrast to Gəʿəz—must be due to the influence of *Cushitic*.[62] Here the prepalatals exist as a phonemically independent series and present a major feature in the Cushitic sound pattern. While we cannot say whether prepalatals have always existed independently in Cushitic, we know that some at least were developed out of velars and dentals[63] (as is generally the case with prepalatals in Semitic Ethiopian languages), mostly through the influence of a following front vowel. In some instances, however, such an influence can no longer be traced—just as that is often not possible in Semitic Ethiopic.

A few examples may suffice:

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[59] Cf. footnote on p. 67 above as well as pp. 142–143.

[60] The liquids *n*, *l*, *r* are reduced to vowels: *təmäsi* " you seem " (root *msl*), *təsäki* " you are drunk " (root *skr*). Cf. Leslau (*Gur. Doc.*, para. 4).

[61] Cf. Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, I, para. 79. See also p. 73 above. Leslau's *Lexique Soqoṭri* (para. 29) and Bittner's *Šḥauri* (p. 16) contain valuable material for the process of palatalization in modern South Arabian.

[62] Thus Cohen, *Études*, p. 11; Cerulli, *Studi Etiop.*, III, p. 7; Leslau *Word*, I, 1945, etc.

[63] Cf. Reinisch, *Bedauye*, paras. 26, 28, 38, 43. Conti Rossini, *Kemant*, p. 28.

Bedauye *šefi* " to drink milk "—Tña *s'äba* " milk "[64]; *yik'ew* " to call "—Gəʿəz *näk'äwä*; *kay* " to be "—*konä*.[65] Bilin *ťihum* (or *šihum*) " chin "—Gəʿəz *s'əḥəm*; *šum* " fast "—Gəʿəz *s'om*.[66] For central Agaw languages see Conti Rossini, *Kemant*, pp. 28 *et seqq*. Sidamo *ť'ommano* " sweet "—Sem. root *t'ʿm*; *ad̆dad̆*[67] " to command "—Amh. *ʾazzäzä*.[68] Galla *šimbiro* " bird "—Hebr. *ṣippor*.[69] Galla has large numbers of prepalatals of which some can be re-traced to Semitic velars and dentals.

Summing up: One has to agree with M. Cohen (*Études*, p. 11) who sees in palatalization " un des traits les plus importants des langues éthiopiennes modernes " and at the same time " une des marques les plus nettes de l'influence du substrat couchitique."

However, as to inter-Ethiopian influences the facts adduced earlier in this chapter militate against acceptance of the commonly held view that the southern languages present a state of affairs that differs in principle from that obtaining in the north. In particular, attention must be drawn to the fact that Tigre alone of all languages palatalizes a dental on suffixing the possessive pronoun of the 1st pers. sing. to the noun.[70]

Since it seems to be generally agreed that palatalization in Semitic Ethiopic is due to the impact of the Cushitic substrata, it should at once be stated (and the examples given above support this) that the Cushitic languages underlying North-Ethiopic[71] possess prepalatals to roughly the same extent as those on which South-Ethiopic has been laid. There is thus no reason to suppose that in this respect the southern languages have started out with any special advantage.

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[64] Reinisch, *Bedauye*, para. 26.

[65] Reinisch, *op. cit.*, para. 33.

[66] Reinisch, *Bilin*, para. 16.

[67] I.e. $d̆ < ž < z$.

[68] Cerulli, *Stud. Etiop.*, II, p. 57.

[69] Cohen, *Cham.-Sem.*, No. 307.

[70] In the light of this, M. Cohen's " tableau dialectal éthiopien " (*Études*, pp. 16–17) would require re-statement in some details.

[71] The terms North- and South-Ethiopic are used merely to describe geographical distribution; they are not at present meant to impart any notions of internal linguistic grouping.

See under CONCLUSIONS.

Palatalization of velars, as an active phenomenon, exists today only in Gurage. In all other languages this type of palatalization is extinct —in the south as well as in the north (see pp. 66–74 above).

A special case, in which a trace of velar origin may possibly have been preserved in pronunciation, has been discussed for Amharic on pp. 142–143 above. It is just possible that this Amharic instance as well as the regular phenomenon in Gurage show that total coalescence has only occurred as far as our imperfect audition is concerned, but that more refined means of recording might perceive a very slight difference in the sound of a prepalatal according to velar or dental origin. It has already been pointed out that in essence palatalization of velars consists of advancing the basis of articulation in the mouth, while that of the dentals entails a corresponding movement backwards. The question then remains as to whether the resulting new place of articulation is fully identical in both cases.[72]

Palatalization of dentals, i.e. in its active and alternating form, operates to somewhat differing degrees everywhere in modern Ethiopic with the sole exception of Tňa. In Tňa the so-called hush-sounds are, perhaps, often an expression of the labializing trends of the language. Alternation between *səm* and *šəm*, for instance, is merely indicative of certain social and individual habits in the way described above. This does not mean, however, that we have to imagine the origin of all prepalatals as due to labialization; the latter is merely a factor, but not necessarily the cause, in the process of palatalization in Tňa.

It is important to realize that in Tňa certain sounds were affected by palatalization in a sporadic manner. In other words: We are concerned here with isolated phenomena only; palatalization did not enter into the morphological frame, the verbal or nominal system, of the language.

In Tigre the position is, on the whole, not dissimilar—with the significant exception of the possessive pronoun 1st pers. sing. when attached to a noun ending in a dental or sibilant. This constitutes, however, a characteristic step away from Gəʿəz and Semitic and a

[72] It may be permissible to cite, as a fairly close parallel, the slight inaccuracies that arise in the diatonic scale on the piano, where B flat and A sharp, for instance, coalesce in the same key, although in reality they represent slightly different notes.

minor inroad into the protective position of the Semitic *Systemzwang*. It is probable that the prepalatals in both Bedauye and Bilin (Tigre's Cushitic substrates *par excellence*) may have to accept partial responsibility for this development. In this connection attention does not previously appear to have been drawn to the somewhat similar phenomenon in Bedauye (Reinisch, paras. 161–2, note (1)): *batyuk*, *batyak* " yours " may facultatively become *baťuk*, *baťak*.

In the Southern languages the conjugation of the verb is often appreciably affected by the operation of palatalization. This is quite regularly the case in Amharic and Gurage, but in Harari there are hesitations (p. 145 above). Outside the morphological sphere there are not a few instances in which a front vowel was allowed to follow a dental (in Amharic) without bringing about the relevant change (pp. 143–144 above).

Gurage, finally, where the exuberantly palatalizing Sidamo substrata have no doubt had a profound effect, has pushed the process of palatalization farthest by causing incisive and far-reaching changes which have given a markedly different aspect to its entire sound pattern.

With the possible exception of Gurage, all modern Ethiopian languages reveal various stages of development: palatalization was not always, not consistently, and not equally operative. This is quite patently not a feature they are likely to have inherited from a common source. In fact, this is, perhaps, an additional reason for thinking that even in the later stages of its life Gəʿəz had not developed palatalization. At the same time, we are able to observe the differing strength of the Cushitic impact as well as the varying degree of resistance put up by the Semitic Abyssinian languages concerned.

As far as palatalization is concerned we need, I think, have no hesitation in concluding that Tňa has kept closest to Gəʿəz, for here this process has only influenced isolated words, but has not found acceptance in the morphological system of the language.

Finally, we should refer to an interesting observation by M. Cohen (*Études*, p. 11) who considers that the palatalization of dentals may have to be interpreted " comme impliquant un certain relâchement de la prononciation ". In fact he sees in it a " disposition analogue " to the weakening of *k* to *k̲* and *b* to *b̲*. I do not know to what extent spirantization, i.e. the failure to effect closure, can be compared to palatalization which entails a partial change also in the basis of articulation.

SEMI-VOWELS

The two semi-vowels, *w* and *y*, are voiced fricatives which occupy an intermediate position between consonant and vowel.[73] In certain positions in the syllable they divest themselves almost entirely of their consonantal character and become very nearly vowels. *w* is a velar semivowel which is pronounced with rounding of the lips, while *y* is a palatal.

Some of the characteristics of *w* and *y* have already been described under labials and prepalatals respectively. We have seen there that in the modern Ethiopian languages *w* is sometimes derived from *b* (generally by way of spirantization, viz. *b̲*), and a *y* has frequently arisen through palatalization of a liquid or further softening of a prepalatal.

The major changes which the two semivowels undergo and the impact they, in turn, exert on neighbouring sounds belong to the treatment of combinatory effects.

Only a few general points have to be mentioned here, since most of the facts relating to the semivowels are considered under different heads.

Ethiopic shares with other South Semitic languages (South-Arabian and Arabic) the retention of initial *w* in cases where Hebrew and Aramaic have substituted *y*: *wld* " to give birth " — *yld*; *whb* " to give " — *yhb*; *wrḫ* " month " — *yrḫ*, etc. In Assyrian initial *w* has generally either disappeared (*ašābu* " to dwell " for *wašābu*) or been changed into *m* (*mummallidat* for *muwwallidat*), while in Babylonian it is usually still retained.

In a few instances initial *y* has become ' in Ethiopic; e.g. *'əd* " hand ".[74]

In general, *w* and *y* are in Ethiopian languages—as Dillmann[75] has pointed out—much more definitely marked off from one another than is the case in other Semitic languages. This is particularly noticeable in the inflexion of verbs containing *w* or *y* as a radical.

Leslau (*Doc. Tña*, para. 10) has found that in *Tña* the two semivowels are feebly articulated in intervocalic position, but strongly at

[73] " On entend en effet dans le son qu'elles produisent, à la fois le timbre d'une voyelle et le frottement d'une consonne spirante" (Grammont, *Traité*, p. 77).
[74] Cf. also Noeldeke, *Neue Beiträge*, pp. 202 *et seqq.*
[75] *Eth. Gramm.*, para. 32, end.

the beginning of words. In my own experience the matter presents itself in a slightly different light: *w* and *y* are articulated very clearly in all positions—except before back and front vowels respectively. In such a case their pronunciation can, indeed, be described as " feeble.". Nor need it surprise us that the utterance of the semivowels is less distinct before those vowels which are nearest to their own place of articulation.

In *Tigre* the position does not materially differ from that in Tña.

In *Amharic* the articulation of *y* seems to me rather more feeble, in particular in initial position. This is confirmed already in Salt's transliteration of *yäbahr* " of the sea " as *E-Bahr* (*Voyage*, Appendix, p.xix). In general it may be said that the relative stability of the semivowels in North-Ethiopic is not parallelled in the south. Many of the uncertainties and fluctuations in Amharic have been collected by Praetorius (*Amh. Spr.*, pp. 47 *et seqq.*) and been further elucidated by Cohen (*Nouv. Études*, pp. 47 *et seqq.*). Gafat semivowels undergo alterations to about the same extent (Leslau, *Gafat*, para. 9).

Semivowels appear to be weakest in *Harari* where considerable changes occur in the conjugation of verbs containing *w* or *y* as radicals. But also outside the verbal system, initial *w* and *y* are frequently reduced to *u* and *i* respectively.

These very summary notes will suffice to show that Tña and Tigre closely reflect the state of affairs so familiar from Gə'əz, while the southern tongues show a greater instability. In not a few instances *w* and *y* are here subjected to total vocalization.

The criteria for the internal grouping of the Ethiopian languages suggested by the semivowels do, in fact, coincide with the actual geographical distribution of these languages as we find it today.

GLOTTALIZED EJECTIVES

k' (*k̯'*) *p'* *t'* *s'* (*z'*) *č'*

All ejective phonemes have been previously discussed together with the corresponding non-ejective sounds with which they share their basis, but not their manner, of articulation. It will be necessary to examine here the way these Ethiopian ejectives are pronounced and to establish their origin as well as their relationship vis-à-vis the emphatic sounds in Semitic and Cushitic.

In the absence of accurate information on the pronunciation of Gəʿəz in its early stages (cf. the chapter on the velars), we shall here assume that the articulation of the ejectives in Gəʿəz was similar to that in modern Ethiopic. This is, of course, purely hypothetical, for we know little or nothing about the pronunciation of the emphatic consonants in either classical Ethiopic or South Arabian. It is, however, likely that by the time Gəʿəz had emerged as an independent language it had already taken on the peculiar character which the emphatic consonants in all modern Abyssinian languages so uniformly reveal.[76] After all, in the Aksum inscriptions—with all their South Arabian affinities—Gəʿəz shows already quite distinctive phonetic trends, such as the elimination of all South Arabian interdentals, of a sibilant, and a pharyngal. Transcriptions of either foreign words into Gəʿəz or the inverse process throw no light on the early pronunciation of the Ethiopic ejectives (cf. p. 48 above).

The best description of these sounds, contained in any grammar of Gəʿəz known to me, was given by Ludolf nearly three centuries ago. He had, of course, the benefit of his informant's (Gregory's) living testimony, an advantage which most of his successors did not have. Ludolf (*Gramm. Æth.*, p. 6) writes: " Inter omnes autem maxime notabiles et pronunciatione difficillimæ sunt sequentes *k' t' s' z' p'* quarum exempla in universa Europa non reperiuntur. . . . Proxime accedunt ad literas illas, quas differentiæ causa in syllabario nostro apostropho notavimus,[77] sed tam valida instrumentorum collisione, et quadam soni repercussione efferuntur, ut tarde et difficulter admodum imitari possis."

The exact articulation of the emphatic sounds in early Gəʿəz must remain a matter for speculation; nor does the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz do more than reflect the phonetic habits of the various modern vernaculars. We are, however, reasonably well informed about the articulation of the glottalized ejectives in present-day Ethiopian tongues.

In the first place, it should be stated that this ejective articulation is uniform throughout all modern Abyssinian languages. Secondly, it

[76] Whether the glottalized ejectives originated perhaps in Arabia and were not only developed after immigration into Africa, will be discussed later on.

[77] Ludolf was, as far as I know, the first to introduce the transcription *k'*, *t'*, etc., for ejective sounds which is also adopted in the present study.

is not restricted to plosives only, but applies equally to the sibilant fricative.[78]

Thirdly, the most important characteristic of these sounds is a twofold simultaneous movement, i.e. the buccal[79] articulation of the consonant concerned and, at the same time, closure of the glottis. Raising of the glottis, probably also accompanied by pharyngal constriction, produces a pressure of air which is set free by breaking the mouth closure. The latter is released a fraction of a second before the glottal closure and thus " the double closure and release give a particularly sharp sound to the plosive".[80] The vowel following such a consonant conveys the phonic impression of being completely detached from it.[81]

Mittwoch (*Proben*, p. 191) explains the articulation of Amharic *k'* in the following way:

> " So wird beim *k'* zunächst ein arabisches *q* articuliert, dann eine Weile die Stimmritze fest verschlossen; hernach wird unter starkem explosiven Geräusch mit festem Absatz der dazugehörige Vokal gesprochen. Man könnte das Wort ቀን am besten arabisch mit قَانْ transcribieren."

This statement is interesting not only on account of the strongly glottalized impression these phonemes have rightly made on Mittwoch but also on account of its inaccuracies. In the first instance, it is not correct to say that initially Arabic *q* is articulated, for the velar articulation of the Ethiopic sound is equivalent to that of *k*[82]; the difference between *k* and *k'* lies in the simultaneous glottal closure and the strong ejection with which the latter is produced. The mouth position of Arabic *q* is somewhat different. In the second place, glottal closure does not *follow* (as Mittwoch believes) the velar articulation, but is established *simultaneously* with it.[83]

Klingenheben (*ZfES*, X, pp. 185 *et seqq.*) has subjected Mittwoch's

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[78] Whether or not *s'* is in some modern Ethiopian languages an affricate rather than the glottalized ejective counterpart to *s*, is irrelevant in this connection. See chapter on sibilants above.

[79] This seems a more suitable term than " oral."

[80] Westermann-Ward, p. 96.

[81] Or inversely: the ejective seems " staccato dal suono che segue " (Moreno, *Galla*, p. 24).

[82] See also Leslau, as quoted on p. 46 above.

[83] In this detail also Leslau's statement (p. 46 above) requires revision.

observations to a detailed scrutiny on the strength of investigations carried out with Amharic speaking informants. He arrived at the conclusion that the glottal closure is established either at the same time or possibly even slightly before the oral closure. Klingenheben's statement on the Ethiopian ejectives deserves, I think, to be accepted as the final verdict on their manner of articulation.[84]

It has already been noted that the pronunciation as glottalized ejectives is not limited to plosives, but may equally apply to fricatives (or continuants), i.e. *s'* and *ḫ'*. The nature of both these sounds has previously been examined in some detail (pp. 49 *et seqq.* and 111 *seqq.* above). Here we need only add that they are produced in precisely the same manner as other ejectives, i.e. with simultaneous buccal and glottal closure.

In the chapter on the velars reference has been made to the "reduction" of *k'* to ', and the limited extent of this phenomenon has been outlined for those Abyssinian languages in which it occurs. Brockelmann (*Grundriss*, p. 121) states that Arabic *q* becomes ' in Cairo, in most Syrian towns, in Malta, and among the Jews of North Africa.[85] In Cushitic languages (where normally *k'* has a very strongly glottalized and ejective character) the process *k'* > ' occurs with some frequency. Moreover—and this is significant—in Cushitic this phenomenon is not restricted to *k'*, but applies to all glottalized ejectives.[86]
Examples:

Janjero *k'a'* (< *k'aǩ'*) " conciare le pelli "
ma'o (< *moḍ*) " buono "[87];

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[84] " Es handelt sich aber bei diesen Kehlkopfverschlusslauten des Amharischen überhaupt nicht um zwei nur zufällig zu einer Lauteinheit verbundene, örtlich wie zeitlich aber getrennte selbständige Artikulationen. . . . Vielmehr müssen wir annehmen dass bei diesen Amharischen Lauten die Stimmritze schon während der oralen Artikulation, d.h. also zum mindesten schon während des oralen Verschlusses, geschlossen ist; ja teilweise mag der laryngale Verschluss schon gleichzeitig mit dem oralen, ja früher als dieser, gebildet werden. Die orale Explosion findet dann noch mit geschlossener Stimmritze statt, und nach jener erst tritt dann auch die laryngale Explosion mit dem Einsatz des folgenden Vokals ein." (Klingenheben, *loc. cit.*)

[85] ". . . Die Velarexplosiva ist ganz aufgegeben und nur noch der feste An- oder Absatz der Vokale übrig geblieben, wie *'amar* 'Mond', *ḫa'* 'Recht' . . ."

[86] ". . . Questo fenomeno, generale nel cuscitico, è molto diffuso anche nel Sidamo. . . ." (Cerulli, *Stud. Etiop.*, II, p. 49.)

[87] Cerulli, *Stud. Etiop.*, III, p. 8.

Sidamo *'od* (Somali *k'ad*) " to be hungry ";
re' (Saho *rap'*) " to die ".[88]
Galla *'irsa* (< *ḍirsa*) " male ".[89]

This process is described by Cerulli (*Stud. Etiop.*, III, p. 8) as " . . . prevalenza dell'occlusione glottale sull'articolazione immediatamente precedente. . . ."[90]

Leslau (*Word*, I, 1945, p. 64) has rightly pointed out that this change, this " affaiblissement ", is only explicable from the nature of the Ethiopian ejectives as glottalized sounds. The transition *x'* (i.e. *x'*) > ' could not be accounted for, were the Ethiopian emphatic consonants identical in character with those in the other Semitic languages. On the other hand, we have seen that, at least in the case of *q*, the weakening to ' does occur, though only dialectally, in Arabic. The question now arises whether Semitic *q* was at one time, either in certain dialects or possibly even in general, a glottalized sound. Brockelmann (*Grundriss*, p. 121) and especially Bergsträsser[91] conjecture that the glottalized pronunciation of *q* was the one current in proto-Semitic. This view has, I think, much to commend it. It is also supported by the identical phenomenon in the Cushitic languages with which *Urverwandtschaft* may nowadays be considered an established fact. In any event, I know of no other plausible explanation for the phenomenon *q* > ' (or rather *k'* > ').

M. Cohen (*Études*, pp. 45 and 108) believes that Sidamo (where—as we have seen—*x'* > ' occurs with some frequency) is responsible for the " weakening " of glottalized ejectives to Hamza in Semitic Ethiopic.[92] While the area of the Sidamo people is, indeed, likely to have originally extended farther to the north than is the case today,[93] their language could only be made answerable for *k'* > ' in Shoan

[88] Cerulli, *Stud. Etiop.*, II, p. 50.

[89] Moreno, *Galla*, p. 27.

[90] See also Cerulli, *Harari*, p. 67.

[91] " Die älteste Aussprache der emphatischen Laute ist wohl die mit nachfolgendem Kehlkopfverschluss wie sie heutzutage noch in Abessinien üblich ist; vielfach ist dafür eine abgeschwächte Aussprache mit Velarisierung eingetreten." (*Einführung*, p. 5.)

[92] M. Cohen has later (*Nouv. Études*, p. 41) asked for further examination of the whole matter.

[93] So convincingly shown by Conti Rossini in his *Studi su popolazioni*, pp. 153–4.

Amharic. This would, of course, still leave this phenomenon in Tigre[94] or Arabic dialects unaccounted for. It seems, therefore, rather more likely that the glottalized articulation of the ejective sounds, wherever it occurs, was liable to give rise in certain circumstances to a surrender of the oral closure in favour of the concomitant glottal closure. I think we need not look for any foreign influences in this connection, but may assume that such an event could happen spontaneously, perhaps at first through failure of the mouth articulation to become fully perceptible in face of the strong glottal release; later by analogous extension of such an occasional failure to a fully fledged facultative variant.

If Brockelmann and Bergsträsser are right about the originally glottalized character of the Semitic emphatic sounds, then we may conjecture that Ethiopic received its glottalized ejectives from Arabia. Their original manner of articulation was preserved in all Ethiopian languages thanks to the influence of the various Cushitic substrates which all (or nearly all) possess these sounds. The other Semitic languages gave up the glottalized nature of the emphatics and merely maintained their oral articulation. With the disappearance of the glottal appendix they would also have lost their ejective force without, however, surrendering their distinct and still decidedly emphatic nature. While some of the Semitic and Cushitic Ethiopian languages (as well as a number of Arabic town dialects) have in certain cases given up the mouth articulation of these composite sounds and only retained the glottal closure accompanying it, most Semitic languages would appear to have taken precisely the opposite course, i.e. surrendering the glottal element and maintaining the oral closure alone.

If this view is correct, then we need not assume with Leslau[95] and others that the Ethiopian glottalized ejectives are due to the impact of Cushitic, but rather that Cushitic prevented their disappearance. Thus origin and preservation of these sounds seem to be the combined action of Semitic and Cushitic.

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[94] Where it seems to occur in some rare instances; cf. Littmann as quoted on p. 48 above. Merx-Beurmann (*Vocabulary of the Tigre language with a grammatical sketch*, Halle, 1868, p. 48; see on this work *ZDMG*, XXII, p. 746) also appear to have encountered it in Tigre (quoted by Praetorius, *Amh. Spr.*, p. 71). I cannot confirm, however, Praetorius' assertion (*Tña Spr.*, p. 101) that *k'*>' also occurs " dialectally " in Tña.

[95] *Word*, I, 1945.

Unfortunately, it is not possible within the framework of this book to deal with two important articles (by Trombetti and Meinhof—see BIBLIOGRAPHY) on the emphatic sounds. Though most stimulating and suggestive, their conclusions remain highly conjectural. There is, however, one point in Meinhof's article to which reference must here be made, since this matter will not be included below under combinatory effects: the influence of an emphatic sound on a following vowel. Meinhof believes that an emphatic consonant regularly changes a vowel, with which it is in contact, to *o* or *u*. It is, of course, well known that in Arabic, for instance, emphatic sounds generally exert an influence on vowel shade and change front vowels into back vowels.[96] This is not, according to my observations, the case in Ethiopian languages where vowel-colour seems to remain unaffected by an ejective consonant. This is also M. Cohen's view[97] who states: " Ces consonnes [i.e. les emphatiques] n'ont aucune influence spéciale sur les voyelles voisines par le fait de leur articulation glottale."

The reason for this state of affairs must, I submit, be seen in the fact that the articulation of the Arabic emphatics is accompanied by raising of the back of the tongue. This lends a somewhat dark (velar) shade to the following vowel, i.e. makes it a back vowel. The usual Semitic emphatic consonants are thus in direct contact with a subsequent vowel, whereas the Ethiopian ejectives interpose glottal closure between the oral explosion and the next sound which appears as a detached entity (see p. 153 above). A laryngal, including glottal stop, changes a fairly close palatal vowel (*ä*) into an open back vowel (*a*). This change does not occur after the glottal closure accompanying the Ethiopian ejectives, because in that case the glottal element is the final component of a complex sound and imports off-glide (*Absatz*).[98] In other positions, however, the glottal stop acts as an on-glide (*Einsatz*) and is closely connected to a subsequent sound.

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[96] Cf. Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, para. 74, d, and also Grammont, *Traité*, p. 215.
[97] *Traité*, p. 39.
[98] Being separated, detached, from the ensuing vowel by fractions of a second.

CHAPTER II

VOWELS

The Ethiopian languages share with Semitic in general the characteristic preponderance of the consonants over the vowels. This preponderance lies, however, more in their greater significance for semantic distinctions than in any vast numerical superiority in any given text. Classical Ethiopic has 26 consonant phonemes and 7 vowel phonemes, but statistical samples show that the former predominate only in a ratio of about 5 : 4.[1]

The Ethiopic script expresses a greater number of vowel phonemes than does, for instance, Arabic writing. In fact, all phonemes are graphically represented, and there exist relatively few sub-phonemes. This latter fact is, perhaps, best explained by the peculiar quasi-syllabic character of the Ethiopic alphabet[2] in which consonants and vowels are welded into a unit[3] which appears to allow little scope to sub-phonemic variants.[4]

Consonants are in Ethiopic[5] the carriers of primary semantic distinctions. This is shown by oppositions like:

Gəʿəz *bäräkʾä* " to shine " — *bäräkä* " to bow ";

Amh. *täkʾäbbälä* " to receive " — *täkʾäbbärä* " to be buried ";

Tña *ʾarägä* " to become old " — *ʿarägä* " to ascend ".

Vowels, on the other hand, generally (though not invariably) merely impart meaning-variants: e.g. Gəʿəz *yəkʾät(t)əl* " he kills " — *yəkʾtəl* (subjunctive). The basic root conception remains unaltered. English

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[1] Cantineau (*Esquisse*, p. 93) has shown that in classical Arabic (where we have 26 consonant phonemes and only three vowel phonemes) we find in an average text 52 per cent. consonants and 48 per cent. vowels.

[2] Cf. *Africa*, July 1951, p. 209.

[3] To the Ethiopian the conception of separate vowels and consonants is an incomprehensible abstraction. He cannot think of *a*, *i*, or *u*, but only of *ba*, *bi*, and *bu*, or *ka*, *ki*, and *ku*.

[4] That is to say that a high degree of literacy, coupled with the rigidity of the graphic system, appears to have had a limiting influence on the number of allophones.

[5] As well as elsewhere in Semitic.

tackle and *tickle* have entirely different meanings, but Gəʿəz *täkəl* " plant " and *təkəl* " plant " (imper.) are merely variations of the same root. While the same is generally true for Arabic and Hebrew, for instance, there nevertheless exist quite a few cases where one or more vowels impart primary semantic distinctions:[6]

Arabic	*ǧimāl* " camels " — *ǧamāl* " beauty "
	rūḥ " spirit " — *rīḥ* " wind ";
Hebrew	*ʿäräb* " evening " — *ʿeräb* " mixture "
	ḥäräb " sword " — *ḥoräb* " drought ";
Amharic	*mäkʾamiya*[7] " instrumental for eating " —
	mäkʾomiya[8] " instrumental for standing ";
Gəʿəz	*sämun* " week " — *sämen* " north ";
Tña	*sämay* " heaven " — *səmuy* " famous ".

The seven Ethiopic vowel-orders[9] all express qualitative distinctions; quantity has no place in this scheme at all—contrary to all earlier assumptions. This also applies, of course—as we shall see presently —to the distinction between the first and the fourth orders. Although this fact has in more recent times been stressed by Mittwoch, Cohen[10], and others, it is still too often disregarded.

Here is Mittwoch's verdict after study with Abyssinian informants:

" Der Unterschied zwischen den einzelnen Vokalen ist nicht sowohl, wie man das gewöhnlich darstellt, ein quantitativer, als vielmehr ein qualitativer. Nicht die Länge oder Kürze ist für einen Vokal charakteristisch . . . sondern es kommt vor allem

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[6] We need not here go into the reasons for this which are often either an intricate semasiological development or a combination of various phonetic factors causing the coalescence of originally distinct roots.

[7] Root probably *kʾhm*.

[8] Root *kʾwm*.

[9] The order of the seven Ethiopian vowels is old and well-established (just as is the order of the Ethiopian alphabet—although I do not, of course, mean to assert that both were fixed at the same time). I have seen the traditional sequence of the vowels in scribal exercises (on margins and fly-leaves) in MSS which have to be dated as early as the 13th and 14th centuries (at Debra Bizen and Debra Libanos). We know, however, nothing about the reason for this sequence; it must be purely fortuitous, as there are no apparent phonetic or graphic causes which might explain it.

[10] " Chacune de ces sept voyelles peut avoir des quantités . . . différentes, sans cesser d'être la même. . . ." (*Traité*, p. 42.)

darauf an, ob ein Vokal eng oder weit gesprochen wird. Auch der I. und IV. Vokal unterscheiden sich nicht als *a* und *ā*; denn auch der IV. Vokal wird . . . mitunter kurz gesprochen. Vielmehr ist auch bei ihnen der Unterschied ein qualitativer." (Mittwoch, *Trad. Ausspr.*, pp. 13 *et seqq.*)

This is, indeed, the unanimous evidence produced by the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz as well as by the modern languages. Each of the seven vowels can be long or short, although some are more frequently long and others more generally short. Thus the 6th order vowel *ə* is long in *gən* " autem ", or *gəz*[11] " Gəʿəz " (this is how the name of the language is generally pronounced). On the other hand, the 4th order vowel *a* is short in *k'ätälakkəmu* " they (fem.) have killed you ".

Vowel-length is non-distinctive in Ethiopic[12]—in contrast to consonant-length (i.e. gemination[13]) which is distinctive. In Ethiopian languages I know of no pair of words which is distinguished by vowel quantity only[14]; in other words: vowel-length is non-phonemic in Ethiopic.[15]

The description of the vowels in Ethiopian languages has frequently been vitiated by confusion of their actual sound with etymological origin and correspondence. Etymologically it is, of course, correct to

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[11] Cf. in English where the short *ə* of, e.g., " along " is long in " bird " [bə:d]. In English this is an unrounded central vowel, in Ethiopic it is uttered with rounding; cf. Jones, *Phoneme*, pp. 56–8.

[12] It is distinctive, for instance, in Arabic: *qŭtila* " he was killed "—*qūtila* " war has been waged ". In Hebrew, on the other hand, I cannot think of a pair of words solely distinguished by vowel-quantity. See, however, below under Gurage, pp. 165 *et seqq.*

[13] See the chapter on gemination below.

[14] Recognition of this fact has generally been obscured by the erroneous assumption that the 1st and 4th orders, on one hand, and the 6th and 5th orders, on the other, stand to each other as the equivalent short and long vowels.

The above statement about the non-phonemic character of vowel quantity in Ethiopic is, in my view, certainly applicable to Gəʿəz, Tŭa, Tigre, and Amh. I cannot pronounce on the position in Gurage and Harari where the existent notation does not appear to me wholly conclusive.

Cf. also below, pp. 168 *et seqq.*

[15] Unlike English where it is, of course, phonemic: [ful] " full "—[fu:l] " fool "; [fit] " fit "—[fi:t] " feat " or " feet "; [kam] " come "—[ka:m] " calm."

compare the 1st order vowel to short *a* in Arabic (e.g. *nafs*), or Ethiopic *ə* to Arabic short *i* and *u* (Eth. *labəsa* — Arab. *labisa*; Eth. *'əzən* — Arab. *'uḏn*)[16]. Eth. *a*, *i*, *u* correspond to the same long vowels in the other languages, while *e* and *o* have arisen from original diphthongs (*bet* < *bayt*; *yom* < *yawm*). This etymological comparison must not, however, be taken to have any relevance to the actual acoustic quantity of the vowel concerned.

1*st order* (*gə'əz*): As stated on preceding pages the 1st order vowel does not differ from that of the 4th order in quantity but in quality. Evidence provided by the traditional pronunciation of Gə'əz, the position in modern Ethiopic as well as in related languages shows that the timbre of this vowel is *ä*,[17] i.e. a half-open fronted *a*-sound spoken with fairly well spread lips. This is in contrast—as we shall see later on—to the 4th order which is an open *a* with lips in a neutral position; in fact, it is rather more a back vowel approaching Jones' cardinal vowel No. 5 (the *a* in " father "). The 1st order vowel, on the other hand, is a centralized vowel.

That this was also the case in Gə'əz finds support in the following facts:

(*a*) 'Ιησους is transcribed into Gə'əz as ኢየሱስ, and there exist of course a good many other instances of this kind. Greek *alpha*, on the other hand, is generally rendered into Ethiopic in the 4th order (e.g. in " Daniel ").

(*b*) The somewhat indistinct character of the 1st order vowel is also shown in the transcription of Σοφονιας as ሰፎንያስ and in the Arabs' inability to make up their minds about the first vowel in Ethiopic *mäs'ḥaf* " book " which, as a loanword in Arabic (cf. Noeldeke, *Neue Beiträge*, p. 49), appears as *muṣḥaf*, *miṣḥaf*, and only very rarely as *maṣḥaf*.

(*c*) In the Aksum inscriptions ኦሌ appears as a variant of ኦለ (cf. Littmann, *Æthiopische Inschriften*, Berlin, 1950, p. 112).

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[16] In a few cases Ethiopic *ə* also corresponds to short *a*—as Praetorius, *Æth. Gramm.*, p. 9, has pointed out—e.g. *'əlf*—*'alf*.

[17] With free variant *ä* in certain conditions, i.e. after *w* or labio-velars. The position in the case of laryngals will be considered in chapter iv (combinatory effects) below.

(*d*) The frequent confusion of ሰ and ሠ; both occur fairly frequently (cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*). Both these variant forms can only be satisfactorily explained if we assume that the first order was pronounced *ä* and not as short *a*, for only *ä* can be mixed up with *e*, but not *a*.

(*e*) It has long been noticed that the attachment of suffixes to prepositions shows certain difficulties in that the final vowel of such prepositions (i.e. the 1st order vowel) becomes *e* (i.e. 5th order), as soon as a suffix is attached. I have not hitherto seen a satisfactory explanation of this fact (cf. Dillmann, *Gramm.*, para. 167, 3; Praetorius, *Gramm.*, para. 151, etc.). I would suggest that this seemingly strange phenomenon is easily explained by assuming that the 1st order vowel was always *ä* and not *a*, i.e. *məslä* and not *məsla* (" with "), or *'əmnä* and not *'əmna* (" from "). On the attachment of a suffix the stress shifted from the ante-penultimate to the penultimate and caused *ä* to become *ē*. Had, on the other hand, the final vowel been short *a*, one would have expected it to become, under the impact of the shift of stress, long *a*, i.e. the 4th order. Forms like *məsléhu* (" with him ") or *'əmnéhu* (" from him ") make it appear quite certain that the prepositions without suffix terminated in *ä* and not *a*.

In a Gə'əz letter written by Ludolf's informant Gregory[18] the *e* in the German words " Berg ", " Albert ", " Bernhard ", is transliterated by the 1st order and not the 5th. Naturally, this reflects Amharic usage, but it also shows us how the 1st order vowel sounded in the traditional pronunciation of Gə'əz three centuries ago.[19] On the evidence presented we are, I submit, entitled to assume that in this respect there exists no significant divergence between Gə'əz and the modern tongues.

Contrary to an assumption by Ludolf (see preceding footnote) and many of his successors, the 1st order vowel may be short as well as

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[18] *Comm. Hist.*, pp. 37–8.

[19] And even four centuries ago in the writings of the Portuguese. Ludolf, in his Ethiopic grammar, p. 7, has seen the matter in a more accurate light than many of his successors: ". . . pronunciatur per *A* Anglicum, vel *ae* Belgicum in *aerd* terra, seu *ä* Germ. quod ad *E* balans fere accedit . . . (ut ከመ " sicut " legitur Angl. *Cama*. . . . መንፈስ *Menfes* " spiritus ") verum sono brevi et tam obscuro ut audiens ab eo fere abhorreat. . . ."

long. It may be true, however, that in the majority of cases it is short.

In *yək'ättəl* " he kills " *ä* is short[20]; in the first syllable of *gäläb* " fishing hook " it is long, in the second it is again short.

All this applies equally to *Tña*. Leslau (*Doc. Tña.*) calls *ä* " une voyelle prépalatalisée ". I am not sure whether his " pré " is justified, but it certainly is a palatal vowel. In *säbärä* Leslau hears *ä* " d'une quantité moyenne "; I think in the first syllable it may even be described as long.

For the 1st order in *Tigre* the evidence seems rather more conflicting. Munzinger (in Dillmann, *Lex.*, Appendix, p. v) heard: *a*, *ä*, *e*, *ö* in accordance with their " prononciation allemande ". In looking through his vocabulary, however, one will find that the shades *e*, *ä* greatly preponderate. The timbre *ö*, though rather indistinct, may indeed sometimes be perceived. Perhaps this explains why Σοφονιας was transliterated into Gəʿəz as ሰፎንያስ (p. 161 above).

The Tigre grammar of the Missione Cattolica (p. 8) states that " tutte le lettere di questo primo ordine dovrebbero suonare *e* ". And similarly Leslau (*JAOS*, 1945, p. 165): " 1st order *ä* (vowel between *a* and *e*) " . . . After a short visit to Keren Leslau has now pointed out (*JAOS*, 1948, p. 127) that two kinds of *ä* may be distinguished in Tigre, one open (and the other presumably somewhat closer). I have not myself noticed this distinction[21]; in any event, it is of course non-phonemic.

It will have become apparent from references to Ludolf's writings, earlier in this chapter, that in *Amharic* the sound of the 1st order is *ä*.

[20] According to Mittwoch (*Trad. Ausspr.*, p. 14) it sounds like the *ä* in the German word *Blätter*.

[21] As has been mentioned in the INTRODUCTION, our knowledge of Tigre is still highly unsatisfactory. Littmann's promised (*Princeton texts*, p. xv) grammar, dictionary, and transcriptions have not hitherto been published, and phonetic transcriptions of Tigre texts are an urgent desideratum. My own transcriptions are too limited in scope as well as geographical extent.

The above-quoted remarks by the Missione Cattolica (and partly also those by Leslau) are principally concerned with the representation of the actual Tigre sounds within the framework of the classical Ethiopic script. What we mainly need now is an accurate description of these sounds—irrespective of their graphic expression. The same applies, to a large extent, to Sundstroem's observations (*MO*, 1914.)

Isenberg heard it as the *a* in " fat ", " lad " and " answering the *Fetḥa* in Arabic[22] and the *Patach* in Hebrew. Like the former, it is modifiable, approaching the *e* sound or the short Hebrew *Segol* " (*Gramm.*, p. 9). Guidi (*Gramm.*, para. 4, b) states that the 1st order in Amharic is generally pronounced " fra l'*a* e l'*e* aperto " as the English *a* in " bad ".[23] He adds that the 1st order vowel " priva di qualunque accento si pronuncia con suono breve e non ben chiaro. . ."

Armbruster, speaking of this " variable vowel ", refers to a " . . . gradation of sounds from *e* in English ' bet ' through approx. *u* in ' but ', *eu* in ' neuf ' . . . *ö* in ' Götter ' to *a* in ' was '. . . ." (*Gramm.*, p. 5.)

M. Cohen (*Traité*, pp. 42–3) has rightly stressed that in Amh. the vowel of the 1st order and that of the 4th are " deux *a* différents par le timbre ". But I hope that my observations above have shown that there is no evidence to support his view that " en ancien éthiopien la première était un *a* bref, la seconde un *a* long ".

M. Cohen perceives the 1st order in Amh. as a central vowel " articulée avec une légère fermeture, produite par le relèvement de la partie centrale de la langue vers le milieu du palais. . . ." His examples (*loc. cit.*) seem to show, however, that he is inclined to describe its timbre as somewhat too close to that of the 6th order vowel. The same applies, in my view, to his table in *Études*, p. 18; the difference between the Amharic vowel inclining towards *ə* and the Tňa timbre *ä* seems to me a little overstated. I have examined fairly large numbers of Tňa and Amharic speakers (paying special attention to the opinions expressed by M. Cohen), but I have been unable to hear any noticeable difference in their colouring of the 1st order vowel—although it might just be possible that in some instance the timbre *ä* is less distinct in Amharic than in Tňa. M. Cohen's observations in *Nouv. Études* (pp. 51 and 77) are possibly meant to supersede some of his earlier views, though I am not sure that the reliance he places on the Amharic experiments carried out by Westermann-Ward (*African Phonetics*, p. 40) is wholly justified in view of their extremely limited character.

On the whole, the descriptions provided by Armbruster and Guidi

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[22] Thus also in Basset's edition of the *Futuḥ al-Ḥabašah*, p. ٢١٧.

[23] I.e. not a short vowel—or at least one that may be long and short.

(cited above) seem to me most adequate.[24] Klingenheben calls the relevant vowel a " Hartgaumen oder Palatalvokal . . . weites *e*. . . ." (*ZfES*, X, p. 196.)

As to quantity, Cohen (*Traité*, p. 42) is no doubt right in saying that the 1st order vowel is " ordinairement de durée moyenne ". There also exist a number of cases where it is long: *fidäl* " letter of the alphabet ", *'afär* " dust ", etc.[25]

In *Gurage* the position seems somewhat complicated, and Leslau's transcriptions (*Gur. Doc.*) are not wholly unequivocal. Since I have not heard Gurage spoken, I shall content myself here with recording very briefly what appears to emerge from the available documents.[26]

Leslau (*op. cit.*, p. 13) registers *ä* (" with free variant *å* before or after a labial and labio-velar ") and " open *ä* ". It is, however, not quite clear whether these two sounds are phonemically distinct. This point has also been discussed by Polotsky (*Notes*, p. 17) who finds that " the evidence is somewhat inconclusive ".

Polotsky (*BSL*, 1938, p. 138) renders the 1st order vowel " normalement par *ə*; par *ä* là seulement où ce timbre a été distinctement perçu (surtout après *d*, *g* et les prépalatales) ". E.g. *bəq'q'ärəm* " brasser " (*ibidem*, p. 151), but also outside the conditions stated by Polotsky: *anzäraba* " it did not rain "; *ambära* " he did not eat " (*op. cit.*, p. 143).

In *Harari*, too, the position is not entirely unambiguous, and M. Cohen (*Études*, p. 262) has justly underlined the need for further investigation " on the spot ". Cerulli's excellent Harari studies have not quite removed these ambiguities. He observes (*Harari*, p. 57) that *a* has generally " timbro più chiaro della *a* dell'amarico " and

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[24] Among indigenous accounts Afeworq's verdict might be mentioned here: " Il primo di tali ordini ha per tutte le lettere . . . un suono leggero, simile quasi alla *e* apperta, al suono fra la *a* ed *e*. . . ."

[25] Cf. also the list given by Cohen (*Nouv. Études*, pp. 77–8). One would not follow him, however, in thinking that the final liquid in most of the examples quoted by him might be responsible for the vowel length in these cases. There are quite a few instances disproving this: Cohen's own *gämäd* " string ", and also *kəbäd* " weight ", *bərät* " iron ", etc.

[26] Polotsky (*Notes*, pp. 16–7) appears to think that in one or two cases vowel length may be distinctive, but at the same time he speaks also of a—though rather slight—qualitative difference.

is only " sporadicamente " pronounced *ä*, normally through the effects of combinatory conditions: in contact with vowels (*i*—and possibly other front vowels) as well as with consonants (prepalatals). As my knowledge of Harari is derived from written documents only, I have nothing to add to this. It is clear, however, that further inquiry is necessary not only into the precise sound of this Harari vowel (equivalent to the 1st order of classical Ethiopic),but also into phonemic conditions.

2nd order (*ka'əb*): This is a velar vowel (*u*), rather close, with the tongue raised high in the mouth; very noticeable rounding of lips. There is no reason to suppose—as Mittwoch (*Trad. Ausspr.*, p. 15) has rightly shown—that in classical Ethiopic *u* was always long. It is long in *k'um*, but medium or short in *k'ätälu* and *k'ätälukkəmu*. The short υ in ὕσσωπος is rendered in Gə'əz by the 2nd order: *husop'u* (*St. John*, xix, 29).

All this applies equally to Tňa of which Leslau (*Doc. Tňa.*, p. 8) has correctly said that the *u* of the second order " est le plus souvent d'une quantité longue "—but not always. E.g. *yəḵ'ätluwwo* (short *u*).

Nothing has to be added for Tigre. Here, too, the vowel may be either short or long[27] (cf. Leslau, *JAOS*, 1948, p. 127).

In Amharic the 2nd order is also a " Velarvokal " (Klingenheben, *ZfES*, X, p. 196) with strong rounding of lips. Isenberg (*Gramm.*, p. 9) had already noticed that *u* may be short as in " full " and long as in " fool ".[28]

Armbruster compares this vowel to that in English " full ", when short, and to that in Italian " luna ", when long (*Gramm.*, p. 5). He also observes, correctly, that " final *u* is generally weak, sometimes very short " (*Gramm.*, p. 26). This applies in particular to the vowel in the suffixes *-hu* (or *-ku*) as well as to original *qətul* forms where *u* has moved into final position through the disappearance of the laryngals, e.g. *bəzu* " much ".[29]

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[27] Littmann (*Princeton Texts*, I, p. xiv) observes that *u* in the last syllable before a laryngal is always shortened.

[28] Rendered into Arabic as *ū* (ـُو) and *ŭ* (*ḍamma*) in Basset's ed. of the *Futuḥ al-Ḥabašah*, p. ٣٦٧.

[29] For the " displacement " of *u* cf. Armbruster, *Gramm.*, pp. 26–7. See also p. 80 above.

There is nothing special to be said about *u* in Gurage and Harari. For the former cf. now also Polotsky (*Notes*, pp. 15–16).

3rd order (*saləs*): This is a rather close front vowel (*i*). Here, too, it can be shown from early transcriptions that there is no support for the commonly held view that *i* was always long in Gə'əz: مسجد appears in Ethiopic as መስጊድ (not መስግድ), Κυριακος as ኪርያቅ. It was no doubt long when transcribing Greek η: *məst'ir* — μυστήριον, *tigun* — τήγανον; and similarly in Αἰθιοπια — ኢትዮጵያ.

In late Gə'əz MSS I have noticed a tendency for *saləs* to replace *ḫamməs*; e.g. ሥላሴ often written ሥላሲ (Bodleian *MS Æth. g.*14, folios 3b, 48b, etc., etc.), as well as many other similar instances.

Tňa *i*, too, can be long or short (cf. Leslau, *Doc. Tňa.*, p. 8). It is short in the suffix of the 1st pers. sing. attached to the verb: *yəḳ'ätlänni* " he kills me "; this is why in this case the 3rd order vowel turns into the 6th order *šwa mobile*, if another element is attached to *-ni*: *'ayyəḳ'ätlännən* " he does not kill me ".

No observations on the 3rd order in Tigre.

For Amharic, Isenberg (*Grammar*, p. 9) shows the differing quantity of the 3rd order vowel by comparison with English " pin " and " finger ", on one hand, and " bee " and " sea ", on the other.[30]

There is nothing to be added for Gurage and Harari.

4th order (*rabə'*): The Ethiopian *a* is an open vowel, formed in the back of the mouth, approaching rather the sound of English " father " than that of German " Vater ", though it is, perhaps, not quite so distinctly a back vowel as the English *a*. As has been shown above in discussing the 1st order, *rabə'* is not invariably a long vowel, though it is much more frequently long than short: *fā'il*: *ḫāt'ə'* " sinner ", *kāhən* " priest ", *s'ādək'* " just "; *'af'āl* (broken plural): *'aḫzāb* " peoples ", *'afrās* " horses "; old Semitic long vowel: *k'āl* " word ", *'āläm* " world ". The vowel *a* is short in *k'ätälakkəmu* " they (fem.) have killed you ".

For Tňa, Mauro da Leonessa (*Gramm.*, p. 8) is wrong in stating that the 4th order " segna sempre la *a* lunga ". The position in Tňa

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[30] Rendered into Arabic as *i* (ـِـ) and *i* (*Kesra*) (Basset, *loc.cit.*).

is, in fact, precisely as in Gəʿəz, and Leslau's (*Doc. Tña.*, p. 9) " le plus souvent long " reflects the situation accurately.

All this applies to Tigre in equal measure. Leslau (*JAOS*, 1948, p. 127) asserts that in the case of *a* " the length contrast often has a semantic or grammatical value ". The examples adduced by Leslau in support of this theory cannot, in my view, withstand critical scrutiny[31]:

(1) *ʿafa* " to look at " — *ʿāfa* " to heal ". The former is, indeed, a Tigre word meaning " to see, to look ",[32] but the latter is simply an Arabic loanword عافى (III) " to restore to health "; the indigenous Tigre word is *ʾadḥana.*

(2) *ʿagna* " to bend a stick "[33] — *ʿāgäna* " to bend several times ". Even in Leslau's version the length contrast in *a* is not the distinguishing element, but rather the addition of *ä*. Incidentally, I hear *ʿāggäna* and not *ʿāgäna.*

(3) *hab* " give "[34] — *hāb* " heat ". This is a simple error: the word for " heat " is *ḥāb* (cf. Gəʿəz *ḥaw*, Tña *ḥawwi* " fire ").[35] Leslau himself recognizes, of course, the existence of a distinction between *h* and *ḥ*[36] in Tigre (non-existent in Amharic).

(4) *təʿayyära* " to be insulted " — *təʿāyära* " to insult ". This difference of grammatical categories is expressed, in the first place, in the gemination of the consonant. The Arabic parallel *taqattala* and *taqātala* is obvious.

(5) *ḥal* " maternal aunt " (probably from **ḥalt*) — *ḥāl* " maternal uncle ". Leslau's use of the asterisk seems to me misleading, for it is *ḥalt* which means " maternal aunt " also nowadays. The difference between " maternal uncle " and " maternal aunt " is thus clearly expressed in *ḥal* and *ḥalt*, respectively.[37]

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[31] See also my note in *BSOAS*, XIV, 1, pp. 209–10.

[32] Cf. Egyptian *ḫf* " to see " and Bilin *ʿafay* (Cohen, *Cham.-Sem.*, No. 149).

[33] *ʿagna* does not necessarily mean " to bend a stick "; it is the transitive verb " to bend " and may take anything as its object.

[34] Imperative; root: *whb.*

[35] Bilin (the principal Cushitic substrate of Tigre) : *haw.*

[36] *JAOS*, 1945, p. 165.

[37] Cf. also Munzinger, *Vocabulaire*, and the *Vocabolario* of the Missione Cattolica.

(6) *ḥamsay* " brownish yellow " — *ḥāmsay* " fifth ". But *ḥāmsay* " fifth " exists only in Tňa; in Tigre it is *ḥāməs*. Leslau got that form presumably from his informant Mikael Ḥasama who speaks generally Tňa rather than Tigre. Keren (where Leslau worked) is heavily contaminated with Tňa and is not an ideal place for the study of genuine Tigre. The alleged ordinal form on the pattern *qātlay* has, I think, to be seen in this light (Leslau, *JAOS*, 1948, p. 130).

In any event, we may state that there are no grounds for assuming that the contrast between long and short *a* in Tigre can serve as a vehicle for semantically significant distinctions.

In Amharic it would appear that Isenberg perceived the 4th order invariably as long, as his comparison with the vowel in " far ", " father " and " rather " (*Gramm.*, p. 9) shows.

Armbruster (*Gramm.*, pp. 5 and 8) correctly gives the 4th order as either long or short; he compares the former to the *a* in " father " and the latter to that in " fatto ". The fact that Ethiopic *a* is a back vowel is also pointed out by M. Cohen (*Traité*, p. 43).[38]

For Gurage, Polotsky (*BSL*, 1938, p. 138) seems to have heard the 4th order mostly as *ā*,[39] adding that " je n'ai perçu le timbre *â* que dans des cas spéciaux."

No observations for Harari.

5th order (*ḥaməs*): The vowel *e* has — as has previously been observed—arisen from an original *ay*.[40]

It is a half open front vowel which is in the majority of cases long; only in certain circumstances (constitution of the syllable, stress)[41] is it short. In the transliteration of Greek words the 5th order usually stands for ε, η, ει, and αι.

My experience of the articulation of the 5th order vowel differs somewhat from that of Mittwoch[42] as regards the traditional pro-

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[38] ". . . un *a* très légèrement fermé par élévation de l'arrière de la langue, donc tendant un peu vers *â*. . . ."

[39] Cf. now also Polotsky, *Notes*, p. 16.

[40] *bēt* < *bayt*; *hēdä* < *hayd* (" to distress "); *lēlit* < *layl*, etc.

[41] Just as in the case of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th orders.

[42] *Trad. Ausspr.*, p. 15. My observations extend to Gə'əz as read by Amharic, Tňa, and Tigre speakers; Mittwoch was apparently basing his conclusions on his experience with Amharas only.

nunciation of Gəʿəz. In some modern Ethiopian languages *e* is pronounced as *ʸe*: *bʸet* " house ", *gizʸe* " time ", etc.[43] Mittwoch's informants seem to have " prefixed " this *ʸ* also when reading Gəʿəz,[44] while I have generally observed its absence from the traditional pronunciation. In fact, I have heard more than once that a teacher would correct his pupil on this point. When questioned about it, his reply would merely be that this was " not done " in Gəʿəz. That might, indeed, be one of the few instances where a genuine Gəʿəz tradition has, perhaps, been preserved, whereas normally the so-called traditional pronunciation is hardly more than a reflection of modern vernacular habits of speech.

For Tňa, Leslau is not quite right in saying that " *e* précédé d'un *y* est rare en tigrigna."[45] The examples given by him as being without *ʸ* are in fact pronounced in precisely the same manner as those instances in which he admits the prosthesis of *ʸ*, i.e. *ʾəngʸera* " bread ", *bʸet* " house ", *mʸes* " mead ", etc.[46] The position is, indeed, as stated by M. Cohen (*Études*, p. 19): ". . . il est diphtongué habituellement en *ye* en amharique et en tigrigna. . . ." The regular exception is merely formed by the laryngals and *w*. The emphasis in M. Cohen's statement is on " habituellement ", i.e. not in all instances is *e* in Tňa pronounced as *ʸe*. Those few exceptions occur exclusively in unstressed syllables where apparently diphthongization is either omitted altogether or becomes scarcely audible: e.g. *sämenáwi* " northerly " but *säm*ʸ*én*[47] " north " (though occasionally one may also hear *säm*ʸ*enawi*); *dameŕa* " the bonfire at Mäskʾäl " (far less frequently *dam*ʸ*era*). Often both pronunciations can be heard, but the monophthongal one seems more usual in an unstressed position. Such minor fluctuations cannot be regionally (i.e. dialectally) fixed, but are due to purely individual preferences.

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[43] Cf. the similar phenomenon in English *u* (*united*, etc.) or in Italian *e* (*ieri* " yesterday ", Latin *heri*). For further details see below.

[44] With a few exceptions, generally after laryngals.

[45] *Doc. Tňa.*, p. 9. Nor could it be claimed that *ʸe* is rarer in the Akkele Guzay " dialect " with which Leslau's work is concerned. It might, however, have been an individual feature of his informant's speech.

[46] *Ibidem.*

[47] Or *səmʸen* and *səmenawi*.

In the following I give a few examples of *ᵛe* pronunciation in Tña; they all occur in transcriptions taken down by me in the Hamasᵛen,[48] Akkele Guzay, and Serae divisions as well as in other parts of the Tigre province, so that there can be no question of dialectal differences. These examples may also be found in this form in the transcriptions given in Conti Rossini's *Lingua Tigrina* and in da Bassano's *Vocabolario*: *gizᵛe* " time "; *t'ᵛel* " goat "; *rᵛesa* " corpse "; *ʿalᵛet* " descent "; *däsᵛet* " island "; *mᵛes* " mead " ; *t'əmᵛet* " hunger " (in *EWN* 41, col. 1, even spelt: *t'əmyät*)[49]; *fərᵛe* " fruit "[50]; *märᵛet* " soil ".[51]

In Tigre the 5th order is pronounced *e* without diphthongization. So also Cohen (*Études*, p. 19) in express terms, and Leslau's transcriptions (*JAOS*, 1948, pp. 128 *et seqq.*, *passim*). Similarly Munzinger (*é*) in Dillmann's *Lexicon* (Tigre appendix) as well as transcriptions in Littmann's *Princeton Texts* (vol. IV B): *Taklēs* (p. 859) (not *Taklᵛes* or *Taklies*); *Ḥemēda* (p. 591); *Tarakbē* (p. 607); *Bēt* (p. 657). The contrary view expressed in the grammar of the Missione Cattolica (*passim*), where the 5th order is transcribed as *ie*, would appear to be based on evidence from bilingual (Tña—Tigre) areas, since in Tigre proper the diphthongization of *e* does not take place.

In Amharic it is curious to observe that until comparatively recent times the pronunciation of the 5th order as *ᵛe* has not found expression in European transcriptions. Thus Ludolf (*Hist. Æth.*) writes *Bet*, *Samen*, *Tamben*; Bruce: *Selasse*, *Samen*; Salt: *Beit* (*sic!* not *Biet*), *set* (" woman "), *zare* "(today ").[52] It is difficult to decide whether these transcriptions indicate the absence of *ᵛe* in earlier Amharic or whether those authors did not trouble to note down diphthongization,

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[48] Itself an example, though in Italian and British official documents *Hamasen* and *Hamasien* occur indiscriminately. The actual pronunciation in this case is always Hamasien.

[49] Leslau (*Doc. Tña.*, p. 297) transcribes *ṭəmätən* " and hunger ". The surrender of diphthongization may in this case be due to the shift of the stress to the new syllable created by the affix.

[50] Leslau (*op. cit.*, p. 307) writes *fəre*. While I have nearly always heard *fərᵛe*, I seem to remember an occasional hesitation over diphthongization following *r*. But the fairly regular failure to diphthongize the *ḫaməs* vowel is a distinctly personal trait in the speech habits of L.'s informant, Täklä Gərmu.

[51] Leslau (*op. cit.*, p. 308): *märet*. See preceding footnote.

[52] For further 19th century transcriptions of *ḫaməs* see Praetorius, *Amh. Spr.*, p. 33.

as they may have considered it a corruption. The latter assumption would be perfectly feasible, especially in the case of Ludolf who always strove to preserve the " purity " of the language, but considerations of this kind would hardly have carried weight with Bruce or Salt. If one observes, however, that even Budge in his *History of Ethiopia* writes in 1930 *Tamben* (for *Tamb^{v}en*), *Selasse* (for *Selass^{v}e*), etc., then one may well hesitate to place undue reliance on all these transcriptions.[53] I think it is highly unlikely that the ^{v} " prosthesis " in the 5th order should have been developed in the 30 years between the writings of Salt and those of Isenberg who, as far as I can see, was the first to invite attention to this phenomenon. We are justified, I believe, in assuming that the diphthongization of *e* in Amharic is a fairly old-established feature—though no definite evidence can be adduced for this.

Isenberg speaks of the 5th order as " a sharp *ê*, with a slight *y* sound before it . . . as in the German *je*. . . ." (*Gramm.*, p. 9).

Guidi (*Gramm.*, p. 6): " La vocale *e* suona *ie* (*e* aperto), p.es. *siet*, donna. . . ."

Armbruster (*Gramm.*, p. 8) rightly shows that ^{v}e may be long or short. That the " ^{v} is most noticeable when ^{v}e is accented "[54] seems fairly obvious, while the fact that in " night " *ḫamɔs* is pronounced *l^{v}elit*, but in " other " *lēla* defies all attempts at an explanation.[55] However, in the overwhelming majority of cases the standard Amharic pronunciation of the 5th order is ^{v}e. This excludes, of course, the laryngals[56] and *w*.[57]

Cohen (*Traité*, pp. 43–4) calls the vowel of the 5th order " un *e* moyen, généralement précédé d'un léger *y*: *giz^{v}e* ' temps '. . . ."

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[53] Most of those travellers and historians did not, of course, set out to provide phonetically accurate data. Others were precluded by a knowledge of the literary language from noting down simply the sounds they had heard. A traditional script with historical spellings can be a powerful obstacle to phonetic notation.

[54] Armbruster (*Amh. Gramm.*, p. 28).

[55] Cf. Armbruster (*Engl.-Amh. Voc.*).

[56] Instead of the usual *hedä* " he went " I have never heard what Armbruster calls " less commonly " *h^{v}edä*. (*Grammar*, p. 28.)

[57] The Amharic word for " beast " I have only heard pronounced *'arwe*; Armbruster (*Gramm.*, p. 27) also mentions the " displacement " pronunciation *aur^{v}e* for *arw^{v}e*.

Also (and this is important): " La diphtongaison qui résulte de l'articulation du léger *y* au début est habituelle dans une *prononciation correcte non dialectale.*"

Such differences as do exist with respect to the pronunciation of the 5th order seem to fall within the ambit of individual habit and fashion rather than that of dialectal distribution. I therefore think that another remark by Cohen (*ibidem*)[58] as well as Guidi's observation (*Vocabolario*, p. xiv),[59] both mentioning regionally identifiable differences, are not really borne out by a comprehensive investigation covering large parts of the Amharic speaking area. Cohen himself appears, later on (*Nouvelles Études*, p. 52), to have arrived at a similar conclusion after re-examination of a number of " jeunes gens du Choa observés à Paris." Their testimony is so symptomatic of the attitude of informants and shows so clearly the pitfalls of the method of questioning as opposed to that of observation that I quote M. Cohen's account of this matter in a footnote.[60]

Klingenheben reports that his informant (who came from the Shoa) made very sparing use of the diphthongization of *e*.[61]

The impossibility of drawing any isoglosses and sketching a convincing dialectal pattern of this particular feature seems so apparent

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[58] " Elle [i.e. l'articulation du *ʸe*] est plus nette dans le Nord; elle est plus légère ou même manque complètement dans certaines régions méridionales du Choa."

[59] The 5th order vowel is " pronunciato generalmente *ie* (nel Lasta *e*)." Since the Lasta province is in the northern part of Ethiopia, it will be observed that Cohen's and Guidi's findings contradict each other.

[60] " En général les jeunes gens du Choa observés à Paris n'avaient pas conscience de la prononciation *ʸe et même la niaient* et prononçaient *e* dans la récitation du syllabaire, *alors que la diphtongaison était observable dans leur parler courant.* Je crois pouvoir noter que la non-diphtongaison est réelle chez des individus élevés dans une province méridionale comme le Boulga, ou dans des colonies amhariques en pays Galla; mais je l'ai rencontrée aussi chez d'autres; y aurait-il une affaire de mode ? " (*Nouv. Ét.*, p. 52.)

Reference to this passage will again be made later.

[61] " Die Diphthongisierung der beiden Längen *ē* und *ō* zu den steigenden Diphthongen *ʸe* bezw. *ʷo*, die nach den neueren Darstellungen der Sprache im übrigen Sprachgebiet ja die Regel zu sein scheint, habe ich bei *ē* häufiger nur in *'ənʸē* ' ich ' statt gewöhnlicherem (*sic*) *'ənē*, and bei *ō* nur ganz vereinzelt einmal . . . gehört." (*ZfES*, X, p. 196.)

that one need have no hesitation in agreeing with M. Cohen (last footnote but one) that this is very largely " une affaire de mode."

Finally, it is of some interest to note (and this again confirms M. Cohen's experiences related in footnote[60]) that Afeworq (*Amh. Gramm.*, p. 9) likens the vowel of the 5th order to the Italian " *è* accentuata ". There is no mention of a preceding *ᵛ* sound, and it seems quite inexplicable why indigenous scholars generally deny its existence—unless it be the desire to conceal a deviation from the " original " pronunciation of classical Ethiopic.

In Gurage the position is not entirely clear. M. Cohen (*Études*, p. 19) states that the pronunciation of the 5th order vowel as *ᵛe* " se rencontre aussi en gouragué." Nevertheless, most of the examples given by him (*op. cit.*, p. 128) show *ē* rather than *ᵛe*: *bēt* " house ", *lēla* " other ", etc., and his assertion that " toutefois les textes ont aussi quelques exemples de diphtongaison en *yē* avec *y* léger " does not seem to be entirely substantiated by the material quoted by him. Thus Muhər *taqᵛēmmām* " ils furent vaincus " (*ibidem*) and Chaha *dägᵛe* " mead " are not altogether happy examples, because it is impossible to decide (certainly on written evidence) whether these are palatalized velars (so frequent in Gurage) or diphthongized *ē*. This ambiguity makes the combing of the Gurage vocabulary a very frustrating undertaking. In looking through Leslau's Gurage Vocabulary I have not been able to find any unequivocal instances (outside the palatalized velars) with the exception of *gəzᵛe* or *gizᵛe* (Leslau, *Gurage*, p. 155). It would appear, though, that *gizᵛe* is an Amharic loanword and that the more usual word for " time " in Gurage is *ga* (Leslau, *op. cit.*, p. 153).

Polotsky's Gurage transcriptions (*BSL*, 1938) do not contain, as far as I can see, any *ᵛe*, and the 5th order seems to be generally rendered as *ē*.[62]

A convincing instance of a personal habit of pronunciation may be seen in Harari, for which Cohen (*Études*, p. 19) notes that only Tigre and Harari have maintained the non-diphthongized pronunciation of *ē*.

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[62] Professor Polotsky very kindly informs me (letter of 18/7/51) that he is not entirely certain about the diphthongization of *e* and *o* in Gurage: " I have occasionally heard (or believe I have heard) *bᵛet* and *sʷost* and also noted it down, but I am not quite sure. On the whole, however, *e* and *o* are not being diphthongized."

This statement is based on Cohen's work with an informant in whose articulation " *ē* est toujours maintenu au lieu de *ʷe* en amharique " (*op. cit.*, pp. 262–3). Cerulli (who has had considerable experience in the Harar area), on the other hand, finds that "*ē* è usualmente pronunciata *ie*—contrariamente a quanto invece fa l'informatore di M. Cohen."

Cohen's distribution pattern (*op. cit.*, p. 19), showing Tigre and Harari as *ē* languages, and Tña, Amharic, and Gurage as *ʷe* languages, would thus seem to require alteration to:

ʷe	*e*
Tña	Tigre
Amh.	Gurage[63]
Harari	

7th order[64] (*sabəʿ*): The vowel of the 7th order is a fairly open *o* sound, with open rounding of the lips. It is far more open than the *o* in French *beau* and almost as open as in English *caught*. As to its quantity, all that has been said about the 5th order vowel on p. 169 above applies also here; i.e. dependence on stress, syllabic constitution, etc., but in general it is true to say that this vowel is predominantly long.

In Gəʿəz *o* has often been monophthongized from an original *aw*, e.g. *yom* < *yawm*, *mot* < *mawt*, etc. Sometimes it goes back to *u* as in the suffix *-homu* < *humu*; or in certain abstract nouns taken over from Syriac: *haymanuṯa* — *haymanot*. In Greek words the 7th order transliterates ο, ω, ου, αυ, and once or twice even υ (Κύπρος —ቆጵሮስ).

According to Mittwoch (*Trad. Ausspr.*, p. 15) the 7th vowel is, in the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz, " ausnahmslos " preceded by a *ʷ*.[65] He observed this feature even in connection with laryngals which were excluded in the case of *ʷe*.

My own experience as regards the pronunciation of Gəʿəz *o* by indigenous scholars is different from Mittwoch's.[66] But in this case

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[63] With, apparently, some occasional uncertainties.

[64] It is more convenient to let the 7th order follow immediately on the 5th on account of some resemblance as regards diphthongization.

[65] As Mittwoch worked with one or two Amharic speaking informants, this pronunciation is *prima facie* only indicative of the speech habits of these individuals.

[66] Cf. pp. 169–170 above.

I have never even heard a pupil—whether his mother tongue was Amharic, Tña, or Tigre—read *ʷo*, let alone any *mämhər*.[67]

For modern Ethiopic, Cohen (*Études*, p. 19) states that " la diphtongaison en *ʷo* se rencontre également en amharique et en tigrigna, mais elle y est d'emploi moins habituel que celle de *ē*. . . ."

As far as Tña is concerned this statement is hardly applicable. Leonessa in his Tña grammar makes no reference whatever to diphthongization nor do his transcriptions reveal any trace of it.[68] The same is true of Conti Rossini's *Lingua Tigrina*: *'əzom* " these ", *'ətom* " those " (p. 24); *'abbo* " father " (p. 26); *lomi* " today " (p. 33); *k'omä* " he stood " (p. 120); *ḥassot* " lie " (p. 184). The absence of diphthongization in Conti Rossini's transcription of the 7th order is specially noteworthy because in the case of the 5th order he has consistently applied it. We may therefore assume that he did not notice a " preceding " *ʷ*. (Conti Rossini had considerable experience of spoken Tña extending over its entire area.) Da Bassano's *Vocabolario* conveys the same picture.

Leslau (*Doc. Tña.*, pp.8–9) transcribes the 5th order as *e* and *ʷe*, but the 7th only as *o*. Later on, however, he adds that *o* " est rarement précédé d'un *w* léger comme c'est le cas en amharique." He gives no example, and search of his many texts fails to reveal any instance.

I have never heard the 7th order pronounced as *ʷo* in any part of the Tña territory.[69] This applies equally to the southern fringes of the Tña area where Amharic influence would be most likely to make itself felt. I am at a loss to understand Cohen's above-quoted statement, unless he heard Tña spoken by someone whose mother-tongue was Amharic (where—as we shall see presently—the articulation *ʷo* is not altogether unknown).

For Tigre there is a general consensus of opinion that the vowel of the 7th order sounds *o* and not *ʷo*. Cf. Littmann's transcriptions (*Princeton Texts*, IV): *'Embō*, *'Erōta* (p. 780); *Šeḫōta* (p. 781); *'Enkelōlō* (p. 854), etc., etc.

Early travellers in Ethiopia, who provide Amharic transliterations, fail to give any indication of a diphthongization of the 7th order—

[67] I.e. teacher, professor.

[68] This also applies to earlier writers; Salt (1814) writes *lomi* " today ", etc.

[69] I have recently again paid special attention to this point when talking to a Tña speaking member of the Ethiopian Embassy in London, but I could detect no trace of *ʷ* in his pronunciation of *o*.

just as we have previously noted in the case of the 5th order. Thus the Portuguese, Ludolf, and Bruce write *Damot*, *Haymanot*, etc. Salt transliterates *djōro* " ear " (*ǯoro*), *sōst* " three ", and, although in both instances he specially marks long *o*, he does not write a diphthong *uo* or *ʷo*. This has obviously nothing to do with Salt's English pronunciation of the *o*-sound, for the English sound in e.g. " home " is a falling diphthong [*houm*], whereas an Amharic diphthong is rising: [*sʷost*]. In this connection labio-velars are, of course, left out of account, for transliterations like *Macuonen* (Ludolf, *Historia*) can naturally be found; however, this is an altogether different phenomenon with which we have already dealt above.

Isenberg (1842) was the first (as in the case of the 5th order) to mention the diphthongized pronunciation of the 7th order. But he expressly remarks on the alternative pronunciation as either " *o* as in ' so ' " or " with *w* before it, as in ' woe, wonder ' " (*Gramm.*, p. 9). And similarly, Massaia who wrote twenty-five years later. Praetorius' mention of both *o* and *ʷo*[70] provides, of course, no independent evidence, as he himself never heard Amharic spoken and relied in this respect on his predecessors.

Thus we again find (cf. pp. 171–72 above) a unanimous " suppression " of all mention of diphthongization in the writings of all authors until the beginning of the 19th century. And then, suddenly, in an interval of less than thirty years, this phenomenon enters prominently into the description of the Amharic vowel system. Dialectal divergences cannot account for this fact, as Isenberg and his successors did not travel more widely than their precursors; nor do I think it at all likely that diphthongization evolved all of a sudden between 1814 and 1842.[71] It seems rather more likely that improved methods of investigation account for this change. Isenberg was probably the first to accord to linguistic matters a place of importance *per se*.

However, even Isenberg's evidence as to the pronunciation of the 7th order as either *o* or *ʷo* is far too sketchy, since he does not tell us

(*a*) whether he heard diphthongization all over the Amharic area;

(*b*) in what conditions *ʷo* would replace *o*; was there an influence of stress ?

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[70] *Amh. Spr.*, para. 12 a.

[71] I.e. the dates of publication of Salt's and Isenberg's works, respectively, which coincide approximately with their actual sojourn in Ethiopia.

(*c*) would both pronunciations be used indiscriminately by the same speaker?

Since neither his grammar nor his dictionary contain any transcriptions, it is difficult to form an opinion as to the type of words in which *o* would either be preserved or be made into a diphthongized vowel.

Guidi in his *Gramm. Amar.* (1889) finds that in the 5th order the vowel *e* "suona *ie*", while the position with regard to the 7th order is stated in somewhat less general terms. Here he would only state that the vowel *o* "*spesso* fa sentire avanti a sè un brevissimo suono di ^{w}", e.g. *s^{w}ost* "three".

No one seems to have gone as far as Armbruster (*Amh. Gramm.*, 1908) who simply states (p. 30) that the 7th order is ^{w}o, adding that "the ^{w} is most noticeable when ^{w}o is accented, and in *r$^{w}o*." This finding is then consistently applied in both his grammar and dictionary: *j^{w}or$^{w}o* "ear"; *gənb^{w}ot* "May", etc. Neither Guidi nor Baeteman (*Dictionnaire*), who both had considerable practical experience of Amharic, have heard this pronunciation in anything like so consistent a manner. I feel quite sure that I have not regularly encountered such a diphthongized articulation of the 7th order, and certainly not in the two examples quoted above. I can only suppose that Armbruster has standardized the pronunciation of the 7th order vowel as ^{w}o (which he may have heard in some instances) without actually having himself recorded the ^{w}o articulation in each case. This applies in particular to the gerund forms ending in ^{w}o which appear in the appendix to his grammar.

Cohen, apart from the general remarks in his *Études* (see above, p. 176), states in the *Traité* (p. 44) that the vowel of the 7th order is "habituellement précédé d'un très léger ^{w}: *dägm$^{w}o* 'de nouveau', *s^{w}ost* 'trois'." And again (*ibidem*): "La diphtongaison est habituelle; toutefois elle semble souvent moins nette que celle de ^{y}e; elle est en conséquence fréquemment négligée dans les notations du présent Traité."[72]

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[72] Alone-Stokes' useful *Amharic Manual* with its many transcribed texts is, unfortunately, too rough in this respect. The 7th order is always rendered as *o*.

Afeworq's *Grammatica* is as disappointing here as it is with regard to the 5th order (see p. 174 above): ". . . il settimo ordine . . . corrisponde al suono dell' *o* italiano. . . ." (p. 9).

Klingenheben (*ZDMG*, 1950, p. 380, note 2) points out that diphthongization of *o* is "keineswegs ausnahmslos über das Sprachgebiet verbreitet. . . ."

From this array of conflicting opinions the following facts seem to stand out:

(*a*) the incidence of ^{w}o vis-à-vis *o* in Amharic is considerably smaller than is the case with the parallel phenomenon ^{y}e vis-à-vis *e*;

(*b*) originally long and stressed *o* seems rather more liable to become ^{w}o.

For Gurage see Polotsky's remarks quoted on p. 174 above. Cf. now also his *Notes*, p. 18.

In Harari, according to Cerulli, " *ō* è pronunziato *uo*."

Summarizing then we find the following pattern as to the diphthongization of the 5th and 7th Ethiopian vowel orders :

no diphth.	*diphth. of both*	*of 5th only*	*of 7th only*
Tigre	Amharic	Tĭna	None
Gurage	Harari		

Tigre is certainly quite free from the diphthongization of the 5th and 7th orders; there are some doubts about Gurage. Tĭna takes an intermediate position with only the 5th order being liable to be diphthongized, while in Amharic and Harari ^{y}e is well attested, ^{w}o to a lesser extent. The question arises, of course, as to whether this distribution stands in any direct relation to the existence or otherwise of this phenomenon in the respective Cushitic substrates (see below).

Before we are able to answer this question, we have to consider for a moment the nature of diphthongization in general. It is not easy to discern the origin and cause of these rising diphthongs in modern Ethiopic. The only other instances of diphthongization of this kind known to me in Semitic[73] occur in Maltese. Brockelmann (*Grundriss*, I, p. 142) mentions that in Malta *e* may be diphthongized to ^{y}e in stressed syllables, but remains *e* in unstressed syllables; e.g. *kalbieni* " courageous ", pl. *kalbenin*; *tliet* " three " — *tletin* " thirty ".[74]

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[73] Diphthongization occurs in some modern South Arabian languages, but the resultant diphthongs are invariably falling ones: Mehri *ō* > *ou*; *i* > *ey* (cf. Bittner, *Mehri*, I, pp. 9 and 10). In Soqoṭri old short vowels frequently become diphthongs, especially under the influence of emphatics; e.g. *qeybor* " to bury " (cf. Leslau, *Soqoṭri*, p. 43). Stress and a neighbouring emphatic consonant seem to be the main causes for the development of these new falling diphthongs.

[74] Might the strong influence of Italian perhaps account for (or at least have facilitated) these diphthongizations ?

It appears that diphthongization may in some languages take place if a vowel is either subjected to stress or stands in the immediate neighbourhood of an emphatic consonant. The vowel need not necessarily have been a long one (as Soqoṭri shows), and the resultant diphthong can be either rising or falling. In modern Ethiopic, diphthongs which have arisen through " dédoublement ou segmentation "[75] of a (generally long) vowel are invariably rising. This is, of course, a frequent phenomenon in the Romance languages, and, since the development there is far better known, we should have a glance at the results in that language group.[76]

The principal agent in these vowel changes in the Romance domain was the expiratory accent of Latin towards the end of the imperial period. This caused stressed vowels first to become long and then, in certain conditions,[77] to be " segmented ", i.e. to be turned into rising diphthongs. However, this development was by no means universal, nor did it manifest itself everywhere either at the same time or in the same circumstances. In fact, in some regions a retrograde movement took place,[78] neutralizing segmentation and reconstituting the simple vowel (e.g. in Portuguese).

Diphthongization can probably be seen to greatest advantage in Italian: *siede*, *pietra*[79] (*sedet*, *petra*), *nuovo*, *può* (*novum*, *potet*); but not in close syllables: *festa*, *porta* (Spanish, on the other hand, has *puerta*), nor in proparoxytones: *popolo*. But even in Italian there existed, and still exist, dialectal variations.

In Cushitic the diphthongization of *e* and *o* does not occur over a very wide field. It does not take place in Bilin or Kemant, among Agaw languages, nor in Bedauye in the north or in Sidamo and Janjero in the south. For the latter two, Cerulli (*Stud. Etiop.*, II, p. 44 ; III, p. 2) observes that the diphthongized pronunciation ^{v}e and ^{w}o is " assai rara e, pare, dovuta a recenti influssi stranieri (dell'Amarico o del Galla)."

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[75] Bourciez, *Linguistique Romane*, p. 142.

[76] I am very largely relying here on the standard works in Romance philology, notably Bourciez's book.

[77] These conditions need not be enumerated here, for they apply mainly to circumstances peculiar to the Romance sphere.

[78] As we have observed, in a different connection, in the case of certain Ethiopic spirantizations and palatalizations.

[79] French *pierre*; Portuguese *pedra*.

Diphthongization of *e* and *o* does, however, occur in Quara and Khamir (central Agaw); cf. the demonstrative pronoun which in Agaw languages generally consists of the element *en* (Awiya *en*, Kemant *än*) and which appears in Quara and Khamir as *ʸen* (Conti Rossini, *Kemant*, p. 49).[80] Moreno (*Galla*, p. 25) reports that "in alcuni dialetti [del Galla] *ē* si dittonga in *ʸē* ed *o* in *ʷo*."

We know far too little about stress, past and present, in Cushitic to form any judgment as to whether expiratory accent has had an influence on diphthongization in some of these languages. At present we are only in a position to observe certain facts, but can venture no opinion as to their genesis.

The question naturally arises whether diphthongization of *e* and *o* in Semitic Ethiopic is due to broadly the same causes, notably stress, as were at work in the Romance languages. The answer to this question is rendered rather difficult on account of the complicated nature of the accent in the various Ethiopian languages (see the relevant section below). Amharic, for instance, has no stress accent at all, but it possesses—as we have seen—a large number of diphthongized *e* and *o* vowels. It is, of course, feasible (and even likely) that developments have not taken place in a consistent manner; there must have been retrogression as well as partial and arrested evolution of certain features (as is the case in Portuguese). French today has a non-expiratory accent: many rising diphthongs (from a period of different accentual conditions) have survived, others have been given up. Similar circumstances are likely to have prevailed in Amharic, but the peculiar nature of the Ethiopic script prevents us from seeing the matter from an historical point of view.[81]

In Tña the impact of stress on the diphthongized pronunciation of *e* is undeniable (cf. above pp. 170 *et seqq.*). Often the "segmentation" of the long vowel is maintained even if it ceases to have the accent: *bʸetká* (Conti Rossini, *Proverbi*, p. 81), *Ḥamasienót* (Conti Rossini, *Lingua Tna.*, p. 211). But among my transcriptions I also find *'aḳebán* "and a meeting", *zenáwi* "informing" (adj.). I fail to detect any instance of *ʸe* pronunciation in Tña in an *original* antepenult (cases like *sämʸenawi* "northerly" with the ending *-awi* do

[80] Cf. also Leslau, *Word*, I, 1945, p. 65.

[81] Transcriptions into other languages are—as we have observed above—scarcely more revealing.

thus not invalidate this assertion). " Segmented " pronunciation of a long vowel in an unstressed syllable is in any event scarcely audible.

We are justified, I submit, in assuming that the causes which brought about segmentation (diphthongization) of long vowels in some modern Ethiopian languages were in essence the same as those which were at work in the Romance languages. In neither language group have all individual members been equally affected, neither in time nor in scope. In some languages the phenomenon, if ever it has existed at all, does not survive. Insufficient documentation in the Ethiopic field, as well as other causes previously mentioned, does not allow us to present the full picture of development, retrogression, and partial re-emergence.

The question as to whether diphthongization of *e* and/or *o* had already existed in late Gəʿəz cannot be answered.[82] The fact that not all modern Ethiopian languages possess this pronunciation would be no counter-argument, for we are not as yet committed as to the precise nature of the relationship of Gəʿəz to the various modern vernaculars. Moreover, the process of evolution, neutralization, and retrogradation which we witness in Ethiopic as well as other language groups renders it very hazardous to determine with any degree of certainty whether some features may perhaps have been lost in circumstances which, through lack of documentation, can no longer be ascertained.

The modern Semitic Ethiopian languages happen to fall in fairly accurately—as far as diphthongization is concerned—with the pattern prescribed by Cushitic. Tĭna and Amharic are in contact with Central Agaw (Quara and Khamir), while Harari as well as Amharic are surrounded by (and probably superimposed on) Galla.[83] All other Ethiopian languages, Semitic as well as Cushitic, do not at present possess segmentation of long vowels. I am not inclined to assert that this pattern—which is, perhaps, no more than a coincidence—reveals the source of diphthongization in Tĭna, Amh., and Harari, but

[82] In this connection I have not seen it pointed out that we possess one single instance where Eth. *ʾazēb* " south wind " corresponds to Arabic *ʾazyab*. Noeldeke (*Neue Beiträge*, p. 62) had already put these together as " dem Arabischen und Æth. gemeinsame Wörter " without, however, drawing attention to the possible diphthongization of the 5th order in this case. It would, of course, be impossible to draw far-reaching conclusions from this one example. Dillmann (*Lexicon*) simply remarks " *ʾazeb* pro *ʾazyab* ". Jahn (*Mehri*, p. 262) finds this word in Mehri as *haziēb*. It is certainly not impossible that in (late ?) Gəʿəz *ʾazēb* was pronounced *ʾazʷeb*.

[83] Cf. pp. 180–181 above.

it seems likely that the Cushitic tongues just mentioned have so far prevented the disappearance of diphthongization in their respective superstrata.

Finally, I would observe that there might conceivably exist some phonetic connection between the palatalizing and labializing tendencies in Ethiopic and the diphthongized pronunciations *ʸe* and *ʷo*, respectively. In some instances it is, in fact, not quite easy to draw a clear line between the two.[84] M. Cohen has suggested that the 5th and 7th order vowels in Amharic be examined " à la lumière de l'idée générale d'un certain relâchement de l'articulation."[85] It will be recalled that he has proposed a similar explanation of " relâchement " for palatalization in general (cf. p. 149 above).

The diphthongized and simple vowels are, of course, members of the same phoneme (cf. Jones, *Phoneme*, pp. 72 *et seqq.*).

6th order (*sadəs*): The 6th order vowel has always been considered the " most difficult " (Ludolf, *Gramm.*, p. 8) among the seven Ethiopic vowel orders. A whole treatise might, in fact, be written on this elusive vowel, but we shall confine ourselves here to a few selected aspects immediately relevant to our subject.

Sadəs represents at once a " furtive " vowel sound often compared to Hebrew *shəwa mobile* (so already Ludolf, *loc. cit.*) as well as the absence of a vowel (*shəwa quiescens*). It is a tribute to Ludolf's fine linguistic instinct that he had already described this sound with considerable accuracy: ". . . vocalem autem habet dubii soni, qui medius quodammodo est inter *i* et *u* Gallicum, sed adeo rapidus et obscurus, ut dubites, utrum ad *i* magis, an ad *u* Gallicum referendus sit. . . ." (*ibidem*). He then compares its sound to *e* in the final syllable of German *Wasser*, *haben*, and to *ü* in the penultimate of German *Hütte*, *verhüllen*.

The ambiguity of this vowel as either *ə* or zero causes difficulty not only to Europeans, but even Ethiopian scholars often disagree about it in the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz as well as, occasionally, in their own vernaculars.

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[84] E.g. *kʷonä* " he was " in Tĭa, or *dägʸe* " mead " in Gurage (cf. Cohen as quoted on p. 174 above; Leslau, incidentally, writes *dägʸä*, *Gur. Doc.*, p. 152), although I feel confident that the former presents labialization of *k* and the latter palatalization of *g*.

[85] *Nouv. Études*, p. 52.

The phonetic character of this vowel is, however, not in any doubt. It is a central vowel (cf. Westermann-Ward, pp. 39–40) whose basis may fluctuate between the hard palate (resembling *ĭ*) and the velum (resembling *ŭ*). Its precise timbre is determined by the nature of surrounding consonants as well as by the effects of vowel harmony. Its quantity may vary (as has been shown on p. 160 above), though it is true to say that it is predominantly short. To the examples of medium or long *ə* given on p. 160, I would here only add: Tña *wəgə'* " war " (first short, second long); Amh. *bər* " pen ". In Tña the degree of accompanying lip rounding is very pronounced, but in Amharic lips are often spread. Thus in Tña the vowel timbre is frequently *ŭ*, while in Amharic it is approaching *ĭ*. Phonemically, however, the contrast between the rounded allophone of *ə* and the phoneme *u* on the one hand, and the fronted allophone of *ə* and the phoneme *i*, on the other, remains constant as the following oppositions show:

Tña *wəgə'* " war " — *wəgu'* " wounded ";
Amh. *sər* " blood vessel " — *sir* " strap of leather ".

Etymologically Gəʿəz *ə* corresponds to short *i* and *u* in other Semitic languages (as has been pointed out on p. 161 above). In transcriptions from foreign languages, notably Greek, the 6th order in Gəʿəz is used for all short vowels, and sometimes even for long vowels in unstressed syllables (cf. Dillmann-Crichton, *Grammar*, pp. 37–8).

It is interesting to follow the remarkably consistent career of 6th order vowels into Ethiopic words which were accepted as loans into Arabic:[86]

Eth. ə — Arab. i

Eth. *gəlbāb* — Ar. *ǧilbāb* " woman's gown "
Eth. *dərəʿ* — Ar. *dirʿ* " breast-plate "
Eth. *māʾəd* — Ar. *māʾida* " table "
Eth. *məzər* — Ar. *mizr* " Abyssinian beverage ".

Eth. ə — Arab. u

Eth. *ṣəwāʿ* — Ar. *ṣuwāʿ* " cup "
Eth. *ḫəbəst*[87] (<**ḫəbuzt*) — Ar. *ḫubz* " bread "
Eth. *bərhān* — Ar. *burhān* " light, evidence ".

[86] For etymological and general explanations cf. Noeldeke, *Neue Beiträge*, pp. 46 *et seqq.*

[87] In this case *u* is conditioned by the twofold effect of a labial neighbour as well as vowel harmony. See also p. 210 below.

These examples show that *ə* in the neighbourhood of dentals (including liquids and sibilants) is generally rendered as *i*, while in proximity to labials it appears as *u*.[88] The Arabic pointing thus provides clear evidence that in this respect at least the modern Ethiopian languages accurately reflect the phonetic conditions which obtained in Gəʿəz.

Transcription of the 6th order varied among the early grammarians of Gəʿəz: Potken uses *ŏ*; Ludolf in his first edition employs *y* (which seems quite suitable for this " furtive vowel ", although it may give rise to confusion with the semi-vowel *y*) and in the second edition *e*; similarly Marianus Victorius.

The traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz has no special contribution to make to the problems connected with *sadəs* (cf. p. 183 above as well as Cohen's and Mittwoch's works on the traditional pronunciation of Ethiopic).[89]

The theories concerning an original nominal ending *-ə* will be referred to below under chapter iv.

For Tňa I find Leslau's description (*Doc. Tňa.*, pp. 8–9) somewhat contradictory. In para. 14 (*a*) he transcribes the 6th order vowel as *ə*, *ŭ*, and in para. 14 (*h*) he declares that *ə* " se prononce sans arrondissement des lèvres. . . ."

There can, in fact, be no doubt that the predominantly rounded pronunciation of *ə* is a very obvious feature of Tňa. This applies to all regions of Tňa speech.[90] Reference has previously [91] been made to the labializing tendencies so very apparent in Tňa; *ə* has been very noticeably affected in this way. That this is so also in the language of Leslau's informant is clearly shown in the transcribed texts (*op. cit.*) where L. has sometimes failed to differentiate between one vowel

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[88] Assimilation of vowels to consonants (i.e. influence of consonants on vowels) generally works in Ethiopic by a process of partial regressive assimilation, although quite a few instances of the partial progressive type can also be adduced (see also under chapter iv below).

[89] A plea for caution must again be entered here against complete acceptance of Mittwoch's conclusions which are based on his experience with Amharic speakers only.

[90] The dialectal differences which Leslau seeks to detect (*JA*, 1939, p. 67) have, in my view, no basis in actual fact. I take it that in the examples adduced by him he does not refer to spelling, for in writing standardizations to either *ə* or *u*, or *i* have, of course, often been adopted.

[91] See pp. 136 *et seqq* above.

phoneme and the sub-phonemic variants of another. This applies especially to the Tŭa numerals (where the labializing trend finds a particularly fertile field[92]); here as well as in other instances *u* transcribes at once the phoneme *u* and the rounded allophone of *ə*. This proves beyond doubt the strongly rounded character of *ə*.

Leslau as well as Conti Rossini (*Ling. Tna.*, p. 17) have shown that *ə* is particularly exposed to the effects of vowel harmony. I find among my transcriptions: *k'ŭddus* (*k'əddus*) " holy "[93]; *sĭ'ĭli* (*sə'əli*) " picture " (see also p. 210 *seq.* below).

As to quantity nothing has to be added to the observations on p. 184 above.[94]

Very largely the same applies to Tigre. Munzinger describes the sound of the 6th order as *ö ü ĕ* (*Vocabulaire*, p. v). Littmann (*ZA*, 1907) transcribes it as *ə* (*passim*). Later, in his *Princeton Texts*, I, p. xiv, he explains that in accordance with neighbouring consonants *sadəs* may assume the sound of short *i* or *u*.[95]

In Amharic *ə* is not spoken with rounding of lips. Isenberg (*Gramm.*, p. 9) uses the transcription *ĕ* or *y* (*berry*). This shows that he has not, or at least only very rarely, encountered the rounded allophone of *ə*[96]. Guidi (*Gramm.*, p. 6) likens *ə* to *ĕ* or *eu* in French, but " quando ha l'accento, ad un *ĭ* breve ". This is not entirely borne out by Armbruster's observations (*Gramm.*, pp. 28–30) who shows the full variety of sound-nuances which Amh. *sadəs* may represent: *ŭ*, *ü*, *ĭ*, *ä*; he adds—in contrast to Guidi—" sometimes, if accented, *u*." This corresponds rather more closely to my own observations, although I find it very difficult to be dogmatic about the timbre of this central

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[92] See pp. 136 *et seqq.* above.

[93] Salt (*Voyage*, Appendix, p. xxii) writes *subook* for *s'əbuḳ'* " good ". See also pp. 210–211 below.

[94] Here again I find two mutually exclusive statements by Leslau (*Doc. Tŭa.*): In para. 14 (*h*) he says, correctly, that *ə* may be lengthened " et est même ultra-long " in *gən* " but ", while in para. 16 he asserts: " Toutes les voyelles *sauf les brèves ä et ə* peuvent être longues ou brèves. . . ." Leslau's own example *gən* (to which quite a few others can be added; see pp. 160 and 184 above) shows that the words which I have italicized cannot be correct.

[95] Cf. also Leslau *JAOS*, 1945 (p. 167) and especially Littmann, *ZA*, XII,(p. 193).

[96] For Amh. *ə* under combinatory conditions see chapter iv below and Praetorius *Amh. Spr.*, pp. 38–9; Cohen, *Nouv. Ét.*, pp. 56–7.

vowel in Amharic with its chameleonic properties, constantly changing its colour under the influence of neighbouring vowels and consonants. Guidi goes farther and thinks of regionally definable distinctions,[97] though, unfortunately, he is not very explicit on this point.

The changeable nature of *sadəs* is brought out very clearly in M. Cohen's description (*Traité*, pp. 44–5).[98]

In Gurage Polotsky finds the 6th order vowel " semblable à l'*i* bref de l'anglais et de l'allemand " and " quelquefois *ə* lorsque le timbre paraissait plus ouvert."[99] Leslau (*Gur. Doc.*, p. 13) describes *ə* as a " close vowel, with free variant *ŭ* before or after a labial and labio-velar." The phonemic circumstances are discussed by Polotsky (*Notes*, pp. 13 *et seqq.*); he convincingly shows the misunderstandings that may arise from failure to distinguish the fronted and rounded allophones of *ə* from *i* and *u* respectively. It appears that there also exists an acoustic difference between the sub-phonemic variants of *ə* and the phonemes *i* and *u* (*op. cit.*, p. 14).

Cerulli describes Harari *ə* as " una vocale breve e neutra ",[1] but he shows that in most cases it inclines towards short *i*: Gəʿəz *'əḫəw* " brother " — Harari *ih*; Gəʿəz *'əd* " hand " — Harari *iddi*. Cerulli concludes: " La tendenza *ə* > *i* è dunque generale nello harari e verte sull'intiero patrimonio della lingua" (*Harari*, p. 78). There exist, however, a few instances where *ə* has assumed the timbre *u* without our being able to find any apparent cause for this process; e.g.: Gəʿəz *'əzən* " ear " — Harari *zun*.[2]

On the short vowel *ə* in Semitic see Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, I, para. 52. The equivalent of the Ethiopic 6th order exists also in Cushitic (cf. Moreno, *Galla*; Reinisch, *Bedauye*, para. 84, and other works on Cushitic languages), where it frequently tends towards short *i* in pronunciation. Leslau (*WORD*, I, p. 65) and especially Cerulli (*Harari*, p. 440) have thought it necessary to explain the sub-phonemic

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[97] " Naturalmente la pronuncia . . . delle vocali . . . varia secondo le diverse province." (*loc. cit.*).

[98] Cf. also his observations on this point in *Études*, pp. 401–3, and *Nouv. Études*, p. 51.

[99] *BSL*, 1938, p. 138.

[1] *Harari*, p. 78.

[2] Further examples may be found in Cerulli's work (*loc. cit.*), although in some cases one would not necessarily endorse the explanation offered by him.

variants of *ə* in Semitic Ethiopian languages as due to the Cushitic substrate. I do not consider it expedient to have recourse to Cushitic in this connection. Semitic unstressed short vowels not infrequently have a somewhat indeterminate character and are, therefore, liable to be subjected to a variety of assimilatory tendencies, both under the influence of consonants as well as vowels.[3] But even in Cushitic phonemic oppositions appear to have remained constant despite the bewildering number of allophones.[4]

There are, in my view, two main trends which characterize the phonetic structure of the Semitic Ethiopian languages and which offer a satisfactory explanation of the different treatment the *sadəs* vowel has received in Tǐa and Amharic (to single out the major exponents): labialization in the north and palatalization in the south.[5] This accounts for the frequency of rounded *ə* in Tǐa and Tigre, on one hand, and the predominance of fronted *ə* in Amharic and Harari.

In *conclusion* we may say about the vowels in general that they have, on the whole, shown a remarkable constancy. With the probable exception of the diphthongization of *e* and *o* we have no reason to believe that the modern Semitic Ethiopian languages have in any important detail deviated from the position which obtained in Gəʿəz.

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[3] Cf., for instance, Rabin, *West-Arabian*, p. 99.

[4] Cerulli himself brings this point out very clearly in his latest work on Kaffa, p. 33.

[5] I refer here to broad tendencies; naturally labialization can also be found in the south—just as there is palatalization in the north.

CHAPTER III

ACCENT

The exact nature of stress as well as its measurement have still not been satisfactorily investigated. Most phoneticians consider stress to be a largely subjective phenomenon, both from the speaker's and the hearer's standpoint.[1] This is probably why the terminology of stress is impressionistic rather than scientific. Among Ethiopians I have found few people who would agree about the location of stress in any given word, even if these people, at least in my hearing, pronounced those words in a fully identical manner. This fact might possibly be taken as an indication that Ethiopian languages possess no expiratory accent. The problem is further complicated by the difficulty in distinguishing clearly such related, yet different, phenomena as stress in the proper sense, prominence,[2] pitch or tone, and particularly sentence rhythm.[3]

Some languages which possess no expiratory accent today can nevertheless be shown to have had an " accent d'intensité " at an earlier period of their history. This is notably the case in French where stress accent caused either the segmentation of vowels (diphthongization) or their disappearance in certain positions. Strong stress has played havoc among the vowels of Hebrew and Aramaic: **dabarím* — *dəbarím*; **qaṭaltém* — *qəṭaltém*; **šamarú* — *šamərú*; **gamalá* — Aram. *gamlá*; **dahabá* — *dahbá*.

In Ethiopian languages there have not occurred marked sound changes under the impact of stress; this points to a less forceful accent

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[1] A different theory, backed by laboratory investigations, is put forward by Jeaffreson (" Stress and Rhythm in Speech " in *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1938, p. 73) who finds that degrees of stress can be measured by the movement of the jaw, making allowance for the fact that different vowels require differing degrees of lowering of the jaw.

I do not know whether Jeaffreson's method would be equally applicable to the varying circumstances in different languages. In Ethiopian languages I have not observed violent movements of the jaw. This would, of course, need proper laboratory investigation.

[2] I.e., the distinctness of a sound in contrast to its force of utterance.

[3] I.e. fairly marked contrasts in the sentence-context without any fixed stress on particular words.

than is known in Hebrew and Aramaic. Investigation of stress in the various Ethiopian languages has never been carried out systematically, and the only general survey, though based on second-hand material, is offered in Brockelmann's *Grundriss*, I, pp. 95–9.

Several researches have been made into accentual conditions in the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz. Ludolf had already recognized that " accentuum notas nullas habent, ac vix regulas."[4] Even so he appears to have been inclined to provide rules which are on the whole a little too rigid, but his exposition (which need not be quoted here) is of much greater value than that of many of his successors two centuries later. Among these latter Trumpp's long article in *ZDMG*, vol. XXVIII, seems to have enjoyed a long-standing reputation which, in my view, is not wholly deserved.[5] His polemics against Ludolf are particularly ill-founded. The main shortcoming of Trumpp's article lies not only in the fact that it was based on the evidence of one single informant, but that it set up accent rules which in their rigidity are unlikely ever to have existed in Gəʿəz. All his attention was given to the isolated word at the expense of the (for Ethiopic) much more important sentence rhythm.

Littmann (*Gəʿəz Studien*, I, p. 632) has rightly shown that " der Accent is in der Aussprache des Gəʿəz ebenso mannigfaltig wie im Tigriňa und im Tigre." He mentions the impression Europeans usually get of " ein starkes Streben nach Penultima-Betonung ", but recognizes that in reality the position is different. In the first place, many words which have no accent in the context of the sentence are provided with an artificial stress when spoken in isolation by a harassed Däbtära under cross-examination by European scholars. I would emphasize that, irrespective of whether or not one attributes any genuine value to the so-called traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz, such traditional method of pronunciation as may conceivably exist is exclusively tied to contextual recitation and delivery. There is no tradition or knowledge as to the isolated accentuation of words. The fact that many Europeans have gathered their information under direct questioning by going through the paradigms of verbs, etc., very largely invalidates the data thus elicited as far as Gəʿəz is concerned. Learned

[4] *Gramm.*, p. 9.

[5] Some mild strictures on Trumpp's article may be found in Koenig's *Neue Studien*. It is impossible here to deal either with Trumpp's theories or the rejoinders by Koenig and others.

Ethiopians generally are familiar with the musical rhythm with which Gəʿəz is recited, and I have little doubt that this method of delivery has a respectable age. Direct questioning on isolated points produces dogmatic answers whose value as a genuine piece of evidence is negligible despite the fervour with which they are usually put forward.

In the second place, I believe that the generally assumed penultimate accentuation in Gəʿəz is based on a confusion of stress and pitch. A similar view was first advanced by Kolmodin (*MO*, 1910, p. 250) who had justly reached the conclusion that the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz was not indicative of an expiratory accent but merely of "Wortmelodien".[6] Thus in verbal forms like *yənäggər*, which are always quoted in support of the paroxytone theories, I hear pitch on the penult and a slight emphasis on the final syllable (such as can be perceived in final syllables in French). While I think that this distribution of pitch and "emphasis" is the normal one, I do not claim that this is universally the case. Like Ludolf (*Gramm.*, p. 9) I perceive a noticeable stress on the penult in a form like *sʿäraḫkämmu*. But I am unable to bear out the rigid rules given in Trumpp's above-quoted article and summarized in Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, I, pp. 95–6.

In the traditional Abyssinian *säwasəw*[7] the accent is not mentioned.[8] Täklä Maryam Sämharay's *mämhərä ləsanä gəʿəz* is no exception, for the detailed indications contained therein are partly the author's own system invented *ad hoc* and partly due to European models.[9] The vagueness of Ethiopian notions is best shown in the exposition given by Afeworq, *Gramm.*, pp. 21–4. While he rightly points out that Amharic has "un accento non molto rimarcato", he asserts that in Gəʿəz the rules of accent were "perfettamente determinate". But, he continues, in the course of time the Gəʿəz speakers thought they

[6] It appears that, in a somewhat less conclusive form, this view is supported by M. Cohen: ". . . la lecture ne puisse pas indiquer la nature de cette ancienne accentuation pénultième : en effet l'accent d'intensité lu pourrait répondre à un ancien accent de hauteur de la langue parlée. . . ." (*Pron. trad.*, p. 232).

I would venture to doubt that a proper stress accent can, in fact, be perceived today; I think I hear pitch only.

[7] Indigenous grammatical system.

[8] Cf. now also M. M. Moreno's valuable article in *RSE*, VIII, pp. 24–7. Also Mondon-Vidailhet's *La Rhétorique Éthiopienne*, *JA*, 1907.

[9] Cf. the description in Littmann's *Gəʿəz Studien*, III, pp. 318 *et seqq.* See also Cohen, *Pron. trad.*, p. 243.

could pronounce the words " con quell'accento che loro più convenisse, ed . . . avviene che tante e tante parole si sentano pronunziate ora in un modo, ora in un altro . . ." (*loc. cit.*). Apart from the historical aspect, Afeworq reflects accurately the present uncertainty about accentual conditions in Gəʿəz.

The fullest and most recent treatment accorded to the accent in the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz is contained in Mittwoch's *Trad. Ausspr.*, pp. 32 *et seqq.* Mittwoch emphasizes the discrepancies which his predecessors' accounts of the Ethiopic accent reveal, but it appears that his own notation largely reflects the whims of one or two informants consulted by him.

Mittwoch's error, I venture to suggest with great respect, lay in his failure to distinguish clearly between expiratory stress and pitch. In my experience (as well as that of Kolmodin, as quoted on p. 191 above) it is not correct to say (*op. cit.*, p. 33) : " Neben ihm [i.e. the expiratory stress] spielt der musikalische oder tonische Akzent in der gewöhnlichen Rede[10] oder beim Lesen eine untergeordnete Rolle ". As shown in the foregoing it is my intention to emphasize that it is precisely the " musical accent ", tone, pitch, which is decisive in the traditional recitation of Gəʿəz, and such stress as may be heard usually falls on final syllables and is, on the whole, subordinate to the overriding principles of sentence rhythm.[11]

In the following I give a transcription of the first two verses of *Genesis*. These transcriptions were noted down in various monasteries and churches in Eritrea, Northern and Central Ethiopia, including Debra Bizen in the north and Debra Libanos in Shoa. They diverge from those offered by Mittwoch (*op. cit.*, p. 80) mainly as to pitch and the important sentence rhythm:[12]

bäkʿädämí gäbrä ʾəgziʾabḥér / sämáyä wämədrä /
wämədrəssä ʾítastärəʾi / wäʾikónät dəlútä /

[10] I fail to understand the expression " gewöhnliche Rede ". Gəʿəz has not been spoken, at least not as a vernacular, for about 1,000 years; and the traditional delivery of Gəʿəz does surely not pretend to be indicative of the " gewöhnliche Rede ".

[11] Mittwoch (*op. cit.*, p. 32) recognizes that ". . . im Zusammenhang des Satzes . . . haben alle Worte eine für sie charakteristische Drucksilbe ". I would suggest "characteristic pitch " rather than " Druck ".

[12] In the following ˙ above a sound symbol indicates pitch, while ´ indicates stress of varying force; / marks the incisions in the sentence rhythm.

wäs'əlmât mäl'əltä k'ʾáláy / wämänfäsä 'əgzi'abḥér / yəs'ʸèllál mäl'əltä máy.[13]

The sentence accent in Gə'əz and—as we shall see—in the modern Ethiopian languages is far more significant than such stress as may be accorded to individual words. Whether Gə'əz ever possessed expiratory stress must, I submit, remain a matter of pure conjecture. The condition of Gə'əz vowels might indicate that stress accent in classical Ethiopic, if it ever existed, was not very strong.

Stress in the modern Ethiopian languages requires further study. What is known from published descriptions or my own observations in Ethiopia can be summarized fairly briefly.

Salt, in his *Tigrinya* word-list, provides stress only in a few isolated cases, and in some of these at least it seems likely that his " accent " indicates pitch rather than stress. The same is true of the examples offered by Beke[14] where the accent marks almost invariably pitch. Leonessa[15] and Conti Rossini[16] find that the accent " si fa cadere *sempre* sulla vocale o semi-vocale dell'ultima sillaba, sia questa radicale, sia affermativo, o sia anche suffisso." Conti Rossini (*loc. cit.*) gives the following examples: *kälbí* " dog ", *nägärä* " he said ", *'ayyənäggərən* " he does not say ".

I find myself in substantial agreement with these statements. Leslau (*Doc. Tña.*, p. 15) has found it " très difficile à noter l'accent du mot ". While I do not altogether share this view, I agree with him that the accent of the individual word " s'efface devant l'accent de la phrase ". However, Leslau himself concedes that " dans la plupart des mots, la dernière syllabe est également accentuée."

We thus find in Tña that sentence stress and rhythm are the predominant element to which the stress of individual words is subordinated. But in the case of the isolated word as well as in the sentence-context emphasis on the last syllable is clearly audible. That

[13] This is strongly reminiscent of French. Bourciez (*Linguistique Romane*, p. 638) " scans " a French sentence thus: Il y avait/une fois/un vieux roi/qui n'avait pas/d'enfants. Such a sentence " n'offre en réalité que cinq accents, quoiqu'elle se compose de quatorze mots ". (*loc. cit.*). Very similar conditions obtain, in my view, in Ethiopic.

[14] *Proceedings of the Philological Society*, London, 1846, pp. 97 *et seqq.*

[15] *Gramm.*, p. 29.

[16] *Ling. Tna.*, p. 22.

Salt and Beke, over a hundred years ago, have left us rather different indications is hardly due to any shift in stress conditions which might have taken place in the interval, but rather to the common confusion of pitch and stress. Kolmodin (*MO*, 1910, p. 244) had already observed " dass die Tigriňa-sprache feste Wortmelodien aufweisen kann, deren Tonhöhen in der Regel mit den expiratorischen Stärken *nicht* zusammenfallen." Kolmodin draws attention to the fact that he, as a native speaker of Swedish, was particularly well qualified to observe this distinction between pitch and stress and their accurate apportionment.

While stress in Tňa falls almost invariably on the last syllable, pitch moves with some freedom and is primarily conditioned by the sentence-context. The two rarely coincide. These findings reinforce my assertions about the stress conditions in the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz. Tňa reflects the position in classical Ethiopic with some accuracy. Here, too, stress is non-phonemic.

The fullest treatment of the stress in *Tigre* is provided in Brockelmann's *Grundriss*, I, pp. 97 *et seqq.* This is generally based on Littmann's observations, but much remains uncertain; in fact, the position in Tigre is even less explored than it is in Tňa. Brockelmann (*loc. cit.*) finds that " der Akzent des Tigre . . . ist noch ausserordentlich beweglich und von der Schallfülle der Silben abhängig. . . ." However, many of the detailed rules he subsequently elaborates do not sufficiently take account of this principle. The Tigre grammar of the Missione Cattolica (p. 9), on the other hand, transplants the Tňa rules to Tigre with little or no change.

Kolmodin (*MO*, 1910, p. 251) has recognized that Tigre possesses " feste Wortmelodien "[17] which are, however, different in several details from those obtaining in Tňa and elsewhere. It appears from Kolmodin's observations as well as from the limited transcribed Tigre material at my disposal that in Tigre pitch and stress more often coalesce than is the case in either Tňa or the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz. Stress and pitch distribution in word groupings displaces stress and pitch peculiar to individual words. The sharply divergent accounts given of the stress conditions in Tigre are indicative of weak

[17] ". . . eine Erscheinung, die überhaupt in allen abessinischen Sprachen, sowohl den semitischen als auch den kuschitischen, vorzukommen scheint. . ."

and shifting stress. This is confirmed by the fact that Tigre vowels have remained unaffected by the impact of such expiratory stress as may have existed. While the necessity of a comprehensive investigation of stress conditions in Tigre is, of course, obvious, I would venture to assert, on the basis of what is already known, that also in Tigre pitch plays a far more important part than stress.

In *Amharic*, too, we have no strong expiratory stress and therefore " la posizione dell'accento si rivela incostante ".[18] Rabin[19] has, with much justification, gone so far as to assert that Amharic belongs to those languages which possess only the " non-expiratory type of accent."

Ludolf's and Isenberg's indications on the accent in Amharic are too schematic to do justice to the intricacies of this phenomenon. Praetorius, who had to rely very largely on the information contained in Ludolf's and Isenberg's writings, had already assumed the movability of stress in Amharic and rightly compared it to the situation in French where accent is fairly evenly distributed over all syllables.

The seemingly shifting position of stress in Amharic is well reflected in Guidi's *Gramm. Amar.* (p. 8), whose rules are, however, partly contradicted by Afeworq's indications (quoted by Guidi himself, *loc. cit*). Guidi's conclusion is that " queste regole hanno *molte eccezioni*, ed in generale *l'accento non ha una sede sempre stabile e chiara.*"[20]

Afeworq (*Gramm.*, pp. 21 *et seqq.*) has to agree that " tante e tante parole si sentano pronunziate ora in un modo, ora in un altro . . ." and he also states correctly that Amharic is pronounced " con un accento non molto rimarcato." But he finds this position unworthy of the dignity and the " dolcezza " of the Amharic language, and after castigating his Ethiopian compatriots for pronouncing the words " con quell'accento che loro più convenisse ", he proceeds to invent an accent-system of his own.

With only one or two reservations I would accept the broad outlines

[18] Moreno, *RSO*, XVI, p. 184.

[19] *West-Arabian*, p. 102. I cannot, however, share his acoustic impression of Amharic as a language whose utterance appears " almost staccato ". My own impression and that of most other observers is rather to the contrary.

[20] Guidi (*loc. cit.*) also speaks of dialectal divergences with regard to accent. He gives no further details, and I am at present unable to say anything on this point, which requires investigation.

given by Armbruster (*Gramm.*, pp. 35 *et seqq.*). I find that only in the verb does the accent generally possess any degree of stability: in the case of biliterals it falls on the penultimate, and in triliterals and quadriliterals on the antepenultimate.

Cohen (*Traité*, pp. 63–4) has shown that Amharic possesses no " accent d'intensité " nor " hauteur notable à des places *déterminées*."[21] In this latter respect it is clearly distinguished from Tña. It is interesting that Cohen, a Frenchman, confirms the impression of other observers used to stress accents in their own languages that " le discours a peu de relief, il est encore plus égal qu'en français." In groups of words I have noticed a slight emphasis on final syllables.

No reliable indications on the accent in *Gurage* have hitherto been published,[22] but Professor H. J. Polotsky very kindly informs me that the conditions here are broadly identical with those in Amharic, i.e. absence of an expiratory stress. I am unable to say anything about pitch in Gurage.

Cerulli has pointed out that in *Harari* the position is analogous to that in Amharic and Gurage (*Harari*, p. 78): ". . . predomina l'accento della frase su quello della parola isolata. . . ."

In *Semitic*, Hebrew and Aramaic possessed a strong expiratory stress —as we have seen above. Modern Arabic dialects show divergences as far as this feature is concerned (cf. Rabin, *West-Arabian*, p. 103). Stress in classical Arabic was non-phonemic, but in Hebrew it was distinctive: *šábu* " they returned " — *šabú* " they have taken prisoner"; *šába* 3rd fem. sing. perf. — *šabá* participle fem.; *bánu* " in us " — *banú* " they built ", etc.

For *Cushitic* Reinisch has observed in his various grammars (*Bedauye*, para. 98, *Somali*, para. 95, etc.) that stress is generally fairly evenly distributed over the various syllables, i.e. there is apparently no

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[21] The elaborate rules worked out by Mittwoch (*Proben*) do not invariably reflect the true position. Cohen has intentionally omitted to indicate accent in the fragments offered in his *Traité* and has thus made an appreciation of the accentual conditions in Amharic much easier than is the case in the somewhat complicated and over-precise system introduced by Mittwoch.

Cf. also the very pertinent remarks by Klingenheven, *ZfES*, 1920, p. 197.

[22] With the exception of a very brief outline in M. Cohen's *Études*, p. 134; it is probable, though, that M. Cohen would wish to revise at least some of his remarks in the light of his observations in *Traité*, pp. 63–4.

expiratory stress in Cushitic. The same "instability" of accent has been shown to exist in Galla (Moreno, *Galla*, p. 30).[23]

Cerulli (*Harari*, p. 78) has expressed the opinion that the accentual position in Amharic, Gurage, and Harari "è certo in rapporto col sostrato cuscitico di questi linguaggi." But since the same accentual conditions appear to exist in the Cushitic substrates of Tňa and Tigre, Cerulli's view is not *prima facie* supported by the evidence at present available. He has, however, promised to provide a comprehensive study of the accent in Cushitic[24]; it might therefore be well to reserve judgement until this study appears.

Common to all Semitic Ethiopian languages is the "instability" of the accent. In all of them the sentence accent predominates over such stress as might be apportioned to the individual word. The same holds good for Cushitic (Cerulli, *loc. cit.*).

There is, however, a significant difference between North and South Ethiopic which has not hitherto been pointed out[25]: Gəʿəz (at least in its traditional pronunciation), Tňa, and Tigre have a stress (of which the main element is pitch), while Amharic, Gurage, and Harari possess no stress, and pitch appears to play a very insignificant role only. The precise correlation between stress and pitch in North Ethiopic I am at present unable to determine; my material was not collected with sufficient attention to this point.

There is little doubt that it is Tňa which reflects most nearly the stress and pitch conditions which are likely to have existed in Gəʿəz and which are still to some extent apparent in its traditional pronunciation.

I see no reason for making the Cushitic substrates responsible for the position obtaining in South Ethiopic. Languages without stress-accent are also known in Semitic and other language groups. It is, however, possible that the Cushitic substrates have contributed to evolving the great importance of pitch and sentence accent in Semitic Ethiopic.

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[23] Cf. also the same author's article in *RSO*, XVI, pp. 184 *et seqq.*

[24] Most recently in his important *Lingua Caffina*, p. 52.

[25] M. Cohen's dialectal pattern (*Études*, p. 20) requires re-statement in the light of these observations.

CHAPTER IV

COMBINATORY EFFECTS

SELECTED PROBLEMS

Under this heading it is proposed to discuss a few isolated questions which may throw some light on our comparative investigation. It is impossible at the present stage, even if space permitted, to embark on a more ambitious examination of these problems, since we first require a detailed study of syllabic constitution in the various Semitic Ethiopian languages. Serious as this handicap is, it need not worry us unduly in connection with out limited objectives: The Semitic Ethiopian languages have all a basically similar structure, and it is therefore inherently unlikely that a purely structural analysis will greatly advance a comparative examination.

CONSONANT CLUSTERS

(I) *Initial*

In Gə'əz (as in Semitic in general) every syllable begins with a consonant, and with one only. In many cases where one might suspect a consonant cluster the neutral *ə* is, in fact, clearly audible in the traditional pronunciation of Gə'əz, and the initial cluster is thus avoided: *ləbäs* (imp.) or *gəbär*. In Arabic the initial cluster has been dissolved in these cases by a prosthetic sound: *'ilbas*. The liquids *r* and *l*, on account of their sonorous character, appear to allow a partial exception when they form the second element in an initial cluster. But in examples such as *krəstos* or *bla'* I seem to perceive at least a slight *ə*, i.e. *kᵊrəstos* and *bᵊla'*, though on account of the syllabic nature of *r* and *l* it is very difficult to be certain about the acoustic impression.

In a number of Gə'əz words insertion of *ə* does not seem to have sufficed and prosthesis has been resorted to: thus *'əmnä* for **mən* "from"; or *'əgzi'* for *gəzi'* "lord". Many foreign words in Gə'əz

can easily be recognized by their initial double consonants which have been re-distributed by prefixing *'ə* or *'ä*: e.g. *'əst'ifanos* " Stephanus "; *'atronəs* Θρόνος, etc.

The labio-velars constitute no exception, for—as has been shown on pp. 74 *seqq.* above—we do not here encounter a sequence of two sounds, but absolute simultaneity of utterance.

All this is true for *Tigriňa* as well. Here, too, initial clusters do not occur; thus again in the imperative we find *qətäl* for **qtäl*. Also in cases where the second element of the cluster is a liquid I clearly perceive an *ə* between the two consonants: e.g. *kələttä* " two ". Da Bassano (*Vocabolario*) transcribes *klette*, but Leslau (*Doc. Tňa.*, p. 127) agrees with me. *bərät* (so also da Bassano) " rifle " ; *bərəllä* (da Bassano *brəllä*) " mead-bottle ".

There is nothing to be added for *Tigre* where initial consonant clusters are unknown. Leslau's question whether an initial cluster is permissible in the *t* stem has to be answered in the negative, and the form *tbäggäsä* " to set out " (*JAOS*, 1945, p. 168) does in fact sound *təbäggäsä*.[1]

In general, *Amharic* avoids initial clusters, and the position is very largely identical with that described in the foregoing.[2] Thus *bərät* " iron ", *nəgus* " king ", etc. In verbal forms we have the imp. *ləkʼäm* " gather!" , but, of course, the jussive *yəlkʼäm* " may he gather ", without *ə* between the first two radicals.

In some instances where the liquids *l* and *r* form the second element of the initial cluster M. Cohen has heard a pronunciation " sans séparation " (*Traité*, p. 58), i.e. without insertion of *ə*: *krämt* " rainy season " (as well as *kərämt*). I myself have only heard the latter pronunciation (or rather *kəräm*ᵊ*t*—on which see below). The word *graň* " left-handed " (Cohen, *loc. cit.*) always appears to be thus pronounced. In fact, the cluster *gr-* occurs with some frequency, no

[1] I do not know if the cluster *tb* occurs even in languages which do admit initial clusters; it certainly does not in any Western European language.

[2] The fact that owing to the virtual disappearance of the glottal stop in some parts of the Amharic area (see chapter on laryngals above) a syllable may begin with a vowel need not at present concern us. There are, however, fairly wide regional divergences, and in Klingenheben's excellent transcriptions (*ZfES*, 1920), for instance, we find large numbers of " rough initial glides " (*fester Einsatz*).

doubt due to the voiced character of *g* and the syllabic nature of *r*. In my experience of Amharic there exist only four combinations where an initial consonant cluster is possible without insertion of *ə*: *gr-*, *gl-*, *br-*, *bl-*. There are naturally intermediate degrees of articulation with *ə* " très réduit " (Cohen, *loc. cit.*); e.g. *bəlatta* (an Ethiopian title) as well as *blatta*.

In some cases a prosthetic (')*ə* appears before *r* (and more rarely before *n* as well as other consonants) whether or not there was an initial cluster: *rəgəb* " pigeon " as well as (')*ərgəb; rab* " hunger " and (')*ərab; sʷet* " woman " and *əsʷet*. Here also belongs the prefix of the 1st pers. plur. impf. *ənn-*.[3]

According to Leslau (*Gurage*, p. 15) a word in *Gurage* can begin with any vowel[4] or a single consonant. Initial clusters of two members are limited to those in which *r* is in second position. The following examples occur in the texts published by Leslau: *brəlle* " bottle ", *grangər* " calf ", *krätʰam* " carry ", etc. I am not in a position to judge whether a slight *ə* is audible between the first and second consonants.

Harari and *Gafat* do not know initial clusters, but both have a number of prostheses in a manner almost fully identical with the conditions described for Amharic above.

Semitic languages did not originally have initial clusters, but while this is still so in classical Arabic, modern Arabic dialects—with some exceptions—show quite a few instances of such clusters (cf. Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, p. 61). In Hebrew judgement on forms like *šnayim, šlošah, brit, krub*, etc. must depend on an interpretation of the nature of *Shəwa*, but it seems very likely that in all such cases we have, in fact, *shəwa mobile*—though this is not so in modern Hebrew where initial clusters are very frequent. In Syriac, too, initial clusters do sometimes occur—through elision of *ə*: *šta* " six " (*'ešta*), *kse* " covered " for *kəse*, etc.

The Semitic avoidance of initial consonant clusters is fully preserved in all the Semitic Ethiopian languages. The only partial exception are two-member clusters of which the second element is *l* or *r*. The most usual case shows, however, disjunction of initial double con-

[3] Cf. Cohen, *Nouv. Ét.*, pp. 66–8.

[4] Due, of course, to the disappearance of the laryngals in Gurage.

sonants by insertion of *ə*. It is thus correct to say that all the Semitic Ethiopian languages—even those which otherwise have moved farthest from the Semitic pattern—shun initial clusters in a manner much more consistent than the modern developments of other Semitic tongues.

(II) *Final*

Consonant clusters in final position offer a more fertile field for comparative study in the Ethiopian languages. The main difficulty of a safe interpretation of the data in Gəʿəz lies again in the absence of a mark of gemination and the ambiguity of the 6th order representing both *ə* and zero.

Words ending in two consonants appear to occur in *Gəʿəz* in the patterns *kʿätl* and *kʿətl*, in the feminine nouns ending in *-t*, and in certain broken plural types. However, the graphic appearance is ambiguous, and the form *kʿätl* might also be pronounced *kʿätəl* or *kʿätlə*. Some partial aid at least in assessing the respective probabilities of these pronunciations is furnished by a few transcriptions into other languages and by the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz. Dillmann (*Grammar*, para. 38) was the first to advance the theory that Ethiopic nouns originally ended in and were spoken with " a short and fugitive *ə* " corresponding to the *-u* of the Arabic nominative (just as the accusative in both Arabic and Ethiopic terminates in *-a*). This applied to all nouns ending in the 6th order, irrespective of whether or not there was a final cluster. Thus *gäbr* " servant " was—according to Dillmann—pronounced *gäbrə*, and *dänagəl* " virgins " sounded *dänagələ*. Not all the arguments cited by Dillmann (*loc. cit.*) in support of his view can withstand critical examination, but the principal elements of his theory[5] seem to me to be borne out by the following considerations (not all adduced by Dillmann himself):

(1) Cosmas of Alexandria (who was at Adulis in the 6th century) renders the Ethiopic *ʾarwe ḥariš* as αρουη άρισι; the province *sämen* (*sämʷen*) is transmitted as *Semene*, *mətʿin* as *Metine*—as well as several other instances quoted by Littmann (*Aksum*, I, pp. 42 *et seqq.*).

(2) Rhymed poetry in Gəʿəz (the rhyme always consisting of consonant + vowel) shows convincingly that a final consonant in the 6th order was spoken with *ə* and not zero. Cf. in the *Tʿäbibä Tʿäbiban*

[5] It is not contended that this final *-ə* was necessarily present at all stages in the development of Gəʿəz.

(Dillmann, *Chrestomathy*, pp. 108 *et seqq.*) where rhymes like: *näbibə*: *ʿarbə*; *tʿäbibə*: *kirubə*; *fəsʿumə*: *ʿalämə* prove that a final vowel must have been sounded, for *tʿäbib* and *kirub*, etc., obviously do not rhyme. The same is still the case in the rhymed poetry of the modern Ethiopian languages which have taken over the rules of rhyming from Gəʿəz; cf., for instance, the Amharic examples in M. Cohen's *Couplets Amhariques du Choa*, p. 24.

(3) The evidence of the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz (see INTRODUCTION, last part), if it were held to do more than reflect the speech habits of the vernaculars, would seem to refer us to a time when the final *ə* was no longer audible. But one must accept such traditional " evidence " with great reserve. Ludolf (*Gramm.*, p. 8) writes *hyzb* " people " (*həzb*) and *fykr* " love " (*fək'r*), etc. ; Trumpp (*ZDMG*, XXVIII, p. 532) transcribes *bərt* " iron ", Littmann (*Gəʿəz Studien*, I, p. 646) hears *ṣədq* " justice ", and Mittwoch (*Trad. Ausspr.*, p. 81) *yäbs* " dryland ". M. Cohen (*Pron. trad.*, p. 267), on the other hand, notes the pronunciation *sə'lə* " picture " and finds that " il y a une tendance à prononcer une voyelle *ə* après groupes de consonnes à la finale."[6] Even more important is the observation (*op. cit.*, p. 222)—which I can confirm from my own experience—that in the Ethiopian liturgical chant final consonants are generally followed by *ə*.

The evidence supporting Dillmann's assumption of a final *ə* in the case of words terminating in the 6th order seems to me impressive. Scholars like Littmann (*Aksum*, IV, pp. 80–1) and M. Cohen also agree that

> " une voyelle finale ancienne conservée étant toujours prononcée après les groupes, qui ainsi ne se trouvaient pas en finale absolue." (*Études*, p. 6.)

We shall see presently what additional support this view will find in the modern languages.

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[6] The fact that in the overwhelming number of instances final clusters are tolerated in the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz should not, however, lead us to the conclusion (reached by Cohen *MSL*, 1927, p. 75) that

> " la tradition représente ici un état de transition, où la voyelle finale est sans doute assez récemment disparue. . . ."

It seems much more likely that the isolated cases of *sə'lə*, etc. are survivals of a genuine tradition and that cluster pronunciations reflect the habit of certain of the modern vernaculars. Genuine Gəʿəz tradition is the exception rather than the rule.

In *Tña* no final vowel is pronounced when a word ends in a single consonant, but all consonant clusters—without exception—are removed, generally by adding *-i* and thus re-distributing the syllables: *käfli* " part ", *näfsi* " soul ", *kälbi* " dog ", etc. The same process occurs in the case of final geminates: *ʿaddi* " country ", *säddi* " wild animal ", *käbbi* " circle ", etc. That the sonority of liquids—forming either one or both members of the cluster—does not exclude them from this course is shown by *käfli*, *kälbi*, and esp. *kʾärni* " horn ".[7]

There is, however, another method of clearing away final clusters which I have not seen pointed out in reference to Tña: the appearance of a disjunctive vowel (which we have noticed in initial clusters as well as in final clusters in Gəʿəz). This method is adopted much more rarely than the addition of final *-i*, but there exist quite a few cases: *bəyyən* " dispensation ", *kʾəsʾsʾəl* " addition ", *dərrəb* " wearing of two garments ", *gəbbəz* " hypocrite ", etc. When I found these instances among my transcribed texts, I was at first inclined to assume that the anaptyctic vowel occurs, instead of final *-i*, whenever the medial radical is doubled. This is, indeed, correct, as forms like *dərrbi*, *gəbbzi* would otherwise maintain a cluster in the first syllable,[8] but there also exist a number of examples with disjunction where the medial radical is not doubled: *kʾasʾəl* " bell ", *kʾərəb* " proximity ", *kʾäsəb* " coercion ", etc. There are, to the best of my knowledge, no instances where a final cluster has been dissolved in both ways (e.g. *kʾätli* and *kʾätəl*) with subsequent development of a distinctive semantic value attached to each form.

The final *-i* has in this connection a purely phonetic significance. That it does, in fact, correspond closely to the final *-ə* which we have postulated for Gəʿəz, is shown when a suffix is attached: *kälbi* — *kälbəḵum* " your dog "; *fəkʾrən ʿaddən* "love and country " (*fəkʾri* " love ", *ʿaddi* " country "). But this purely phonetic *-i* must not

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[7] Semi-vowels (*w* and *y*) are likewise not excepted, even in such instances where they form the second element in a falling diphthong: *wayni* " wine ", *säẇḥi* " meadow ", etc. The same applies to both Harari and Gafat.

[8] Nor does a re-distribution to three syllables occur; i.e. *dərrəbi* or *gəbbəzi*. Only *dərrəb*, *gəbbəz*, etc., exist. In the impf. of the Tña verb (where the medial radical is geminated) a geminate becomes single when a vocalic ending is suffixed : *təsäbbər — təsäbri*, *təsäbru*. Any other course would either necessitate a cluster or (through an anaptyctic vowel) an additional syllable.

be confused with cases where a final *-i* has morphological significance: for instance in the *nomen agentis*: *k'ätali*, or the *nomen instrumentale*: *mäk'täli*.

Harari, too, clears final consonant clusters by adding *-i*: *zulmi* " wrong ", *k'älbi* " heart " (both are loans from Arabic), *zəmbi* " fly ", etc. In some cases the form with final *-i* alternates with one where a disjunctive vowel has been inserted: *t'əfri* " nail " as well as *t'əfər*.

According to Cerulli (*Harari*, p. 77) geminates are not considered as clusters in Harari: *sinn* " tooth ", *t'ädd* " mead "; this is—as we have seen—in contrast to Tňa.

Whereas in Tňa the impf. has the medial radical doubled (the consonantal group being resolved by a disjunctive vowel (*yək'ättəl*)—see footnote [8]), in Harari the impf. stem has a simple medial radical which, in turn, causes **yəgadl* (*gadala* " to kill ") to become *yəgadli* — and thus throughout the impf., with the exception of the 2nd and 3rd pers. plur. which have, of course, the vocalic suffix *-u*. In this way final *-i* figures very prominently in Harari, more so even than in Tňa.

Almost the same conditions prevail in *Gafat*, where a final *-i* is generally added to avoid consonant clusters in nouns as well as in the impf. of the verb (cf. Leslau, *Gafat*, p. 31). However, Leslau does not seem to have pointed out that in quite a few instances we find alternative forms in the same noun, i.e. with and without final cluster, and the position is far less consistent than in Tňa and Harari. Thus: *wayni* " wine " (Leslau, *op. cit.*, p. 34) and *wayn* (Bodleian *MS Bruce Or.* 94, col. 15, line 3); *wärk'* " gold " (Leslau, *loc. cit.*) and *wärk'i* (*MS Bruce*, col. 9, line 19).

Nouns with unrelieved consonant clusters have all a liquid, nasal, or semi-vowel as a member of the final consonantal group. This is the conclusion I reached on perusal of *MS Bruce Or.* 94, our only source of Gafat. I have found only one exception (*korăbt* " hill "), and here the strongly voiced *b* might be responsible. Among such clusters are: *amb* " mountain ", *wärk'* " gold ", *wayn* " wine ", *zänd* " in order that ", *'arz* " cedar ", *kənf* " wing ", *kərn* " arm ", *kərämt* " rainy season ". But in the majority of cases final *-i* does appear: *rəgwi* " pigeon ", *zängi* " stick ", etc. Among nouns which have

final *-i*, although they terminate in one consonant only, are: *ḫari* " silḳ ",[9] *zebi*[10] " fox ".

There also occur cases which have a disjunctive vowel instead (this again has hitherto been overlooked): *fək'ər* " love ", *k'əs'ər* " wall ", *rəgəb* " dove ", etc.

In the verb *-i* appears in the impf. (with the exception of the 2nd and 3rd plur., though the former is not attested in *MS Bruce*), although —unlike Harari—the clustered forms occur as well: *yəmäsli* — *yəmäsl*; *tək'ärbi* — *tək'ärb*, etc. A regular consonantal group also appears in the 2nd fem. sg. of the perfect: *taǩ'ämš*[11] " you were closed ". The suffix *-š* is derived from *-ki* by way of palatalization (*ǩ* > *š*)[12], and it seems that at the end of the phonetic process *-i* failed to re-appear in order to relieve the cluster.

As in Tňa *-i* becomes *ə* before a suffix: *waynəš* " your wine ".

Tigre does not make use of a final *-i* to relieve groups of consonants. At the same time, however, it does not permit final clusters which are generally avoided by a disjunctive *ə*, thus creating an additional syllable. As usual for Tigre we are seriously handicapped by the absence of a representative body of well transcribed texts.[13] In the Tigre noun we find forms like *k'ätəl* and *k'ətəl* with anaptyctic *ə*: *näfəs* " soul ", *däbər* " mountain ", *səmət'* " shore ", etc. In the impf. of the Tigre verb we have gemination of the medial radical—as in Tňa—and thus

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[9] Tňa *harri*. In most cases where the final *-i* appears redundant, we may well have to suppose a geminated consonant (the Ethiopic script has, of course, no means of indicating this). In that case Gafat would agree with Tňa rather than Harari—as we have seen in the foregoing.

[10] In this case the *-i* may be a survival from a time when there was still a cluster: *zə'b*. After the suppression of the glottal stop the *-i* failed to disappear.

[11] Cf. Hebrew *ṣm*.

[12] Cf. the chapter on the palatalization of velars above.

[13] Munzinger's (*Tigre Voc.*) *'əgr* " foot " and *'əzn* " ear " are probably due to lack of an accurate system of transcription, but in these two instances it would in any event be difficult to hear the difference between *'əgr* and *'əgər*, unless—as should happen—the stress shifted to the new syllable. Reinisch's *käbdə* " belly " finds no support in the observations of later scholars, but the matter certainly requires further investigation. Littmann (*Aksum*, IV, p. 81) only heard forms like *käbəd*, but thinks that, if Reinisch's perception was accurate, the final *-ə* would lend further support to Dillmann's theory (quoted above).

forms like *'ək'ättəl*, etc. ; but before a vocalic suffix the second radical becomes simple to avoid the cluster. Many feminine forms lose their characteristic *-t*, in order to dissolve a final group: *k'ətul*, fem. **k'ətəlt* > *k'ətəl*.

Amharic, on the whole, tolerates final two-member clusters: *näfs* " soul ", *'and* " one ", *wanz* " river ", *mängəst* " government ", etc. But a disjunctive *ə* is usually inserted whenever the second element of the group is either a liquid, a nasal, or *b*: *'əgər* " foot ", *nämər* "leopard", *gädəl* " life ", *gət'əm* " rhyme " (so also Cohen, *Traité*, p. 59—but Guidi, *Vocabolario*, col. 784, gives *gət'm*), *sədəb* " insult ". In most of these cases it would be wrong to be dogmatic, since the syllabic character of some of these sounds makes unequivocal perception very difficult. The anaptyctic vowel is generally clearly audible after prepalatals which are never members of a cluster: *k'äť'ən* " thin ", *'əǰəg* " much ", etc. There are considerable divergences among scholars in the notation of final geminates, as it is generally very hard to be sure about these: *bädənn* " corpse " (Guidi, *Voc.*, col. 348), *harr* " silk "[14] (but Guidi writes *har*; Armbruster, *Voc.*, *harr*); my own notations of final geminates in Amharic are not unequivocal.

Verbal forms (e.g. *yənägər*), where *Systemzwang* operates more vigorously, seem to show, however, that a disjunctive vowel might once have been the normal occurrence in Amharic in general. In fact, there are certain indications that Amharic at one time made use even of a final *-i* after simple consonants, for otherwise forms like the Amh. plur. suffix *-oť* (<*oti*), or the suffix of the 3rd fem. sing. perf. *-äť* (< *äti*) would be inexplicable.

According to Leslau (*Gurage*, p. 15) *Gurage* words usually end in a vowel or single consonant, but a number of two-member clusters do occur. In that case either the first member is a liquid or a nasal (*ärť* " boy ", *zəmb* " flea ") or the second member is a dental or sibilant (*aməst* " five ", *yätəks* " may he kindle "). Gemination in final position does not occur.

A descriptive classification of the Semitic Ethiopian languages on

[14] Cf. Cohen, *Nouv. Ét.*, p. 39. See also Mittwoch, *Proben*, under " Verdopplung ". For doubling of final consonants as a *sandhi* phenomenon see Armbruster, *Grammar*, para. 6.

the basis of their attitude to final consonant clusters would look as follows:

(1) final *-i*: Tŭa (North)
Harari, Gafat (South)
(2) insertion of disjunctive vowel: Tigre (North)
Amharic, Gurage (South)

In the second group Amharic (and to a much lesser extent Gurage and Tigre) condones final clusters in the circumstances described. The above pattern shows us that we cannot operate here with the terms " North " or " South " Ethiopic; divergences as well as similarities cut across all geographical divisions.

The last conclusion is confirmed by a diachronic investigation which leads us to the recognition that the present-day descriptive pattern differs from the position in its historical aspect.

Common to all Semitic Ethiopian languages is the aversion to final clusters. Also common to them all is the insertion of a disjunctive vowel. Dillmann's theory of a final vowel in Gəʿəz (supported by the arguments adduced in the foregoing) makes it very probable that the position now current in Tŭa, Harari, and Gafat also obtained in Gəʿəz at one time. And certain Amharic palatalizations (as we have seen above) cannot be explained except by the assumption of *-i* in at least some cases.

We thus find an original universality of this phenomenon which had at one time been thought to be peculiar to Tŭa and Harari. The disappearance of final vowels is likely to be a comparatively recent occurrence. Moreover, we may suppose that the fairly large number of final clusters which we nowadays find in Amharic was caused by a second process of elision, viz. that of the vowel between the 2nd and 3rd radicals. It is probable that a shift of stress had some influence on this, but at the present stage of our researches it would be hazardous to be more definite. Gafat, with its curiously inconsistent situation, offers favourable conditions for observing the various stages of development; it presents, in fact, a microcosm of the position as it evolved over the entire Ethiopian field. It is, therefore, a matter for regret that the virtual demise of Gafat during the last 100 years has made it impossible for us to study this matter on the living phenomena.

It only remains to add that Conti Rossini has shown that final *-i* is " abbastanza diffuso " also in the various Agaw languages (*Proverbi*, etc., p. 41).

Influence of Consonant on Consonant

Of the phenomena falling within this category I select one only for treatment here: the velar nasal *ŋ*, i.e. assimilation of dental *n* to a velar consonant. This is, of course, a case of partial regressive assimilation.

Mittwoch (*Trad. Ausspr.*, p. 10) believes he has made the observation[15] that, while *n* becomes a velar nasal before *g*, *k*, *k'* in Amharic, in the recitation of *Gəʿəz* velarization is not heard. This would presuppose that a native speaker of Amharic is aware of a different articulation of *n* : *ŋ* before velars, and *n* before all other consonants. Even if there existed a genuine tradition of Gəʿəz pronunciation (see last section in Introduction), it would still be highly unlikely that such phonetic habits of the vernaculars would be consciously discarded in the recitation of the classical tongue. My own observations have always confirmed that velarization of *n* or its absence in the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz depend entirely on the speech habits of the speaker's native tongue.

For *Tňa* Leslau (*Doc. Tňa*, p. 8) finds that " devant une postpalatale *n* se prononce avec vélarisation : *moŋgo* ' milieu '." My own transcriptions of Tňa and Tigre contain no examples of velar *n*, and I do not recall ever having heard one in any part of the Tňa and Tigre speaking regions.

The position is different in *Amharic* where the usual pronunciation appears to be *mäŋgäd* " way " (but Tňa *mängäddi*), *dəŋgəl* " virgin " (Tňa *dəngəl*), etc. Armbruster (*Gramm.*, p. 33) has rightly pointed out that the velar pronunciation of *n* is not universal. I cannot say, though, whether this particular articulation follows any definable dialectal lines. This aspect requires further investigation. M. Cohen's remark (*Traité*, p. 56) that velarization of *n* " paraît être évitée en prononciation soignée " does not advance this matter any further, for in slow and careful pronunciation the two syllables are treated almost as separate entities and the combinatory influence can scarcely be said to have become effective.[16] This phenomenon has, of course, to be observed in normal speech.

[15] The native tongue of his informants was Amharic.

[16] *ŋ* is, of course, merely a combinatory variant in Ethiopian languages, and not a separate phoneme.

I am unable to say whether velarization occurs in Gurage; it is neither mentioned nor marked in Leslau's work. But since *ŋ* is a sub-phonemic variant, it does not, of course, need to be indicated in a strictly phonemic transcription.

In Cushitic languages velar *n* does occur (cf. Reinisch, *Bedauye*, para. 34; Cerulli, *Stud. Etiop.*, III (Janjero), p. 1, etc.), but none of the transcriptions are sufficiently rigorous to ascertain whether or not *ŋ* exists here as a separate phoneme as is the case in many African languages (Westermann-Ward, *passim*). The Cushitic tongues in which velarization takes place include several Agaw languages as well as Janjero (of the Sidama group). In Semitic *ŋ* does not seem to be a widespread phenomenon, though in most instances this can only be said on the strength of the traditional pronunciation. For Arabic, Zamakhshari (*Mufaṣṣal*, p. 394, Egyptian edition, 1323 A.H.[17]) includes among other partial assimilations the pronunciation of *n* as *ŋ* in *'anka* " from you " (*ġunna fi'l-ḫayšum*—a nasal voice through the nose).[18]

The evidence is too scanty to allow us to come to very definite conclusions, but it is likely that Gə'əz (like the Northern languages nowadays) had no velar *n*. It is probably fair to assume that *ŋ* in Amharic is an outcome of Cushitic influence.

VOWEL HARMONY

Some phenomena of vowel harmony have already been discussed in connection with the 6th Ethiopian vowel order (pp. 183 *et seqq.*).

The systematizing influence of the Ethiopic script has generally prevented the expression of vowel harmony in writing. We are, therefore, badly placed in judging the extent of this phenomenon in *Gə'əz*. But, apart from the instances quoted above with regard to the quality of *sadəs* (pp. 183 *et seqq.*), I think we have sufficient reason to suppose that vowel harmony was fairly wide-spread in classical Ethiopic. In this connection the published transcriptions of the traditional pronunciation of Gə'əz have, in my view, little value, for

[17] I have no access to Broch's ed. at the time of writing.

[18] In modern Hebrew (*lingo'a* " to touch ", *manginah* " tune ") velar *n* occurs only rarely, even in cases where it is quite usual in the first language of a Hebrew speaker.

not only would they primarily reflect the speech habits of the respective vernaculars (as has been pointed out before), but the scholars who have provided such transcriptions were too well acquainted with the script pattern and have generally not given sufficient attention to such details. Thus transcriptions like *bəs'u'* " happy ", *təhub* " she will give ", etc., clearly stand for *bŭs'u'*, *tŭhub*, etc., in the pronunciation of modern informants.[19] In Ethiopic MSS neighbouring vowels (and particularly in connection with the 2nd and 3rd orders) are not infrequently harmonized (*bŭruk* for *bəruk* " blessed "; *lĭhik'* for usual *ləhik'* " old "), though in some cases there may be doubt whether such harmonizing is not merely due to a *lapsus calami*.

Probably the best means of obtaining an idea of the extent to which vowel harmony operated in Gə'əz is the examination of loan words from Ethiopic.[20] Gə'əz *dəlg̈əma* " bracelet " appears in Arabic as *dumluǧ* (cf. Noeldeke, *Neue Beiträge*, p. 53). The *sadəs* vowel in the second syllable was always pronounced as *ŭ* under the influence of the labio-velar, and subsequently the *ə* in the first syllable was brought into harmony. Similarly Gə'əz *ḫəbəst* " bread " (< *ḫəbuz*, pass. participle of *ḫabäzä* " to bake ") goes into Arabic as *ḫubz*[21]. Arabic *'ubbiya* " haughtiness " is generally held to have been borrowed from Gə'əz *'əb(b)uy* " haughty "[22] and the Arabic vowelling makes it reasonably certain that, through harmonizing, the *sadəs* vowel in Gə'əz was pronounced *ŭ*. The same is true of Arabic *luǧǧa* " depth of sea " vis-à-vis Gə'əz *ləg̈gat*.

The evidence of the modern languages fully supports these isolated indications and makes it quite certain that the striving after vowel harmony was a common Ethiopian feature. The effect of this phenomenon in *Tĭa* becomes apparent mainly in the alterations to which *ə* and, to a somewhat lesser degree, *ä* are subjected. It is principally the influence of *u* which causes this adaptation of vowel colouring, and, naturally, the widest application is offered by the *k'ətul* forms which

[19] Phonemically, *ŭ* is, of course, merely the rounded allophone of *ə*. See also Dillmann, *Gramm.*, p. 236.

[20] To a lesser extent this applies also to words taken over by Ethiopic from other languages: thus Syriac *gihana* and Hebr. *gehinnom* appear in Gə'əz as *gähänäm*.

[21] It seems likely that the loan to Arabic was effected not from the fem. *ḫəbəst* (with unvoicing of the sibilant before *t*) but from the masc. *ḫəbuz*.

[22] Cf. Noeldeke, *Neue Beiträge*, p. 59.

are generally pronounced *k'ŭtul*. Vowel assimilation is predominantly of the regressive type.[23] Thus forms like *s'əbuḵ'* " good " (pronounced *s'ŭbuḵ'*), *bəzuḥ* " much " (pronounced *bŭzuḥ*) are extremely frequent in Tña. To what extent vowel harmony influences the entire vowel pattern of the Tña language has been shown by Conti Rossini in an interesting excursus in his *Proverbi*, etc. (pp. 19–21), and we need not, therefore, go here over the same ground once more. It may, however, be of interest to quote a few examples of how vowel harmony in Tña impressed itself upon the ear of an untrained observer, 150 years ago, who knew nothing of the Ethiopic script and whose audition was thus not influenced by orthographic knowledge. Salt (*Voyage*, Appendix I, p. xxii) writes (phonemic transcription in brackets): *murrur* " bitter " (*mərur*); *to-um* " sweet " (*t'ə'um*); *buze-u* " much " (*bəzuḥ*); *sub-ook* " good " (*s'əbuḵ'*); *duk-oom* " weak " (*dəḵum*); *nuk-koos* " dry " (*nəḵ'us'*), etc.

For *Tigre* we lack transcriptions. Littmann (*ZA*, XII, 193) cites *hŭtū* " he " for *hətu*. Munzinger (*Tigre Voc.*, col. 9) gives *ḥusur* " calomnié ", *ḥuguz* " embarrassé " (col. 12), *sutur* " fendu " (col. 20), *gubu'* " ruiné " (col. 47), etc. To what extent the Tigre vowel pattern, outside the passive participles, is affected by vowel harmony, we cannot at present decide.

A number of cases showing vowel harmony in *Amharic* have been assembled by M. Cohen (*Nouv. Ét.*, pp. 57 *et seqq.*). Among them is *zəhon* — *zohon* " elephant,"; *däro* — *doro* " chicken "; *ďäro* — *ďoro* " ear "; *tälo* — *tolo* " immediately ", etc. In Amharic, too, the passive participles offer the most fertile field for vowel harmonizing: *mŭlu* (*məlu*) " full ", *kŭfu* (*kəfu*) " bad ", *bŭzu* (*bəzu*) " much ", *'ŭkkul* (*'əkkul*; cf. Armbruster, *Voc.*, p. 128) " half ". In Salt's work (*loc. cit.*) one finds: *kuffo* (*kəfu*) " bad ", *dunkoro* (*dänk'oro*[24]) " deaf ", but rather unexpectedly: *bertu* " strong " (*bərtu*) for the more usual *bŭrtu*; *ertub* (*'ərt'ub* as well as *'ərt'əb*) for *'ŭrt'ub* " wet ", etc.

Gurage examples of vowel harmony are: *ənn̈äd* — *ŭnn̈äd* " other " (Leslau, *Gurage*, p. 147), *səmut* — *sŭmut* " eight " (*ib.*, p. 162), *šemä-m* — *šämä-m* " to hide " (*ib.*, p. 163), etc.

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[23] The best-known example of progressive vowel assimilation is the influence of a preceding *i* on the suffixes *-hu*, *-hum*, and *-hunna* in classical Arabic.

[24] Guidi (*Vocabolario*, col. 675) gives *dänk'oro* as well as *donk'oro*.

Harari, too, provides quite a few instances of vocalic harmony: *ət'ur* — *ŭt'ur* " recinto " (Cerulli, *Harari*, p. 71); *rəhuk'* — *rŭhuk'* " far ", etc. Cerulli notes (*loc. cit.*) that the type *k'ətul* generally alternates with *k'ŭtul*. Other cases are: *sari* — *säri* " mountain " (*loc. cit.*), *zirätti* — *ziritti* " che essa ha visto " (*ib.*).

The common occurrence of the phenomenon of vowel harmony (leading in particular to the rounding of *ə* under the influence of a velar vowel in a following syllable) in all the modern Ethiopian languages makes it certain that the partial assimilation of vowels in neighbouring syllables was also well-established in Gəʿəz. More direct evidence from a time when Gəʿəz was still a spoken language has confirmed this conclusion. The fairly common incidence of vocalic adaptation in so many language groups must, however, warn us against making this feature carry more than its weight. Yet, the manner in which vowel harmony operates in the Ethiopian domain is sufficiently uniform to underline the basic unity of Semitic Ethiopic.

Influence of Consonant on Vowel

Many consonants, especially laryngals, labials and labio-velars, dentals and prepalatals exert a specific influence on neighbouring vowels. But here, too—as has just been stated in the case of vowel harmony—the phenomena are in no way peculiar to the Ethiopian group, but occur also in general Semitic as well as elsewhere. For this reason comparative study can only be of limited significance, and we shall do no more here than present some of the main features.

In all the Semitic languages consonants are apt to influence the quality of neighbouring vowels. This can, of course, be most suitably observed in the modern languages, for in their classical forms, to which we have access through written records only, sub-phonemic changes will, of course, only very rarely find written expression.

In *Gəʿəz* the neighbourhood of a *laryngal* may be significant to a vowel in several ways. In the first place, a laryngal is never immediately preceded or followed, as a member of the same syllable, by *ä*. This important rule has, I think, not hitherto been seen in its proper light. Dillmann and Praetorius in their grammars, Brockelmann in his *Grundriss* (p. 197), Cohen in his important article (*Consonnes laryngales et voyelles en Éthiopien*, p. 26) as well as other scholars

maintain that before a laryngal which closes a syllable short *a* becomes long *a*. Now, it has been shown in the chapter on the vowels above that the seven Ethiopic vowel orders express qualitative and not quantitative differences, and that each order represents a vowel which may be long, medium, or short. In particular, the 1st order is not short *a* but *ä*, and the 4th order may be long as well as short *a*, though it predominantly represents the former. An Ethiopic laryngal does not affect the quantity of a preceding or following vowel[25], but its quality. It is not that *ma'kala* " in the midst " becomes *mā'kala*,[26] but *mä'kala* is changed to *ma'kala*. This seems to me borne out not only by all the relevant facts, but it appears intrinsically unlikely that the laryngals alone among all other consonants should affect the quantity rather than the timbre of a vowel with which they are in contact.

In the Aksum inscriptions (as Littmann, *Aksum*, IV, p. 80, has shown) we still find *bäs'äḫnä*, *mäḫbärtä*, etc., for later *bäs'aḫnä* and *maḫbärtä*. But Ethiopic MSS, with comparatively few exceptions, employ the 4th order vowel (*a*) immediately before and after a laryngal. In other words, while in earliest Gəʿəz a laryngal did not yet influence the quality of a neighbouring vowel, this was no longer so later on when *ä* was regularly changed to *a* in contact with a laryngal. I think (quite apart from the considerations which have already been adduced in the chapter on the vowels) that it can be conclusively proved that laryngals in Ethiopic affected not vowel-length but colour: In the Aksum inscriptions we find forms like *'əḫzab* (for *'aḫzab*) and *'əḫmarihomu* (for *'aḫmarihomu*).[27] *'əḫzab* can only be a variant of *'äḫzab*, but not of *'aḫzab*. Moreover, in terms of vowel quantity *'əḫzab* represents a further shortening instead of the (by the grammarians) postulated lengthening.

There are also other ways in which a laryngal affects a neighbouring vowel in Gəʿəz: a laryngal followed by *a* changes a preceding *ə* into *ä*. This may be the combined influence of the laryngal and vowel harmony: *yäḫawwər* " he will go " for *yəḫawwər*. Furthermore: a laryngal followed by a vowel other than *a* replaces a preceding *ä* by *ə*: thus *näsə'u* " they have raised " for *näsä'u*. Here, too, I am inclined to see a case of vowel harmony, for none of the theories usually advanced carry either weight or consistency. That such harmonizing of vowels

[25] This could in any case not be graphically depicted.

[26] Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, p. 197.

[27] Littmann, *loc. cit.*

should only occur when the intervening consonant is a laryngal is best explained by the fact that laryngals do not require an " adjustment of the buccal organs of articulation."[28] Acceptance of these explanations of the three principal ways in which vowels are—or appear to be—affected by neighbouring laryngals will remove the need for theories which have aroused the suspicion and dissatisfaction even of their authors (cf. Cohen, *op. cit.*, *passim*).

The danger of adapting the usual Gəʿəz rules on laryngals to the modern tongues is clearly shown in Chapter VIII of Leonessa's *Tňa* grammar. Leslau (*Doc. Tňa.*, p. 12), on the other hand, has simply described the changes which certain vowels undergo, and the results of this strictly descriptive method are excellent. They correspond, in almost every detail, with the description offered for Gəʿəz in the foregoing:

(1) The vowel *ä* is pronounced *a* after a laryngal: *ʾasärä* " he has arrested " (vis-à-vis *kʾätälä*).
(2) In a syllable closed by a laryngal the vowel *ä* is pronounced *a*: *bäläʿka* " you have eaten " (vis-à-vis *kʾätälka*).
(3) The vowel *ə* in an open syllable before a laryngal followed by *a* is generally changed to either *ä* or *a*: *yäʾassər* or *yaʾassər* " he arrests " (as compared with *yəkʾättəl*).

In rules (1) and (2) we clearly see that a laryngal changes a vowel, with which it is in contact, to *a*. The same is broadly true of rule (3), but it is likely that in this case the effect of vowel harmony is felt as well.

Conditions in *Tigre* are similar to those prevailing in Gəʿəz and Tňa, while in *Amharic* the scope of this feature is more limited than in the Northern languages on account of the elimination of most laryngals. Nonetheless, in immediate contact with ʾ and *h* an *ä* becomes *a*, e.g. *hayl* " force ", *ʾagär* " country ", etc.[29] The impact on a vowel made by the disappearance of an etymologically justified laryngal is discussed above in the chapter on laryngals (p. 42).

Gurage has lost all laryngals without any trace, but in *Harari* some are left and then exert the same influence on a neighbouring vowel as

[28] C. Rabin (*West-Arabian*, p. 99). Similar phenomena in Arabian dialects noted by Rabin are: *riʾi* for *raʾi* " familiar spirit ", *biʿir* for *baʿir* " camel ".

[29] *hä* or *ḫä*, when derived from ancient *ḫä* (i.e. spirantized *k*), are pronounced *hä* and *ḫä* (i.e. the 1st order is not in this case replaced by the 4th).

has been described in the foregoing.[30] The same applies to Gafat (Leslau, *Gafat*, p. 24).

The preference of a laryngal for the vowel *a*, if in immediate contact, is, of course, well-known everywhere in Semitic. More recently, C. Rabin (*West-Arabian*, p. 100) has shown that Eastern Arabian dialects frequently have *a* in the neighbourhood of a laryngal, where Western dialects present *u*. The phonetic phenomenon in its physiological aspect has been examined by Grammont.[31]

In view of this general Semitic impact of laryngals on vowels with which they are in contact, we have to be cautious in our conclusions for Ethiopic. We can only state that Gəʿəz as well as all the modern tongues, which have preserved at least some of the laryngals, favour the preservation of, or alteration to, pure *a* in immediate neighbourhood. Since the Northern languages, Tňa and Tigre, have maintained the complete laryngal inventory of Gəʿəz, application of this rule is, of course, most wide-spread in these languages. But it is important to realize for a correct appreciation of the historical relationship between North and South Ethiopic that, while the number of laryngals in the South has, in the course of a long independent development, been reduced, the nature and scope of their impact on neighbouring vowels have in no way been altered.

We have tried in particular to see the influence of laryngals on neighbouring vowels in Gəʿəz in a new and, I think, more consistent light; we have also shown the laryngals in their role as facilitating the operation of vowel harmonizing. While the circumstances in some of the modern Ethiopian languages are different, they have all developed along the same lines and subjected vowels in contact with laryngals to very largely parallel changes.

It is hardly profitable, for our comparative purposes, to discuss the effect of labials and labio-velars on neighbouring vowels (resulting in a predominance of velar vowels) or that of dentals and palatalized phonemes (generally giving rise to palatal vowels). These phenomena

[30] "Le laringali hanno sulle vocali azione chiarificatrice. . . ." (Cerulli, *Harari*, p. 72.)

[31] *Traité*, p. 214: ". . . l'assimilation porte sur la position de la langue: pour ces phonèmes consonantiques la racine de la langue est contractée et la masse de la langue portée en arrière; il en résulte que sous la voûte palatine la langue est forcément plus ou moins abaissée, ce qui ne permet pas l'articulation de phonèmes d'aussi faible aperture que l'*i* et l'*u*. . . ."

are adequately recorded in the grammars, and for general Semitic in paragraphs 75 and 76 of Brockelmann's *Grundriss*. The universal character of these phenomena precludes any specific comparisons and dialectal groupings within the Ethiopic field.

Appendix on Gemination [1]

Gemination[2] is of particular importance in Ethiopian languages. The matter requires study of syllabic structure and distributional patterns in Ethiopic, but this cannot be done within the compass of this treatise. We shall here deal with a few questions only which have a direct bearing on a clarification of inter-Ethiopian relationships.

Graphically, Ethiopian languages have no means of indicating gemination, which must be considered a very serious shortcoming of the Ethiopic script.[3] Doubling of consonants assumes special importance in verb formation, i.e. in the way the medial radical is affected; but the position is rather different from that in Arabic, for instance, where the alternation of simple and doubled medial radical may take place in most verbs and import morphological value. In Ethiopic, on the other hand, very few verbs have both the simple and the doubled stem, and verbs with a geminated radical present no morphological or semantic distinction: no intensive or causative meaning is attached to them.

Armbruster (*Amh. Gramm.*, p. 12) has found that in Amharic geminated consonants are actually pronounced double, while Cohen

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[1] J. H. Greenberg's article in *JAOS*, 1952, pp. 1–9, and W. Leslau's rejoinder (*JAOS*, 1953, pp. 164–6) reached me only just before this chapter went to press and were thus too late for detailed comment. On the whole, I would agree with Leslau's conclusions. The principal flaw in Greenberg's admirable and stimulating article is the undue weight attached to the traditional pronunciation of Gəʿəz. His reasoning is cogent, but his premises are often doubtful and required to carry more than they can support.

[2] Grammont (*Traité*, pp. 52–6) has shown by experimental methods the difference between geminated (doubled) and long consonnants. However, since this distinction is phonemically not significant, we shall not in the following deal with it (cf. Jones, *Phoneme*, para. 364). On the problems of gemination in general see Troubetzkoy, *Principes*, pp. 184 *et seqq.*; Bloomfield, *Language*, p. 119; Westermann-Ward, p. 118.

[3] Cf. Polotsky, *JAOS*, 1949, p. 36; see also Ullendorff, *Africa*, 1951, p. 215, where this matter is treated in greater detail.

(*Traité*, p. 39) holds that geminated consonants are " en réalité des consonnes longues."[4] My own experience suggests that geminated consonants are pronounced double in medial position (attaching one part to the preceding syllable and the other to the following syllable), but felt to be long rather than double in final position.[5]

Gemination occurs in medial and final position, but never initially.

For gemination in *Gəʿəz* we have to rely on the traditional pronunciation and the evidence of the modern languages. This is, of course, highly unsatisfactory. Mittwoch (*Trad. Ausspr.*, pp. 17 *et seqq.*) has shown the extent to which European as well as indigenous impressions of consonant doubling differ. On the other hand, Mittwoch's own notation of *yəbarrək* as " er segnet " and *yəbarək* " er segne " has not been corroborated by other observers. Nor is comparison with other Semitic languages a secure guide, for not infrequently have etymologically justified geminations been given up, and vice versa.[6]

I agree with Mittwoch[7] that all consonants may be subject to gemination—with the exception, it appears, of the laryngals. Cohen,[8] on the other hand, thought that " il est probable, d'après la plupart des mêmes langues modernes, que les laryngales n'étaient pas plus qu'en arabe exemptes de la gémination."

But the evidence of the modern languages is hardly very helpful in this connection, for in the South the laryngals have generally disappeared and in the North (i.e. esp. Tňa) they cannot be doubled.

In *Tňa* gemination of consonants is very frequent. Often it is due to assimilation. I cannot agree with Leslau that gemination may be of " morphological " value in Tňa, i.e. *kʾärräbä* " approcher, présenter " — *kʾäräbä* " être proche " (*Doc. Tňa.*, p. 6). The former form does not, to the best of my knowledge, exist in Tňa,[9] and the meaning it

[4] See note (2) above.

[5] D. Jones (*Phoneme*, p. 118) thinks that in Arabic final consonants of words like *ḥubb* " love ", etc., are " doubtless felt by native speakers to be double rather than merely long on account of the existence of cognate forms such as *ḥabib*, etc."

[6] *ʾəm* " mother " is a case in point, but other observers (including myself) have always heard *kullu* pronounced with gemination in the trad. pron. of Gəʿəz—as against Mittwoch's *kulu* (*op. cit.*, p. 18).

[7] *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

[8] *Études*, p. 6.

[9] Cf. also da Bassano's Tňa dictionary where *kʾärräbä* is not listed.

is alleged to represent is generally expressed by *'aḵ'räbä*. I do, however, concur with Leslau's view (*op. cit.*, p. 95) that in the formation of the verb " la différence entre le type A (non-geminated perfect) et le type B (geminated perfect) semble être lexicale." This view is also clearly expressed in Leslau's article on the gemination of the Chaha verb (*WORD*, IV, p. 42) where he finds that the similarity between the Semitic intensive stem (Arabic II) and the Ethiopian type B is purely one of form, without the morphological or semantic value that attaches to the former.

In the imperfect of the simple stem, both types A and B, the medial radical is invariably geminated, but in type A gemination is suspended before vocalic affomatives, while in type B doubling is maintained throughout.

Gemination is unquestionably phonemically distinctive in Tĭña—just as it is in Arabic.

In the following I cite a number of examples taken from my transcribed texts; I am, however, including only such forms as are corroborated by da Bassano's *Vocabolario*, for the danger of mishearing gemination is considerable.

ḥabälä to set a trap
ḥabbälä to be squint-eyed

ḥadäsä to have ample milk (woman)
ḥaddäsä to renew

dämäwä to lose blood
dämmäwä to be beautiful

mäzäzä to draw (sword) from sheath
mäzzäzä to pertain, to belong

käsätä to reveal
kässätä to prosper

wäḵ'ärä to hew
wäk'k'ärä to report, to denounce
(In this case the contrast is further underlined by the fricative in the non-geminated form.)

säräyä	to forgive
särräyä	to prepare a poisoned drink
k'ät'änä	to be small, to lose weight
k'ät't'änä	to liquefy
ḥadärä	to spend the night
ḥaddärä	to remain unploughed (field)
s'älämä	to make off, to escape
s'ällämä	to be black
rägäs'ä	to pound, to crush
räggäs'ä	to close tightly
färäsä	to destroy
färräsä	to eviscerate
'asärä	to bind, to imprison
'assärä	to trace
fänäwä	to go bad, to decay
fännäwä	to send, to let go
säl'e	to tear
sällə'e	to distribute

I have assembled here a fair number of instances,[10] partly because they have not previously been collected and partly in order to show that in most cases the geminated form cannot possibly be considered the intensive stem of the non-geminated one without doing violence to semantic development. I can only think of two examples where there appears to be a semantic relationship between the two stems: *fäläsä* " to be uprooted " — *fälläsä* " to excavate "; *bäläs'ä* " to be superior " — *bälläs'ä* " to choose, to select."

Among non-verbal roots in which gemination is significant one might mention:

sala " crest of cock " — *salla* " in favour of, thanks to "; *'abo*

[10] Many others can, of course, be added; but it should be stressed once more that we have here two separate types of verbal stems and not morphological variations of a given root.

" oleander " — *'abbo* " father "; *'abay* " wild " — *'abbay* " Blue Nile."

Gemination in Tña may affect any consonant—with the exception of the laryngals.[11] In the case of the labio-velars I feel confident that both the velar and the labial component are lengthened; this is also implicit in the very simultaneity of the two articulatory movements by which these sounds are produced. In this I cannot follow Leslau's remarks,[12] but I agree with him that in the case of the glottalized ejectives it is only the buccal closure which is prolonged, the glottal closure remains unchanged. Hence my transcription *t't'*, *k'k'*, etc., is, strictly speaking, not quite correct.

For *Tigre* most of the above observations are valid as well, in particular all that has been said about the geminated and non-geminated stems of the simple verb. Laryngals cannot be doubled in Tigre. Here, too, consonant length is distinctive:

hada	" to marry "	— *hadda*	" to thunder "
ḥama	" to calumniate "	— *ḥamma*	" to take ill "
ḥarät	" rain water "	— *ḥarrät*	" courtyard "
mäsa	" to become evening "	— *mässa*	" to dry "
'ara	" to collect "	— *'arra*	" milt "
'amät	" year "	— *'ammät*	" paternal aunt "
'ara	" to conciliate "	— *'ɹra*	" to reach "
s'ära	" to be polished, smooth "	— *s'ärra*	" to tie "

and many other instances.

In the case of verbs, gemination can only be distinctive in biradicals, for triliterals of type A have no vowel after the medial radical.

In *Amharic*, too, gemination is very frequent. It may be phonemically distinctive as pairs such as *alä* " he said " — *allä* " he is "; *bər* " pen " — *bərr* " money "; *almät'am* " I do not come " — *almät't'am* " he has not come", clearly show.

Gemination in the Amharic verb stands in an inverse relationship

[11] Cf. Leslau, *Doc. Tña*, p. 7.

[12] *Loc. cit.*, where he maintains that only the velar element undergoes lengthening.

to that in Tña and Tigre: the distinction between type A and B of the simple stem exists also in Amharic, but is expressed in the imperfect only, for gemination of the medial radical has analogously spread over the perfect forms which are now *invariably* doubled. Type A: impf. 2nd radical simple; type B: impf. 2nd radical geminated.

Apart from such regular occurrences of gemination, there are very many instances where consonant lengthening appears and disappears for reasons which Cohen has justly termed phonetic and rhythmic.[13] This applies in particular to enclitic elements such as *-m* and *-na* (both meaning " and ") as well as to *b* and *l* before personal suffixes attached to the verb: *märᵛetənna* " and the ground ", *näggäräbbəň* " he spoke in my disfavour ". Cohen[14] has given the well-known example of *mənəm*—but *mənəmm alnäbbär* " il n'y avait rien ". Such geminations are clearly due to rhythmic conditions underlying syllabic constitution.

Leslau[15] and Polotsky[16] have only recently dealt with gemination in *Gurage*. Polotsky had already previously[17] shown that some Gurage dialects (Aymallal, Muher) do *not* have gemination (which appears in the positive perfect) in the forms of the negative perfect. Chaha, the main Gurage dialect, on the other hand, exhibits a more complex situation: Leslau has made it very probable that primitive voiced geminates are simplified and unvoiced in Chaha (e.g. *bäsam* " to be abundant ", impf. *yəbäza*). Moreover, primitive *bb*, *dd*, *gg* are not only simplified and unvoiced, but also aspirated (e.g. *k'äpʰäräm* " to bury " — impf. *yək'äbər*), and thus kept distinct from ordinary unvoiced consonants by aspiration.

In Harari type B of the simple stem does not (or no longer ?) exist. Most geminations here are due to assimilation.

It seems probable[18] that there was a time when Gəʿəz did not have gemination of the 2nd radical in the simple stem. This is still the

[13] *Traité*, p. 41.
[14] *Loc. cit.*
[15] *Word*, IV, 1.
[16] *Gurage Notes*, p. 20.
[17] *BSL*, 1938.
[18] As M. Cohen and H. J. Polotsky have already pointed out in *BSL*, 1938, pp. viii–ix.

case in Harari and in the negative forms of certain Gurage dialects. Another group of languages, Tĭna and Tigre, have largely ungeminated perfect stems (though geminated ones—as we have seen—do occur), but geminated imperfect stems. And a third group is made up of Amharic (and, in the manner described, of Gurage), where the perfect stem is regularly geminated, but in the impf. stem there occur fluctuations which are similar to those in the Tĭna and Tigre perfect.[19]

In the latest stages of Gə'əz the incidence of gemination appears to have been subject to a good deal of hesitation. This is certainly the picture suggested by the divergences in the modern languages. I fully agree, however, with Polotsky (*JAOS*, 1949, p. 38) that there is nothing in these divergences which would preclude reducibility to a common source. In fact, there is enough parallelism between the three groups to say that gemination is a feature inherited by all of them from a common ancestor: Gə'əz.

Gemination of the medial radical in all perfect stems of Amharic is thus not an innovation but merely an extension of an existing characteristic (occurring partially in Northern perfects, and wholly in Northern imperfects). It seems probable that when, later on, Amharic lost gemination in the impf. of the A stem, this was caused by the addition of vocalic afformatives: *yək'ättəl* — *yək'ätlu*, etc.[20]

It is interesting to observe the independence, with regard to this feature, of Harari and part of the Gurage group. They have clearly preserved here an archaic feature which, by itself, should make us chary of lumping them together with Amharic under the label " South Ethiopic."

Although all Semitic Ethiopian languages have (or had) gemination, the variations this phenomenon has undergone in the different languages allows us to establish, diachronically, a number of groups whose dissimilarities can, in turn, be reduced to an original unity.

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[19] I have tried to find out to what extent perf. geminations in Tigre and Tĭna or impf. geminations in Amh. correspond to I,2 verbs in Gə'əz, but the resultant pattern is far from convincing. While in my samples there is a preponderance of correspondences, the minority of non-coinciding forms is large. In general, it must be stated that the number of comparable verbal stems, as between Gə'əz and the modern languages (i.e. stems suitable for this comparison), is not very representative.

[20] Cf. Nyberg, *GGA*, 1932.

CONCLUSIONS

For the reasons explained in the PREFACE the present investigation has had to be limited to phonetic and phonological aspects. While the immediate cause of this limitation was a purely external one, space, it can, nonetheless, be defended on internal reasons as well. Syntax and vocabulary are easily susceptible to the influence of other languages without necessarily disturbing what A. Meillet has called the *système fermé* of the language.[1] Borrowings of words and even distortions of the accepted order of words, etc., merely touch the periphery of that system without seriously impairing its identity. This is certainly well exemplified in all Semitic Ethiopian languages which have accepted a significant number of foreign, i.e. predominantly Cushitic, accretions to their vocabulary. This has, however, upset their identity as little as Latin-French admixtures to the English vocabulary have detracted from the basic Germanic character of that language. The syntax of modern Ethiopian tongues is far removed from all Semitic conceptions, but an investigation of those syntactical features would have relatively little value from a diachronic and comparative point of view.

The position is, however, quite different with regard to the morphological and phonetic-phonological structure of a language. Breaches of that structure occur much more rarely, but when they do take place on any significant scale they soon transform the character of a language. It is generally thought that the phonetic-phonological system offers the strongest resistance to an impact from outside, and this is why it has been selected here for special examination.[2] On the whole, I think, this selection has proved to be justified in the case of the Semitic Ethiopian languages. The conclusions offered in the following are principally based on phonetic-phonological criteria, even though in a few isolated instances I have had recourse to certain morphological features.

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[1] *Linguistique Historique et Ling. Générale*, p. 84.

[2] This is not to say that morphological criteria can be neglected, but in our case I have found that phonetics and phonology offer in many instances more scope for fruitful comparisons. Although sounds, too, may shift and phonemes may become unstable, it is probably true that morphological changes occur with somewhat greater ease. A case in point is the well-known example of the Portuguese in Mangalore (India) acquiring an English morpheme (*'s* to denote possession): *governador's casa.*

Scrutiny of the conclusions, which summarize the salient features of each chapter in the main part of this treatise, shows that nothing has come to light that prevents us from assuming that one Semitic language, perhaps in very slightly varying forms, was imported into Africa from South Arabia. That language, in the course of time, spread over a fairly large area and, when political and other circumstances were propitious, became finally differentiated to such an extent that the varying speech forms became mutually unintelligible.[3] In fact, we might express the same thought in positive form: there is, I submit, sufficient evidence to assume that the modern Semitic Ethiopian languages are of uniform origin, i.e. they belong to the same group, which simply means that they represent the differentiations of one ancient language: Gəʿəz.[4] For relationship between languages connotes modification in various ways of what once was one single language.

M. Cohen (*Études*, p. 39) had already drawn attention to the essential homogeneity of the Semitic Ethiopian languages. This homogeneity becomes particularly clear when one compares modern Ethiopic with, for instance, modern South Arabian. The divergences in each group are considerable, but there is, nevertheless, a basic unity in each group which distinguishes it from all others. Both modern Ethiopic and modern South Arabian are, in the last analysis, derived from one South Arabian tongue. But the displacement of one branch across the Red Sea and its independent development on African soil accounts for those important cleavages between the two.

It has sometimes been suggested (see INTRODUCTION) that the differences between the various modern Ethiopian languages have to be explained by derivation from different South Arabian tongues imported into Africa. Amharic would then be made to claim descent from an unknown "sister" tongue of Gəʿəz. But this theory is neither necessary (in fact, it disturbs the historical pattern which will be set out in the following) nor inherently likely. As the main South Arabian dialects known to us have all had a considerable literary (epigraphic) tradition, it would seem strange that that "sister-tongue" alone should be totally unattested on Ethiopian soil in either epigraphy or literature. Neither were the conditions in the Aksumite Empire

[3] Details below.

[4] A similar view has been expressed to me by Professor H. J. Polotsky.

favourable to a complete loss of all visible traces of such a language, nor does any indirect evidence point to such an event, e.g. Ethiopian words in Arabic: it would have been very odd if no members of the alleged proto-Amharic group had ever been included in the Ethiopian expeditions in Arabia. More important, however, is the fact that our examination in the main part has not brought out any linguistic features in Amharic, for instance, which defy explanation by reference to Gəʿəz. Amharic has got rid of most of its laryngals, but we can show that this is due to a long process of development and that Amharic once possessed those laryngals.[5] Amharic has evolved large numbers of palatalized phonemes which do not exist in Gəʿəz. But these sounds, to varying extents, occur in all modern Semitic Ethiopian languages, and it is possible, and even probable, that some palatalizations took place already in the last stages of Gəʿəz about which we know little or nothing. The same happens quite frequently in the Romance languages: their unity is constituted—just as is the case in the Ethiopic field—by the ensemble of features common to them all. The majority of these features were already apparent in Latin, but quite a few are innovations shared by all or some of the modern languages, and they can only be explained as survivals from that little known linguistic stage called " Vulgar Latin " which is intermediate between classical Latin and the Romance languages.[6]

As has already been briefly mentioned in the INTRODUCTION, the Romance languages offer a most suitable field of comparison for our purposes. In both cases the languages of origin, Latin and Gəʿəz, are known to us from literary sources; in both instances the crucial period between the classical language and the modern tongues, the stage of splitting and differentiation, is shrouded in darkness; and in both cases the resultant languages show about the same degree of evolution from, and affinity to, one another.

My reconstruction of the evolution of the Semitic Ethiopian languages is as follows:

At the time of the Aksumite Empire (3rd—8th centuries) Gəʿəz was the principal language of the Semitic conquerors. It appears

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[5] This chapter contains general conclusions only; detailed references are given in the concluding parts of each section in the foregoing.

[6] *abbiamo* and *chantons*, etc., are cases in point.

that the influence of Cushitic tongues, Agaw in particular, was comparatively slight (as we have seen in the main part above). The linguistic situation seems to have changed in consequence of the rapid political decline. In its heyday the relatively centralized state was probably poor in dialectal variants; no doubt there must have existed regionally definable speech habits, but Gəʿəz was on the whole a fairly compact, uniform language. With the decline of that central power the Empire broke up into smaller units which became—as was shown in the INTRODUCTION—watertight compartments. At the same time, what little power there still existed began to shift southwards. We have no records of Gəʿəz from about the 9th—13th centuries. During that period it must have approached a type, at Aksum and its northern surroundings, which was not very different from what we now call Tňa. In the South, on the other hand, there evolved from the southern speech forms of Gəʿəz a language of the Amharic type. That language—as the earliest records of Amharic show—had lost many of the characteristics of Gəʿəz, but was not as far removed from it as modern Shoan Amharic might lead us to suppose. In particular, it still preserved some of the laryngals, the shift $s' > t'$ had not yet occurred, and the vocabulary was less infested with foreign elements. But both the main successor tongues had been unable to maintain the virtual immunity of Gəʿəz to the impact of Cushitic on sound and form structure. True, the northern language, which we may identify as Tňa, had developed in the traditional home of Ethiopic civilization and continued to be spoken there; its resistance to the acceptance of foreign elements was naturally stronger than was the case in the South. Not only was Southern Gəʿəz (slowly to develop into what we now term Amharic) less directly subjected to the impact of the Aksum tradition and the Ethiopic heritage, but it came more and more to be spoken by racially diverse elements which had no interest in maintaining the glory of the past. It is thus perfectly natural that Tňa, though it shows many important divergences from Gəʿəz, is on the whole less differentiated from the classical language than is the case with Amharic. A reconstruction of many Tňa and Amharic forms will thus have to aim not at classical Gəʿəz, but at this obscure period of late Gəʿəz which is so closely parallel to the epoch of vulgar Latin. The lesser impact of substrate elements on Tňa and long, almost completely independent, development make up the sum total of the differences between Amharic and Tňa. This

must be concluded from our examination of the sound system and is equally confirmed by an investigation of the morphology.

Tĭa was (and is) spoken on the plateau of the Abyssinian highlands, but in the lowlands, both in the east on the Red Sea littoral and in the west towards (what is now) the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, a sharply differentiated language developed which is called Tigre (see INTRODUCTION). The steep escarpment of the highlands (6,000–8,000 feet) prevents practically all bilingualism; the divisions are sharp and abrupt, and the two languages have evolved with a minimum of contact between them. In reality the two languages are the same; one might call Tigre " lowland Tigriña ", for that is what it amounts to historically. But, nonetheless, the two tongues are today well differentiated and mutually as unintelligible as Italian and Spanish: this is the outcome of an independent development extending over 800–1000 years. That Tigre and Tĭa are not as strongly differentiated from each other as are Tĭa and Amharic is due not to geographical proximity (Southern Tĭa and Northern Amharic are also contiguous), but to largely identical substrates and to a greater awareness of a common cultural and linguistic heritage.

Whether Tigre is thus a developed form of earliest Tĭa or latest Gəʿəz is, I suggest, very largely a terminological quibble. That it should, in some instances, have preserved Gəʿəz forms more faithfully is partly a result of statistical probability and partly of influences, mainly Amharic, to which Tĭa is subjected at its southern fringes. But all talk of Tigre being the most direct " descendant " of Gəʿəz must be abandoned; not only because the picture of the family tree is unreal, but mainly because the linguistic and historical data decree otherwise.

There are two other Semitic Ethiopian languages, Harari and Gurage, which have a southern habitat. Conti Rossini was the first to surmise, on historical grounds, that both are

> " secondo ogni probabilità antiche colonie militari tigrine . . . trapiantate colà, come oggi i *kätäma* o campi abissini fra i Galla o i Sidama, per tenere a freno i popoli vinti. . . ." (*Storia*, p. 283).

These Semitic islands in the vast Cushitic sea have maintained their speech, although they have been isolated for 500 years and possibly more. Nowadays pressure against them is no longer primarily exerted by their substrates, Sidama and Galla, but by Amharic, the official

language of the Ethiopian Empire. Their position may perhaps (*mutatis mutandis*) be compared to that of Welsh and Scottish Gaelic in Britain. One total casualty has already been claimed by Amharic when it virtually displaced Gafat between the middle and end of the 19th century (as Cornish in this country); and what little Argobba is still spoken is rapidly being given up in favour of Amharic.

Conti Rossini's hypothesis is fully confirmed by linguistic criteria. There are a number of instances where we can recognize Tigrean features in both Gurage and Harari: Gurage and Tĭna, alone of all Semitic Ethiopian languages, have the alternation of plosive and fricative in different forms of the same root (Gurage *näkkäbäm* " he found " — *yərägəb*; Tĭna *räkäbä* — *yəräkkəb*). Tĭna and Harari shun final consonant clusters and add *-i* to relieve them. Harari—like Tĭna and Tigre—has kept at least two of its laryngals which have disappeared elsewhere in the South completely. The labio-velars have been totally eliminated in Tigre and Harari only. The personal pronouns in Gurage strongly resemble the copula in Tĭna, and the Gurage demonstrative has an obviously " Northern " form, etc., etc.[7] Indigenous traditions corroborate linguistic and historical indications, and there is no valid reason to doubt the essential accuracy of Aläk'a Tayyä's version of the origin of the Gurage people:[8]

> ". . . At the time of the Emperor 'Amda S'əyon an army left the Tigrean town of Gur'a in the 'Akkulo Gəzay province and . . . came to Aymallal[9] and settled there. Therefore the country and people are called Gur'age. The Emperor 'Amda S'əyon reigned from 1327 till 1355, some 30 years. . . . Gur'age means the people or the country of Gur'a. . . ."[10]

And, indeed, a place by the name of Gur'a exists in the province of Akkulo Gəzay (Eritrea) to this day.[11]

The resemblances between Harari and Gurage are thus explained by a similar origin and by development, though completely independent, in circumstances not very different. Cerulli has shown that, apart from the limited influence of Galla, Harari was superimposed on a

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[7] Details in the concluding parts of each chapter above.

[8] In his Amharic *yä-'ityop'ya ḥəzb tarik* (History of the people of Ethiopia), p. 49. Cf. also my note in *Africa*, 1950, pp. 336–7.

[9] I.e. the present Gurage region.

[10] For *-ge* cf. Guidi, *Vocab. Amar.*, col. 701.

[11] Near Decamere, some 30 miles south of Asmara.

Sidama substratum.[12] Gurage and Harari have thus received their principal substrate influences from the same language group.

These facts lead us to the important recognition that, save for ultimate common origin from Gəʿəz, there is no direct connection between Gurage and Harari, on the one hand, and Amharic on the other. The many resemblances between the three languages are the result of growth in very similar circumstances, i.e. substrates, cultural and political conditions, etc. A direct influence by Amharic on Gurage and Harari has only been exerted in the most recent times in the wake of the arrival of fairly large numbers of Shoan Amharic officials.

Strictly speaking, it is, therefore, meaningless to refer to Tĭa and Tigre as North-Ethiopic and to Amharic, Harari, and Gurage as South-Ethiopic, unless these terms are merely applied to " the present habitat of the respective languages."[13] Diachronically these terms are misleading. Leslau, in a recent article,[14] has not, I think, seen the genetic relationship between the various Semitic Ethiopian languages in its proper light. Whether the " existing differences are numerous enough to justify the classification of Ethiopic from a descriptive point of view into North-Ethiopic and South-Ethiopic ",[15] may be a matter for argument, but such a classification takes too much account of superficial similarities, of features numerically preponderant, but qualitatively not of equal weight. And there is no doubt that such a classification has hitherto effectively barred the recognition of historical connections. Though somewhat clumsy, it would in my view be preferable to speak of features of the Amharic or the Tĭa type, respectively. Polotsky[16] has shown that such differences as exist between " North Ethiopic " and " South Ethiopic " fall under the usual categories of linguistic development, such as loss or alteration in the field of phonetics, or analogical unification in the field of morphology. Not only do these distinctions not imply irreducibility to a common origin, but they are precisely of the kind which make a

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[12] *Harari*, p. 440.

[13] As Polotsky has cogently shown in his review of Leslau's *Gafat Documents* (*JAOS*, 1949, p. 37).

[14] *JAOS*, 1951, 4.

[15] Leslau, *loc. cit.*

[16] *JAOS*, 1949, pp. 37–8.

common origin, in this case Gəʿəz, virtually certain.[17] This is also recognized by Leslau (*op. cit.*, p. 230), though perhaps with some hesitation.

One of the main reasons why doubt has often arisen about the sole parentage of Gəʿəz in relation to all the modern Semitic Ethiopian languages is our complete ignorance as regards late Gəʿəz, i.e. the important stage between what we term classical Ethiopic and the appearance of the modern tongues. This unfavourable situation is further aggravated by the fact that our knowledge of Gəʿəz is fairly limited, since it is based only on a number of epigraphic documents and a predominantly ecclesiastical literature dating from a time when the language was artificially preserved in literary and liturgical use. The range of subjects is thus extremely narrow, and there is practically no variety of style or expression. Complaints about lack of representativeness of Old Testament Hebrew or the vast body of Latinity (with " vulgar " writers such as Vitruvius) seem trivial by comparison. It will be an important task for the future to reconstruct certain aspects of " vulgar Gəʿəz ", the language between the 9th and 13th centuries, at least in all cases where the ensemble of modern Ethiopic claims reduction to a feature differing from recorded Gəʿəz.

In any future investigation the comparative method has to be supplemented by dialect geography. At present we know far too little about this. In a few instances only (such as $s' > t'$; $b > \underline{b}$, etc.) has it been possible to fix isoglosses. At the same time, it must be stressed that such an examination must be carried out " on the spot." Information supplied by single informants from different regions is too often mistaken as dialectal in cases where the divergences merely fall within the category of individual speech habits. The main part of this treatise has shown that that has frequently been the reason why I had to differ from some of my predecessors' views on Tňa dialects.

I have not been able to explain satisfactorily the dearth of dialectal variants in Tňa and Amharic. Both languages are spread over wide

[17] This has been expressed in a telling phrase by Conti Rossini (*Proverbi*, etc., p. 13):

". . . Ma nulla, a mio avviso, giustifica—fuor che l'amore di novità— la tesi che le lingue meridionali semitiche abbiano avuto diversa origine delle settentrionali."

areas (though communications are much better than is sometimes supposed—see INTRODUCTION), but have preserved a remarkable unity. M. Cohen has rightly said that

" il n'y est pas question de divisions dialectales proprement dites. . . ." (*Études*, p. 41).

The position is different in Gurage and probably also in Tigre. The situation in the latter requires urgent investigation; in particular, we wish to know if and to what extent Eastern and Western Tigre are differentiated.

I believe our inquiry has not only proved the " reducibility " of the modern Semitic Ethiopian languages to a common origin, but has also shed more light on the degree of their relationship to Gəʿəz as well as to each other. The reconstruction of the genesis of the modern tongues, which has been offered in the foregoing, has shown itself a useful working hypothesis. I do not claim that all or most has been explained now; at the present state of our knowledge of Ethiopian languages there remain many serious gaps. When M. Cohen, 20 years ago, concluded his brief *tableau dialectal éthiopien* by saying that " la réalité est complexe et d'interprétation délicate " (*Études*, p. 52) he uttered no commonplace. And although some progress has been made since then, it is still no platitude today to re-affirm M. Cohen's verdict in full.

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ADDENDA

P. 10, lines 13–18 :

In one or two texts it has recently been thought that a second person form (suffix *-k*) can be identified ; see especially A. F. L. Beeston, *Le Muséon*, LXVI, 1–2, 1953, p. 178 ; G. Ryckmans, *Le Muséon*, LXVI, 3–4, 1953, p. 302 ; E. Ullendorff, *Orientalia*, 1954, p. 328. These are not, however, verbal forms, but possessive suffixes attached to a noun.

P. 68, lines 5–7 :

Dr. C. Rabin (who has been kind enough to read a galley proof) thinks that an explanation of the Arabic and Hebrew *-t* suffixes compared with *-k* in Ethiopic may also be sought in the workings of analogy:

Arabic *-tu*	Eth. *-ku*
-ta	*-ka*

The Arabic and Hebrew *-t* forms would thus have arisen from analogy with the imperfect preformative *t-*.

P. 68, last § :

To what extent *ś* may be considered a true palatal (or, perhaps, more correctly a lateral fricative) has recently been considered by J. Cantineau, *Le consonatisme sémitique*, *SEMITICA* IV, 1951–52, and A. Martinet, *BSL* 1953, 1. Both articles are of considerable interest and importance for a re-valuation of the Semitic consonant system, but they appeared too late for consideration in this book.

For *ś* cf. also A. Schaade, *Sibawaihi's Lautlehre*, p. 74.

P. 161 (under (b)) :

For Arabic *muṣḥaf*, etc., cf. also Rabin, *West-Arabian*, p. 101.