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The noncausal/causal alternation in Muher (Ethiosemitic)

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ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with noncausal/causal verb pairs in Muher — a little-known South Ethiosemitic language of the so-called Gunnän Gurage sub-group in Ethiopia. Muher is a morphologically complex language, characterized by nonconcatenative verb morphology and the use of prefixes in combination with template changes to derive verbs. The study is based on a dataset of the Muher equivalents for the verb pairs in Haspelmath (1993). Muher uses several strategies to mark the noncausal/causal alternation, whereby directed pairs dominate. Within these pairs, a causal verb is more often derived than a noncausal verb. Non-directed pairs, i.e., equipollent, labile and suppletive verb pairs, are also attested, but are less frequent. Moreover, for five of the original items in the list, Muher has no pairs, i.e., one verb only occurs in the noncausal form while four verbs lack a noncausal counterpart. These four verbs, as well as most of the other verbs in the list with a human subject, make use of a morphosyntactic construction, the impersonal, to express an event in which the patientive object is foregrounded.

KEYWORDS

causative, complex predicates, Ethiosemitic, Gunnän Gurage, impersonal construction, mediopassive, Muher, nonconcatenative morphology

RÉSUMÉ

L'article porte sur les paires de verbes non causals/causals en muher, une langue éthiopienne peu connue de la branche Gunnän Gurage de l'éthiosémitique. Le muher est une langue morphologiquement complexe, caractérisée par une morphologie verbale non concaténative et l'utilisation de préfixes en combinaison avec des changements de schème pour dériver des verbes. L'étude est basée sur un ensemble d'équivalents muher pour les paires de verbes de Haspelmath (1993). Muher utilise plusieurs stratégies pour marquer l'alternance non causal/causal, où les paires dirigées dominent. Dans ces paires, un verbe causal est plus souvent dérivé qu'un verbe non causal. Les paires non orientées, c'est-à-dire les paires de verbes équipollents, labiles et supplétifs, sont également attestées, mais sont moins fréquentes. De plus, pour cinq des éléments originaux de la liste, le muher n'a pas de paires, c'est-à-dire qu'un verbe n'apparaît que sous la forme non causale tandis que quatre verbes n'ont pas d'équivalent non causal. Ces quatre verbes, ainsi que la plupart des autres verbes de la liste avec un sujet humain, font usage d'une construction morphosyntaxique, l'impersonnel, pour exprimer un événement dans lequel l'objet patient est mis en avant.

MOTS CLÉS

causatif, construction impersonnelle, éthiosémitique, Gunnän Gurage, muher, morphologie non caténative, médiopassif, prédicats complexes

North Ethiosemitic	South Ethiosemitic
†Geez	a. Transversal
Tigrinya	Amharic Harari
Tigre	Argobba Eastern Gurage
Dahaalik	i. Zay
	ii. Silt'e, Wolane
	b. Outer
	†Gafat Gunnän Gurage
	i. Kistane, Dobbi, †Galila
	ii. Muher
	iii. Mesqan
	iv. Chaha cluster (Chaha, Ezha, Gumer, Gura)
	v. Inor cluster (Inor, Gyeta, Endegagn, Ener, †Mesmes)

Figure 1 — Main genetic groups within Ethiosemitic

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades several typological works have been published showing that languages use various formal devices to mark the noncausal/causal alternation in semantically defined verb pairs (e.g. Haspelmath 1993; Nichols *et al.* 2004; Haspelmath *et al.* 2014; Grünthal & Nichols 2016; Creissels this volume). According to Haspelmath (1993: 90), the two verbs of such a pair denote the same verbal event which typically contains a patient participant, but the agent participant occurs only with the causal verb, while its noncausal counterpart lacks an overt instigator of the verbal event. The formal relationship of the two verbs in a pair is not limited to valence-changing derivation, but also includes other types, like lexical suppletion, auxiliary change, conjugation change, etc. For further details, see the Introduction to this volume, where the guest editors provide a definition of the noncausal/causal alternation, present an overview of the typological literature, and give a detailed overview of the correspondence typologies.

Studies of the noncausal/causal alternation in Ethiosemitic languages are scarce. Even if grammars of Ethiosemitic languages may contain a detailed description of valence-changing derivations, other mechanisms for the noncausal/causal alternation have so far not attracted much attention. The only exception is Amharic, for which a 31-item list of noncausal/causal pairs including an analysis of their formal relationships is available (Wakasa 2014).

Based on the set of noncausal/causal meanings presented in Haspelmath (1993), this paper describes the alternations underlying noncausal/causal verb pairs in Muher (endonym: *m^wähäriṅṅa*; Glottocode: [muher1234](#); the ISO 639-3 code [sgw](#) subsumes Muher under Sebat Bet Gurage).¹

Muher is an Ethiosemitic language spoken in the Gurage Zone in central Ethiopia. An official number of Muher speakers does not exist because the last population and housing census of Ethiopia from 2007 provides only a general figure in which, with the exception of Silt'e (also comprising Wolane), all Gurage varieties are lumped together. About 1.48 million L1 Gurage speakers live in Ethiopia (CSA 2010a: 91), of whom 1.06 million are living in the Gurage Zone (CSA 2010b: 166). Muher is mainly spoken in the Muher and Aklil District in which 87,800 people are living (CSA 2010b: 7). Assuming that most of them speak Muher as their L1, the total number of Muher speakers can be estimated as being between 80,000 and 90,000. Only few of them speak the *ädi-bet* variety, which is mainly found in and around the village of Mäqorqor, and some villages near Wolkite, such as Tattessa, in which according to my estimation approximately 800 *ädi-bet* speakers are living.

Genetically, Ethiosemitic is part of Western Semitic (see Huehnergard & Pat-El 2019: 7-9). The exact number of Ethiosemitic languages is still a matter of discussion; for a summary of the thirty or so varieties, see Hudson (2013: 7-20). Despite several contestations, e.g. Goldenberg (1977) and Hudson (2007; 2013), the most comprehensive classification of Ethiosemitic based on morphological innovations still remains Hetzron (1972: 119; 1977: 15-24). According to him, Ethiosemitic contains three main branches: North Ethiosemitic, Transversal South Ethiosemitic, and Outer South Ethiosemitic (Figure 1). The symbol † is used to indicate extinct languages.

1. Based on SIL's use of the term, Sebat Bet Gurage consists of branches i-iv of the Gunnän Gurage sub-group in Figure 1.

(i)	Root	$\sqrt{k'_1-b_2-r_3}$ 'plant; bury'			
	Templates	PERFECTIVE		IMPERFECTIVE	JUSSIVE
		AFFIRMATIVE	NEGATIVE		
		$C_1\ddot{a}CC_2\ddot{a}C_3-$	$an-C_1\ddot{a}C_2\ddot{a}C_3-$	$-C_1\ddot{a}C_2C_3-$	$-C_1C_2C_3-$
	Base	$k'_1\ddot{a}bb_2\ddot{a}r_3-$	$an-k'_1\ddot{a}b_2\ddot{a}r_3-$	$-k'_1\ddot{a}b_2r_3-$	$-k'_1b_2r_3-$
	↓				
(ii)	3SG.M subject	-ä		j-	jä-
	Inflected verb	$k'\ddot{a}bb\ddot{a}r\ddot{a}$	$ank'\ddot{a}b\ddot{a}r\ddot{a}$	$jik'\ddot{a}br$	$j\ddot{a}?bir$
	↓				
(iii)	Clausal status marker	-m		{-u, -i, -tt}	
	Main clause verb	$k'\ddot{a}bb\ddot{a}r\ddot{a}m$	$ank'\ddot{a}b\ddot{a}r\ddot{a}$	$ji?\ddot{a}bru$	$j\ddot{a}?bir$
		'he planted; buried'	'he did not plant; bury'	'he plants, will plant; he buries, will bury'	'let him plant; bury'

Figure 2 — Basic inflection of the root $\sqrt{k'_1-b_2-r_3}$ 'plant; bury' (type A) in the simplex stem

With the exception of Gafat, Outer South Ethiosemitic languages are grouped together as Gunnän Gurage (Hetzron 1977: 3), as opposed to the genetically rather distant Eastern Gurage (Meyer 2011a: 1221-1224). Within Gunnän Gurage, Kistane, Dobbi, Galila and Muher form a special unit known as Northern Gurage (Hetzron 1977: 23-24).

Muher, like most other Gunnän Gurage languages, typically serves as medium for oral communication and has only sporadically been used for writing. The majority of the Gurage, including the Muher, are bi- or multilingual, speaking more than one Gurage variety beside Amharic (Meyer 2011a: 1223-1224). This has a strong impact on language use of Gurage speakers resulting in various language change and language shift processes.

Muher is a fairly well described language. Besides an extensive wordlist with about 2000 entries (Leslau 1979a: 831-960), glossed and annotated text collections (Leslau 1981: 53-199; Hetzron 1977: 167-184), two grammar sketches (Leslau 1981: 6-50; Meyer 2019), and a comprehensive descriptive grammar (Aregawi 2018), there are a number of specialized grammatical studies on the language (for an overview, see Meyer 2011a).

The data presented in this paper mainly stem from my own fieldwork on Muher with additions from Leslau (1979a). Since 1998, I have been conducting fieldwork on the *ädi-bet* variety of Muher in the multilingual speech community living in Tattessa, a small village 6 km to the east of Wolkite, the administrative center of the Gurage Zone. Originally, the *ädi-bet* variety is spoken in the village of Mäqorqor, from where it expanded to several enclaves in the Gurage Zone (Meyer 2010: 161-162). Today, the Muher of Tattessa can be considered heritage speakers of *ädi-bet* as most of them use Amharic as the dominant language, in addition to other Gurage languages, in particular Ezha. The heritage status of the language affected my interactions with consultants and this should be borne in mind in the analysis that follows.

2. GRAMMATICAL BACKGROUND

As is typical for a Semitic language, the verb morphology of Muher is nonlinear. An inflected verb consists of three components: a verbal root (i.e. a sequence of consonantal or vocalic radicals) encoding the general semantics of the verb, inflectional templates for grammatical aspect and mood, and partly also polarity (as a grammatical category of affirmative vs. negative), as well as subject affixes (see Meyer 2014; 2016a for further details). Figure 2 shows the three stages of the formation of the

(i)	Root	$\sqrt{k'_1-b_2-r_3}$ 'bury'		
	Mediopassive templates	PERFECTIVE	IMPERFECTIVE	JUSSIVE
	Base	$t\ddot{a}-C_1\ddot{a}CC_2\ddot{a}C_3-$	$-t-C_1\ddot{a}CC_2\ddot{a}C_3-$	$-t-C_1\ddot{a}C_2\ddot{a}C_3-$
		$t\ddot{a}-k'\ddot{a}bb\ddot{a}r-$	$-t-k'\ddot{a}bb\ddot{a}r-$	$-t-k'\ddot{a}b\ddot{a}r-$
	↓			
(ii)	3SG.M subject/VN Inflected verb	$-\ddot{a}$	$j-$	$w\ddot{a}-$
		$t\ddot{a}?\ddot{a}bb\ddot{a}r\ddot{a}$	$j\ddot{t}k'\ddot{a}bb\ddot{a}r$	$w\ddot{a}t\ddot{k}'\ddot{a}b\ddot{a}r$
	↓			
(iii)	Clausal status marker Main clause verb	$-m$	$\{-u, -i, -tt\}$	
		$t\ddot{a}?\ddot{a}bb\ddot{a}r\ddot{a}m$	$j\ddot{t}k'\ddot{a}bb\ddot{a}r\ddot{u}$	$w\ddot{a}t\ddot{k}'\ddot{a}b\ddot{a}r$
		'he is/was buried'	'he is being/ will be buried'	'to bury/ burying'

Figure 3 — Basic inflection of the root $\sqrt{k'_1-b_2-r_3}$ 'bury' in the mediopassive stem

simplex stem for the root $\sqrt{k'_1-b_2-r_3}$ 'plant; bury'² with a 3SG.M subject. First, in stage (i) the lexical root interdigitates with the templates to form the verb bases.³ Then, in stage (ii) these bases obligatorily combine with a subject marker to form an inflected verb. With regard to the negative perfective and jussive, the inflected verbs already represent main clause verbs, whereas the verbs in the affirmative perfective and the imperfective are unmarked for their syntactic function. They still have to combine either with a clausal status marker, stage (iii), or with a subordinating element (for clausal status marking, see Meyer 2014: 242-252).⁴

The basic conjugations found in each Ethiosemitic language are perfective, imperfective⁵ and jussive/imperative⁶. A few languages have additional templates for the converb and the verbal noun (or nominal infinitive). Muher does not have a dedicated converb template, but forms pseudo-converbs from inflected verbs. The verbal noun is derived from the jussive template. In addition to the negative prefix, several Gurage languages also distinguish between affirmative and negative perfective by distinct templates (Meyer 2014: 236). In Muher, these templates differ in the second root consonant, which is geminate in the affirmative perfective and single in the negative.

In addition to the templates, three lexical verb classes, called VERB TYPE, have to be distinguished, as they determine the vocalization and gemination patterns of the templates. Type A is the basic or unmarked root. Type B is characterized by gemination of the second root consonant in all conjugations and/or palatalization of either the initial root consonant or the vowel following it (yielding $*\ddot{a} > e$, $*a > \ddot{a}$). Type C is marked by the vowel a following the initial root consonant (for the main verb types in Ethiosemitic, see Meyer 2016a: 169).

As a result, the stems of a verbal root in Muher are not represented by a single inflected verb form but by the combination of the templates for the three basic conjugations (perfective, imperfective and jussive). In other words, the four templates in Figure 2 represent together the simplex stem of the root $\sqrt{k'_1-b_2-r_3}$ 'bury', whereas the three templates in Figure 3 represent the derived mediopassive stem of this root.

Verbs cross-reference definite primary objects by a dedicated suffix set (1a), which is relatively complex in Muher (and other Gunnän Gurage languages) due to a large number of allomorphs (Meyer 2019: 240). Indefinite objects are never indexed, as shown in (1b).

2. The symbol $\sqrt{\quad}$ stands for a lexical root which typically consists of three consonants whose order is indicated by subscript numbers. In templates, any consonantal and vocalic radical is represented by the symbol C followed by a subscript number to indicate their position in the root. The sequences CC_1 and CC_2 stand for geminate consonants.

3. In postvocalic position, the singleton ejective k' regularly debuccalizes to the glottal stop $ʔ$ (Meyer 2019: 230).

4. Note that the citation form of Semitic verbs is the 3SG.M affirmative perfective, which in Muher ends with the clausal status marker $-m$. In this paper, verbs are cited in this form in the body of the text, and are glossed with the English infinitive. In numbered language examples, however, the English glosses represent their actual contextual meaning.

5. The imperfective is used in nonpast and past contexts, in the latter followed by the past auxiliary *bannä* in main clauses (for further details on Muher, see Meyer 2019: 248; and in a wider Ethiosemitic context, see Meyer 2016a: 199-217; 2016b: 199-203). In Figure 2, only the inflection of the nonpast imperfective is shown.

6. Note that a few intransitive/unaccusative verbs form their jussive with the template $-C_1C_2\ddot{a}C_3-$ (Meyer 2016a: 173-174).

- (1) a. *birtʃikk'owe säbbärmuim*
 birtʃikk'o-we säbbär-m^w-i-m
 glass-DEF break\PFV-SBJ.3PL.M-**OBJ.3SG.M**-CSM
 'They broke the glass.'
- b. *birtʃikk'o säbbärmum*
 birtʃikk'o säbbär-m^w-m
 glass break\PFV-SBJ.3PL.M-CSM
 'They broke a glass.'

Verbal derivation is coded either by prefixation, reduplication of a root consonant, vowel *a*- insertion after the first or second root consonant, or a combination of these (see Meyer 2019: 241-241; for the broader Ethiopian context, see Meyer & Wolff 2019: 309-310). Reduplication and *a*-insertion express pluractionality, while the derivational prefixes usually bring about a change in the verb valence. The three productive derivational prefixes are *t(ä)*- mediopassive, *a*- direct causative, and *at*- indirect causative, as in (2) and (3).

- (2) SIMPLEX (TR) DERIVED STEMS
- | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|------------|------------------|
| a. <i>k'äbbäräm</i> | b. <i>at-k'äbbäräm</i> | (CAUS.IDR) | 'let plant/bury' |
| 'plant; bury' | c. <i>tä-äbbäräm</i> | (MP) | 'be buried' |
- (3) SIMPLEX (INTR) DERIVED VERBS
- | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|------------|------------------|
| a. <i>k'ärräbäm</i> | b. <i>a-ärräbäm</i> | (CAUS.DR) | 'bring near' |
| 'be near' | c. <i>at-k'ärräbäm</i> | (CAUS.IDR) | 'let bring near' |

In a few quadrilateral roots, Muher marks mediopassive/causative pairs by the nonproductive prefixes *in-* (intransitive) and *an-* (transitive), e.g. *in-t'ilätt'äläm* 'dangle' vs. *an-t'ilätt'äläm* 'hang up'.

Derived stems do not combine with the set of templates for simplex roots, but with their own set of templates, as shown for the mediopassive of 'bury' in Figure 3.⁷

In contrast to the simplex root $\sqrt{k'_1-b_2-r_3}$ in Figure 2, the mediopassive form only has the sense of 'bury', not of 'plant'. Furthermore, a separate template for the negative perfective is lacking, and the vocalization/gemination of the templates for the imperfective and jussive conjugations differ from the simplex root in Figure 2.

Like simplex stems, derived stems are formed through the interdigitation of stem-specific conjugational templates and the lexical root (stage (i) in Figure 2 and Figure 3). Thus, the derived stems are not simply a modification of the corresponding simplex stem. However, they are morphologically more complex or augmented than the corresponding simplex stems due to the presence of the derivational prefixes, *a*-insertion or reduplication.

Regarding the function of the productive derivational prefixes, the mediopassive *t(ä)*- typically reduces the valence of a transitive verb by deleting its agent participant, as in (2c) *tä-äbbäräm* 'be buried' from the transitive verb *k'äbbäräm* 'bury' (2a). The direct causative *a*- increases the valence of an intransitive verb by adding an agent, as in (3b) *a-ärräbäm* 'bring near' related to the simplex form *k'ärräbäm* 'be near' (3a). The indirect causative *at*- can be applied to intransitive and transitive verb roots and introduces the new role of a causer or facilitator of the verbal event, as shown in (2b) *at-k'äbbäräm* 'let bury' and (3c) *at-k'ärräbäm* 'let bring near'. However, in contrast to other Ethiosemitic languages, particularly Amharic, it is not possible to predict which verb roots allow for the mediopassive and the two causative derivations, i.e. derivation is rather a lexical feature connected with the verb root.

7. For the mediopassive of $\sqrt{k'_1-b_2-r_3}$ 'bury', no verb is attested in the jussive/imperative. Therefore, the verbal noun, which is also based on the jussive template, is given in Figure 3.

3. THE NONCAUSAL/CAUSAL VERB CORRESPONDENCES IN MUHER

This section first gives a statistical overview of the noncausal/causal verb alternation in Muher based on the 31-item wordlist in Haspelmath (1993), and then discusses a number of topics related to them.

3.1 List of noncausal/causal verbs in Muher

The Muher equivalents of the 31 noncausal/causal verb pairs in Haspelmath (1993: 97) and their correspondence types are shown in Table 1. Haspelmath (1993: 90-92) distinguishes five strategies for the formal relationship of the two verbs in noncausal/causal pairs, namely causativization (C), in which a causal verb is derived from a noncausal simplex verb; anticausativization (A), which is the reverse, i.e. a noncausal verb is derived from a causal simplex verb; equipollence (E), in which both verbs are derived; suppletion (S) for pairs with two formally unrelated lexical verbs; and lability (L) when a single verb has a causal and a noncausal meaning. The anticausative and causative correspondences are directed in the sense that the morphologically more marked verb is derived from the simplex verb. The remaining three types — equipollence, suppletion, and lability — are nondirected, i.e. a distinction between simplex and derived verb cannot be made.

Table 1 — Noncausal/causal pairs in Muher

1	boil ⁸	<i>fännam</i>	<i>afännam</i>	C	CAUS.DR	
2	*freeze > be cool/cool	<i>gizäggäzäm</i>	<i>agzäggäzäm</i>	C	CAUS.DR	
3	dry	<i>t'ärrä?äm</i>	<i>at'ärrä?äm</i>	C	CAUS.DR	
4	wake up	<i>tänässam</i> ⁹	<i>k'isäkk'äsäm</i>	S		
5	go out	<i>wätt'am</i>	<i>ḡatt'am</i> ¹⁰	C	CAUS.DR	
6	sink	<i>b^wännam</i>	<i>ab^wännam</i>	C	CAUS.DR	
7	learn/teach	<i>tämaräm</i>	<i>atmäräm</i> ¹¹	E	MP/CAUS.IDR	
8	melt	<i>k'allät'äm</i>	<i>a?ällät'äm</i>	C	CAUS.DR	
9	stop	<i>k'^wämäm</i>	<i>a?^wämäm</i>	C	CAUS.DR	
10	turn (around)	<i>zḡaräm</i>	<i>azḡaräm</i>	C	CAUS.DR	
11	dissolve	<i>t'ämmam</i>	<i>bit'äbbät'äm</i>	S		
12	burn	<i>näddädäm</i>	<i>mäjjäm</i>	S		
13	destroy	<i>färräsäm</i>	<i>afärräsäm</i>	C	CAUS.DR	
14	fill	<i>männam</i>	<i>männam</i>	L		
15	finish	<i>e?äm</i>	<i>fäddḡäm</i>	S		
16	begin	—	<i>k'ärräsäm</i>	—		
17	spread >	disperse	a. <i>täbratf'äm</i>	<i>bratf'äm</i>	A	MP
		widen	b. <i>bättätäm</i>	<i>abättätäm</i>	C	CAUS.DR
18	roll	<i>inkiballäläm</i>	<i>ankiballäläm</i>	E	INTR/TR	

8. Although this verb pair is attested (see, for instance, Leslau 1979a: 877), *fännam* ‘boil (INTR)’ tends to be replaced by the verb *insiräsäräm* ‘boil with a bubbling sound’ and *afännam* ‘boil (TR)’ by *fäkkääm* ‘boil, cook in hot water’. My Muher consultants often avoid *fännam/afännam* ‘boil’ due to the similarity with the verb *f^wännam* ‘have sexual intercourse’. A similar phenomenon can be observed with the Muher ditransitive verb *bäddam* ‘take something from someone’, which tends to be replaced by the Amharic loan verb *wässädäm* ‘take’ because Muher *bäddam* closely resembles Amharic *bädda* ‘have sexual intercourse’ (see also Leslau 1959: 107).

9. Mediopassive with a specialized semantic vis-à-vis the causal verb: ‘rise’ (#21).

10. The verb *ḡatt'am* ‘go out; descend’, see also (#24), represents underlying **a-wätt'a-m* CAUS.DR-go_out/PFV.3SG.M-CSM, in which the sequence /awäl/ is pronounced as a diphthong [ḡa] (Meyer 2019: 231; Leslau 1979b: xvii).

11. Another causal form is *astämmäräm*, most probably a loan from Amharic *astämarä*.

19	develop	<i>tälaʔäm</i>	<i>atläʔäm</i>	E	MP/CAUS.IDR
20	get lost/lose	<i>k'ärräm</i>	<i>aʔärräm</i>	C	CAUS.DR
21	rise/raise	<i>tänässam</i>	<i>nässam</i>	A	MP
22	improve	<i>alläfäm</i>	—	—	
23	rock	<i>ink'ijäkk'ääm</i>	<i>ank'ijäkk'ääm</i>	E	INTR/TR
24	connect	—	<i>gätt'ämäm</i>	—	
25	change	—	<i>fäggääm</i>	—	
26	gather	<i>täsbässäbäm</i> ¹²	<i>sibässäbäm</i>	A	MP
27	open	<i>täkäffätäm</i> ¹³	<i>käffätäm</i>	A	MP
28	break	<i>täsäbbäräm</i>	<i>säbbäräm</i>	A	MP
29	close	<i>tatf'äm</i> ¹⁴	<i>atf'äm</i>	A	MP
30	split	<i>täfäkk'am</i> ¹⁵	<i>fäkk'am</i>	A	MP
31	die/kill	<i>m'ätäm</i>	<i>k'ätt'ääm</i>	S	

A modification of Haspelmath's (1993) original list is found with the verb 'freeze' (#2). Its direct translation into Muher would be a periphrastic expression similar to 'become ice' and 'prepare/make ice'. Therefore, this verb was replaced with the pair 'be cool/cool'.

Muher has no dedicated verb 'sink' (#6). This sense is expressed by the polysemous verb *b'wän-nam* whose lexical meaning can be generally described as 'disappear from view by penetrating into something, like a field, a hole, water, etc.' Furthermore, some derived noncausal mediopassive verbs in Table 1 have a more specialized semantics than the corresponding causal verbs (#26, 27, 29, 30). These instances have been counted as formal noncausal/causal pairs, even if the noncausal sense is typically expressed by the impersonal (see §5). In addition, the mediopassive verb *tänässam* appears twice in Table 1: as the suppletive noncausal counterpart to *k'isäkk'äsäm* 'wake up' (#4), where it can also be replaced by the impersonal of *k'isäkk'äsäm*, and as the derived noncausal counterpart to the verb *nässam* 'raise' (#21). The two instances of *tänässam* have been counted as distinct pairs.

The noncausal verb *alläfäm* 'improve' (#22) lacks a causal counterpart and will thus not be considered further. Conversely, the causal verbs 'begin' (#16), 'connect' (#24), and 'change' (#25) have no derived noncausal counterpart, and thus are not counted. However, in contrast to *alläfäm* 'improve', these verbs can form the impersonal with an unspecific subject (see §5). Consequently, the number of pairs in Haspelmath's (1993) list is reduced from 31 to 27 noncausal/causal verb pairs. One of these English pairs, #17, has two translational equivalents in Muher: *bratf'äm* in the sense of 'disperse' or *abättätäm* meaning 'widen'. As suggested by Haspelmath (1993: 100), each correspondence in the double pair #17 has been counted with 0.5 for the overall calculation in Table 2.

Table 2 — Distribution of noncausal/causal correspondences in 23 Muher pairs

	Directed pairs		Nondirected pairs		Total	
	Causative	Anticausative	Suppletive	Equipollent	Labile	
Raw	10.5	6.5	5	4	1	27
Percent	39%	24%	19%	15%	3%	
Total percent			63%		37%	100%

12. Mediopassive with a specialized semantic vis-à-vis the causal verb: 'gather (only human)'.
 13. Mediopassive with a specialized semantic vis-à-vis the causal verb: 'hardly open'.
 14. Mediopassive with a specialized semantic vis-à-vis the causal verb: 'hardly close'.
 15. Mediopassive with a specialized semantic vis-à-vis the causal verb: 'split easily'.

As can be seen from Table 2, all five strategies for the formation of noncausal/causal verb pairs are found in Muher. The majority of the verb pairs (17 pairs or 63%) are directed, with a preference for the causativization strategy (10.5 pairs), while the anticausativization strategy is less frequent (6.5 verb pairs). A summary of the directed pairs is given in Table 3 which shows that causativization and anticausativization are marked respectively by a single productive derivational strategy, namely the prefixation of *tä-* for the mediopassive and of *a-* for the direct causative. The productive indirect causativization by the prefix *at-*, as well as the nonproductive derivations by the prefixes *in-* (INTR) and *an-* (TR) are not employed in these verb pairs.

Table 3 — Anticausative and causative strategies

#	Causal simplex (6.5 pairs)	Noncausal derivation	#	Noncausal simplex (10.5 pairs)	Causal derivation
17	spread(> disperse)	MP	1	boil	CAUS.DR
21	rise/raise	MP	2	be cool/cool	CAUS.DR
26	gather*	MP	3	dry	CAUS.DR
27	open*	MP	5	go out/put out	CAUS.DR
29	close*	MP	6	sink	CAUS.DR
30	split*	MP	8	melt	CAUS.DR
28	break	MP	9	stop	CAUS.DR
			10	turn	CAUS.DR
			13	destroy	CAUS.DR
			17	spread (> be wide)	CAUS.DR
			20	get lost/lose	CAUS.DR

*More specialized semantics vis-à-vis the causal simplex verb

The first half of Haspelmath's (1993: 97) noncausal/causal verb pairs in Table 1 is dominated by the causativization strategy, whereas the derived noncausal verbs are found in the second half. Haspelmath *et al.* (2014) attributes this phenomenon to the lexical semantics of the verbs. While events in the first part of Table 1 like 'dry', 'sink', 'melt', etc., usually occur without an agent, the verbs in the second part of the table usually require a human agent who fulfills the verbal action. The more frequent type — noncausal with the verbs in the first part of Table 1, but causal with the verbs towards the end — is then expressed by the simplex stem, while the respective other verb is morphologically marked by derivation. The two Muher equivalents for English 'spread' (#17) seem to reflect this semantic division. If 'spread' is translated into Muher in the sense of 'disperse', the unmarked simplex verb is causal with a human agent as subject. The other member of the pair is then a derived noncausal verb in the mediopassive. By contrast, if 'spread' is translated in the sense of 'be wide/widen', the unmarked simplex verb is typically noncausal, without a human instigator. Consequently, its counterpart is a derived causative verb.

With regard to the non-directed pairs, the only labile verb is 'fill' (#14) (see §3.3.1), nine other pairs display either equipollent or suppletive alternations (see §§3.3.2 and 3.3.3).

3.2 Formation of directed pairs

In directed pairs, the noncausal simplex verbs in Table 3 derive their causal counterpart by the direct causative prefix *a-* plus the respective inflectional template (see §2). As a result, intransitive simplex verbs change into transitive verbs with an agentive subject, which is usually animate.

- (4) a. *gɪfˈätwe t'ärräʔäm.*
 gɪfˈät-we t'ärräk'-ä-m
 clothes-DEF dry\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 'The clothes have dried.'
- b. *rawda gɪfˈätwe at'ärräʔättinnim.*
 rawda gɪfˈät-we a-t'ärräk'-ätt-nn-m
 Rawda.F clothes-DEF CAUS.DR-dry\PFV-SBJ.3SG.F-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 'Rawda dried the clothes.'

In some instances, the direct causative prefix *a-* also attaches to transitive (causal) simplex verbs which then have a more specialized meaning, see, e.g., (18b) in §4, or they may convey an indirect causal sense, as with the transitive verb *läbbäsäm* 'dress' in (5), which is in other verbs expressed by prefixing *at-* (CAUS.IDR).

- (5) *kädır jägˈəbbehut aläbbäsännim.*
 kädır jä-gˈäbbe-hˈta a-läbbäs-ä-nn-m
 Kadir.M GAD-brother-POSS.3SG.M CAUS.DR-dress\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 a. 'Kadir dressed his brother.' (direct causative reading)
 b. 'Kadir provided clothes for his brother.' (indirect causative reading)

Simplex verbs with the root-initial vocalic radical *a*, e.g. *addäräm* 'spend the night' cannot form their causal counterpart by the direct causative prefix *a-*, but use the indirect causative prefix *at-* instead. The resulting derived verbs then have a direct or an indirect causative reading, i.e. *atäddäräm* (<**at-addär-ä-m* CAUS.IDR-spend_the_night\PFV-3SG.M-CSM) 'give lodging for the night (direct causative); let pass the night (indirect causative)'.
 The causal simplex verbs in Table 3 employ the mediopassive derivation with the prefix *tä-* (plus the respective mediopassive template) to form their noncausal counterparts. In the mediopassive derivation, unaffected agents are deleted, and the verb valence is reduced by one, as shown with the causal simplex verb in (6a) vis-à-vis its noncausal counterpart in the mediopassive derivation in (6b).

- (6) a. *kädır sinwe säbbärännim.*
 kädır sin-we säbbär-ä-nn-m
 Kadir.M cup-DEF break\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 'Kadir broke the cup.'
- b. *sinwe täsäbbäräm.*
 sin-we tä-säbbär-ä-m
 cup-DEF MP-break\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 'The cup broke/is broken.'

In (7), the subject *kädır* may have had a role in the instigation of the verbal event, but he is also affected by it and thus treated as a patient. The second noun, *ädzhut* 'his hand', is not a direct object (as it cannot be cross-referenced by the object suffixes on the verb, even if it is definite), but an adjunct to the verb that specifies the place of the broken body part.

(7) *kädīr ädǧhut täsäbbäräm.*

kädīr ädǧ-hut tä-säbbär-ä-m
 Kadir.M hand-POSS.3SG.M MP-break\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-CSM

‘Kadir has broken his hand (lit. is broken with respect to his hand).’

Basically, the mediopassive denotes events in which the subject encodes an affected agentive or patientive participant. In contrast to other Ethiosemitic languages outside Gunnän Gurage, the Muher mediopassive has often developed a more specialized, less predictable meaning vis-à-vis the related simplex verb (see §4). Moreover, a noncausal sense is typically expressed by the impersonal construction in Muher (for which see §5).

3.3 Correspondences in nondirected pairs

3.3.1 Lability

Labile verbs are rare in Muher. The only instance found so far is the verb *männam* ‘fill’ (#14 in Table 1), which occurs in the same form in noncausal and causal contexts (8).

(8) a. *b^watto biga männam.*

b^watto bä-iga männa-ä-m
 river MIL-water fill\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-CSM

‘The river is full of water.’

b. *räwda sinwe bä?awa männattum.*

räwda sin-we bä-k’awa männa-ätt-u-m
 Rawda.F cup-DEF MIL-coffee fill\PFV-SBJ.3SG.F-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM

‘Rawda filled the cup with coffee.’

The major difference between (8a) and (8b) is the number of involved arguments: the noncausal intransitive verb *männam* in (8a) only has a subject, while the causal transitive verb *männam* has an additional object. Besides, the two subjects differ in animacy. The noncausal use coincides with inanimate patient-like subjects, while in causal events the subject is an agent. Note that in (8b) the use of the object suffix on the verb is obligatory because its referent, the primary object *sinwe* ‘the cup’, is definite (see §2).

3.3.2 Equipollence

Formally, all pairs in Table 1 could be analyzed as equipollent because both the simplex verb and its derived counterpart are formed through stem-specific templates which interdigitate with a lexical root (similar to the conjugation class change in the typology of Nichols *et al.* 2004), and not simply by attaching derivational prefixes to a simplex stem (see §2). Nevertheless, simplex verbs can clearly be distinguished from their derived counterparts through the lack of such an additional derivational prefix. In the equipollent pairs discussed here, however, the two verbs of the pair are equally marked by a derivational prefix, i.e. the two verbs are equally morphologically augmented.

Equipollent correspondences can be classified into three types, of which only two are attested in the dataset in Table 1. The first type (#18 and #23 in Table 1) is characterized by nonproductive derivational prefixes, namely *in-* for intransitive verbs (noncausal) and *an-* for transitive verbs (causal), as with the verb ‘roll’ in (9).

- (9) a. *ifittawe wəhättawe garinnijä ankiballälmem.*
 ifitta-we wähätta-we gar-ɲnijä an-kballäl-ma-i-m
 WOM- ensete_tuber.DEF house-DIR TR-roll\PFV-SBJ.3PL.F-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 AN.PL-DEF
 ‘The women rolled the ensete tuber towards the house.’
- b. *innamwe bäg^wädzä inkiballäläm.*
 innam-we bä-g^wädzä in-kballäl-ä-m
 COW-DEF MIL-hole INTR-roll\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-CSM¹⁶
 ‘The cow rolled into a pit.’

In the second type (#7 and #19 in Table 1), the two verbs of a pair are formed by the productive mediopassive and indirect causative derivations, marked by the prefixes *tä-* and *at-*, respectively, as with the verb ‘develop’ in (10).

- (10) a. *rawda gunnänça atlä?ättum.*
 rawda gunnän-hja at-läk’-ätt-u-m
 Rawda.F hair-POSS.3SG.F CAUS.IDR-develop\PFV-SBJ.3SG.F-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘Rawda let her hair grow.’
- b. *kunfiḏähä likk’e täla?äm.*
 kunfiḏ-ähä likk’e tä-lak’-ä-m
 beard-POSS.2SG.M very MP-develop\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘Your beard grew a lot.’

For three of the four equipollent verb pairs, i.e. ‘learn/teach’ (#7), ‘roll’ (#18), and ‘rock’ (#23),¹⁷ an underived simplex stem is unattested. The fourth verb pair, ‘develop’ (#19), has the simplex *la?äm* ‘surpass’ (11a), but its semantic relation to the derived stems, i.e. the indirect causative (11b) and the mediopassive (11c), is not straightforward.

In the indirect causative derivation, type A simplex verbs consistently change to type B verbs (for the verb types, see §2). Therefore, the vocalic radical *a* of the simplex verb *la?äm* (11a)¹⁸ gets palatalized and changes to *ä*, and the three basic conjugations use a single template realized as *lä?* (recall that postvocalic *k*’ is uttered *?*), as in (11b).

- (11) a. SIMPLEX
- | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>la?-ä-m</i> | <i>ji-lk’-u</i> | <i>jä-la?</i> |
| surpass\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-CSM | SBJ.3SG.M-surpass\IPFV- CSM | SBJ.3SG.M-surpass\JUSS |
| ‘he surpassed’ | ‘he surpasses’ | ‘let him surpass’ |

16. Nouns with non-human referents are uniformly marked with the 3SG.M subject marker in the singular, even if they are semantically feminine like *innam* ‘cow’.

17. This verb exists in another stem derived by *a*-insertion, namely *k’ijakk’ääm* ‘mix’.

18. The verb *la?äm* ‘surpass’ originates from the type A trilateral root $\sqrt{1_1-A_2-k}_3$, with a glottal stop, a velar, a pharyngeal or a glottal fricative (generally referred to as gutturals) as second consonant, which changed to a vocalic radical (represented by the symbol A) that is mainly uttered as vowel *a* attached to the initial root consonant. Historically, the gutturals triggered vowel assimilation processes that still can be observed in the irregular imperfective base of these roots with type A simplex verbs, in which the vocalic radical is lacking, as in *jilk’u* ‘he surpasses’ in (16a).

3.3.3 Suppletion

The dataset in Table 1 contains five suppletive pairs, namely ‘wake up’ (#4), ‘dissolve’ (#11), ‘burn’ (#12), ‘finish’ (#15), and ‘die/kill’ (#31). In these pairs, the noncausal verbs and their causal counterparts are not formally related, as illustrated in (14).

- (14) a. *assəwä eʔäm.*
 assäwä ek’-ä-m
 salt be_finished\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘The salt is finished.’
- b. *färätwe guggurim fäddzännim.*
 färät-we guggurim fäddzä-ä-nn-m
 food-def all finished\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘He finished all the food.’

In all four pairs, the noncausal counterpart can be replaced by the impersonal form of the causal verb, see, e.g., (25) in §5.

4. ADDITIONAL DERIVED VERBS FOR THE PAIRS IN TABLE 1

Some of the transitive simplex verbs, particularly in the last third of Table 1, also derive another causal verb, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 — Additional derived causal verbs to the transitive simplex verb in Table 1

#	Gloss	Causal simplex	Derived causal correspondent	Derivation
25	change	<i>fäggääm</i>	<i>a-fäggääm</i>	CAUS.DR
16	begin	<i>k’ärräsäm</i>	<i>at’-k’ärräsäm / a-ʔärräsäm</i>	CAUS.DR/IDR ²²
15	finish	<i>fäddzäm</i>	<i>at-fäddzäm</i>	CAUS.IDR
24	connect	<i>gätt’ämäm</i>	<i>ad-gätt’ämäm</i>	CAUS.IDR
26	gather	<i>sibässäbäm</i>	<i>as-sibässäbäm</i>	CAUS.IDR
27	open	<i>käffätäm</i>	<i>at-käffätäm</i>	CAUS.IDR
28	break	<i>säbbäräm</i>	<i>as-säbbäräm</i>	CAUS.IDR
30	split	<i>fäkk’am</i>	<i>at-fäkk’am</i>	CAUS.IDR
31	die/kill	<i>k’ätt’ääm</i>	<i>at’-k’ätt’ääm</i>	CAUS.IDR

Apart from ‘change’ (#25) and also ‘begin’ (#16), which occur in the direct causative derivation marked by the prefix *a-* (plus specific templates), all other additional causal verbs are in the indirect causative marked by the prefix *at-* (and its allomorphs) plus specific templates (see §2). The indirect causative derivation adds a new causer as subject, which instigates or facilitates the verbal action, as in (15c) and (16b). In contrast, the direct causative derivation increases the valence of an intransitive verb by adding a new agentive subject, which is actively involved in the verbal action, and transfers the subject of the simplex verb to the object position, as in (15a-b).

22. The indirect causative *at’-k’ärräsäm* ‘let begin’ and the direct causative *a-ʔärräsäm* are free variants. Their occurrence depends on currently unknown factors; even the same speaker may use them interchangeably.

- (15) a. *wəndimu səllämäm.*
 wəndimu səlläm-ä-m
 Wendimu.M be(come)_Muslim\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘Wendimu became Muslim.’
- b. *aḥḥirgeta jäwəndimu asəllämmūim.*
 aḥḥirgeta jä-wəndimu
 Quran_teacher GAD-Wendimu.M
 a-səlläm-m^w-i-m²³
 CAUS.DR-be(come)_Muslim\PFV-SBJ.3PL.M-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘The Quran teacher converted Wendimu to Islam (by making him say the shahada).’
- c. *jəwəndimu – junus baḥḥirgeta assəllämmännim.*
 jä-wəndimu junus bā-aḥḥirgeta
 GAD-Wendimu.M Yunus.M MIL-Quran_teacher
 at-səlläm-ä-nn-m
 CAUS.IDR-be(come)_Muslim\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘As for Wendimu, Yunus incited him to convert to Islam through the Quran teacher.’
- (16) a. *junus k’uran wəḥira k’ərräsäm.*
 junus k’uran wä-k’ra k’ərräs-ä-m
 Yunus.M Quran VN-read\JUUS begin\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘Yunus began to read the Quran.’
- b. *sitti jəjunus k’uran wəḥira at’k’ərräsättum.*
 sitti jä-junus k’uran wä-k’ra
 Sitti.F GAD-Yunus.M Quran VN-read\JUUS
 at-k’ərräs-ätt-u-m
 CAUS.IDR-begin\PFV-SBJ.3SG.F-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘Sitti incited Yunus to start reading the Quran.’

Thus, the indirect causative increases the valence by one, so that a transitive verb becomes ditransitive by adding a causer subject, while the actual agent, which fulfils the verbal action, is usually not overtly expressed. However, if it is, it is transferred to the peripheral object position marked by the instrumental prefix *bā-* (15c), or it becomes a primary object, as in (16b).

In contrast to other Ethiosemitic languages, such as Amharic (see Meyer 2011b: 1198) or Wolane (Meyer 2006: 74-78), the occurrence of the indirect causative in Muher is less productive and less predictable, as it can only be formed from a limited number of verbs.²⁴ Moreover, the meaning of the indirect causative derivation is sometimes included as an optional reading of the direct causative, as in (5) above, or with *a-ḥərräsäm* ‘make start; let start’ (#16 in Table 4). Consequently, the indirect causative verb in (16b) could also be replaced with the direct causative (17) without any observable change in meaning.

- (17) *sitti jəjunus k’uran wəḥira aḥḥərräsättum.*
 sitti jä-junus k’uran wä-k’ra a-k’ərräs-ätt-u-m
 Sitti.F GAD-Yunus.M Quran VN-read\JUUS CAUS.DR-begin\PFV-SBJ.3SG.F-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘Sitti incited Yunus to start reading the Quran.’

23. The second- and third-person plural markers express politeness with singular referents.

24. The reason for the limited occurrence of the indirect causative is not yet clear. It might be a more general feature of Gunnän Gurage, or due to some kind of grammatical restructuring in the Muher grammar of my consultants who only speak it as a heritage language.

In other instances, the direct causative has acquired a more specialized meaning than its simplex form, as is the case with direct causative *a-fäggä'äm* — simplex *fäggä'äm* ‘change’ (#25 in Table 4) — which has the unpredictable meaning ‘exchange (item X for item Y)’, as in (18):

- (18) a. *junus jäβollättfähut g^wätfä fäggä'ännim.*
 junus jä-b^wällättfä-h^wt g^wätfä fäggäi-ä-nn-m
 Yunus.M GAD-wedding-POSS.3SG.M date change\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘Yunus changed the date of his wedding.’
- b. *sämir innamhut bäβi?uwä afäggä'ännim.*
 sämir innam-h^wt bä-bi?uwä a-fäggäi-ä-nn-m
 Samir.M cow-POSS.3SG.M MIL-mule CAUS.DR-change\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘Samir exchanged his cow for a mule.’

Table 5 shows two derived mediopassive verbs which occur in addition to the basic noncausal/causal verb pair.

Table 5 — Additional derived noncausal counterparts

#	Gloss	Basic pair		Additional noncausal verb	Derivation
		Noncausal	Causal		
1	boil	<i>fännam</i>	<i>afännam</i>	<i>täfännam</i>	> ‘boil over’ MP
11	dissolve	<i>t'ämmam</i>	<i>bit'äbbät'äm</i>	<i>täbt'äbbät'äm</i>	> ‘be turbid’ MP

The additional mediopassive verbs denote a slightly modified verbal situation compared to the simplex form from which they are derived. Thus, *tä-bt'äbbät'äm*, the mediopassive of *bit'äbbät'äm* ‘dissolve’ (#11 in Table 5), does not simply express the passive reading ‘be dissolved’, as the basic noncausal verb *t'ämmam* in (19b), but conveys in addition the sense of being not properly dissolved so that the liquid is now lumpy, clotted or turbid (19c-d).

- (19) a. *basso bit'äbbät'xum sättfähum.*
 bässö bit'äbbät'-h^w-m sättfä-h^w-m
 roasted_barley_flour dissolve\PFV-SBJ.1SG-CVB drink\PFV-SBJ.1SG-CSM
 ‘I dissolved roasted barley flour (in water) and drank it.’
- b. *assäwä iga t'ämmam.*
 assäwä iga t'amma-ä-m
 salt water be_dissolved\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘The salt is dissolved in water.’
- c. *k'awawä täbt'äbbät'äm.*
 k'awa-wä tä-bt'äbbät'-ä-m
 coffee-DEF MP-dissolve\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘The coffee (powder) is (still) mixed (with the coffee drink) [i.e. the ground coffee has not yet settled].’

- d. *b^watto täbt'äbbät'am.*
 b^watto tä-bt'äbbät'-ä-m
 river MP-dissolve\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 'The river is turbid.'

Note that a specialized meaning is also found with derived mediopassive verbs as one component of the basic noncausal/causal pairs #26, #27, #29, and #30 in Table 1. While the mediopassive of 'gather' (#26), *täsbässäm*, is limited to human subjects, the mediopassive of the remaining three verbs has an additional manner component in which the verbal event occurs, i.e. *täkäffätäm* 'hardly open' (#27), *tatf'am* 'hardly close' (#29), and *täfäkk'am* 'split easily' (#30). However, not all Muher consultants agreed about the more specialized reading of these mediopassive verbs, rather considering them to be a noncausal construction without a known instigator of the verbal event.

5. THE IMPERSONAL CONSTRUCTION

Verbal derivation (see §3.2) formally marks the grammatical relationship in noncausal/causal verb pairs by changing the valence and voice of one of its members. In addition, Muher frequently makes use of a morphosyntactic construction, the impersonal, which does not affect the argument structure of a verb but which systematically bleaches out the subject and consequently foregrounds the object and its patient role. The impersonal passive is almost regularly formed from any verb with a potential human subject (for an overview, see Biruk 2013). It occurs with simplex verbs, e.g. *arräf'am* 'cut' and *färrähäm* 'be patient' in (20), as well as with derived verbs, like the direct causative *abässam* 'bring (i.e. make come)' in (21) and the mediopassive *täkäbbäräm* 'be honored' in (22).

- (20) *f^wäm^wä arrät'im fija jowajtt, färrähüm bäsäβ jisälett.*
 f^wäm^wä arrät'-^{wj}-m fija j-bä'a-^{wj}-i-tt
 ensete_sprout cut\PFV-IPS-CVB flower IPS-eat\IPFV-IPS-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 färräh-^{wj}-m bäsäb j-säla-^{wj}-i-tt
 be_patient\PFV-IPS-CVB MIL-human IPS-arrive\IPFV-IPS-OBJ.3SG.M-DCM
 'After one has cut the ensete sprout [which is growing in bundles from the root of an old plant], one eats (its) flower [i.e. the ripe ensete plant], and after one has been patient, one reaches [being a respected] human.' (proverb)
- (21) *k'awa bäg^warra läkk'amum jaβäfett.*
 k'awa bä-g^warra läkk'am-^{wj}-m j-a-bäsa-^{wj}-i-tt
 coffee MIL-garden pick\PFV-IPS-CVB IPS-CAUS.DR-come\IPFV-IPS-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 'One brings the coffee (beans) after having picked them in the garden.'
- (22) *ahunnaf bäf'äñni sällem tākäbb^wrim.*
 ahunnaf-^f bäf'-^fäñnā-^{wj}-i sälla-^{wj}-i-m
 now-FOC MIL-beget\PFV-IPS-OBJ.3SG.M[REL] arrive\PFV-IPS-OBJ.3SG.M-CVB
 tä-käbbär-^{wj}-i-m
 MP-honor\PFV-IPS-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 'But now, one is honored because [the generation] which one begat has arrived.' [i.e. aged parents start to benefit from their children after they have grown up and can protect and support them]

The impersonal is not a separate conjugation, but an inflectional category, a kind of fourth person, with a dedicated subject marker on the verb, namely the suffixed nonsegmental vocoid ^{wj} which triggers the labialization of labial, velar and glottal root consonants in a verb base, and the palatalization

of alveolar, velar and glottal consonants base-finally (see Rose 2000: 110-111; Meyer 2019: 232). The impersonal subject suffix attaches to regular conjugational verb bases, but not to the verbal noun. In the perfective, the impersonal subject suffix is in complementary distribution with the personal subject affixes (22), but in the imperfective and jussive conjugations, the impersonal suffix co-occurs with the regular third person prefix *j(ä)-*, as on the clause-final verbs in (20) and (21). Impersonal verbs only marked by the vocoid (and the third person subject prefixes) are limited to same-subject converbs, as in *arräff'im* ‘one having cut’ in (20) or *läkk'amum* ‘one having picked’ in (21). Usually, the impersonal subject marker co-occurs with an object suffix, by default the 3SG.M, as on the transitive verbs *jowajtt* ‘one eats’ and *jaßäfett* ‘one brings’ in (20) and (21), as well as on the intransitive verbs *jisälett* ‘one arrives at/reaches’ and *täkäbb^wrim* ‘one is honored’ in (20) and (22). With transitive verbs, the default 3SG.M object suffix may be replaced by another suffix referring to the actual person in the patient role, e.g. the 3SG.F in (23).

- (23) *jägärädwe ǝattf'am bǝanǝibat t'äkk'ojam.*
 jä-gäräd-we a-wätt'a-^{wj}-m bǝ-wanǝibat
 GAD-girl-DEF CAUS.DR-take_out\PFV-IPS-CVB MIL-upper_door_beam
 t'äkk'ä-^{jw}-ja-m
 hide\PFV-IPS-OBJ.3SG.F-CSM
 ‘The girl was taken out (lit. one took the girl out) and hidden (lit. one hid her) on lintel.’

The impersonal semantically backgrounds the agentive subject with an obligatory human referent, which is unspecified and irrelevant to the verbal event, while the patientive object is foregrounded. With intransitive verbs, such an unspecified subject has the generic reading ‘people’.

The impersonal encodes the same function as the mediopassive and noncausal verbs with a human subject, and as such this construction is frequently used instead of the latter two. For the verb pairs in Table 1, the impersonal forms shown in Table 6 are attested. The impersonal verbs in brackets can only be used with assumed human referents and have a metaphorical sense.

Table 6 — Additional impersonal forms to basic verb pairs in Table 1

#	Meaning	Noncausal	Causal	Impersonal
1	boil	<i>fännam</i>	<i>afännam</i>	[unclear]
2	be cool/cool	<i>gizäggäzäm</i>	<i>agzäggäzäm</i>	—
3	dry	<i>t'ärrä?äm</i>	<i>at'ärrä?äm</i>	— <i>at'ärrä?äm</i>
4	wake up	<i>tänässam</i>	<i>k'isäkk'äsäm</i>	<i>tänäffem</i> <i>k'^wǝfäkk'^wäfäm</i>
5	go out	<i>wätt'am</i>	<i>ǝatt'am</i>	<i>wättf'em</i> <i>ǝattf'em</i>
6	sink	<i>b^wännam</i>	<i>ab^wännam</i>	(<i>b^wännem</i> ‘people disappeared’) <i>awännem</i>
7	learn/teach	<i>tämaräm</i>	<i>atmäräm</i>	<i>tam^warim</i> <i>atm^wärim</i>
8	melt	<i>k'ällät'äm</i>	<i>a?ällät'äm</i>	[unclear]
9	stop	<i>k'^wämäm</i>	<i>a?ämäm</i>	<i>k'^wämäm</i> <i>a?ämäm</i>

#	Meaning	Noncausal	Causal	Impersonal
10	turn (around)	<i>ʒarām</i>	<i>aʒarām</i>	<i>ʒarim</i> <i>aʒarim</i>
11	dissolve	<i>t'ämmam</i>	<i>bit'abbät'äm</i>	— <i>b^wotf'abb^wäf'im</i>
12	burn	<i>näddädäm</i>	<i>mäjäm</i>	<i>(näddädzim</i> ‘people are angry’) <i>mäggojm</i>
13	destroy	<i>färräsäm</i>	<i>afärräsäm</i>	— <i>af^wärräfim</i>
14	fill	<i>männam</i>	<i>männam</i>	<i>m^wännem</i>
15	finish	<i>e?äm</i>	<i>fädđäm</i>	<i>(e[?]wim</i> ‘people are done’) <i>f^wädđim</i>
16	begin	—	<i>k'ärräsäm</i>	<i>k^wärräfim</i>
17a	disperse	<i>täbratf'äm</i>	<i>bratf'äm</i>	<i>(täwratfim</i> ‘people scattered’) <i>b^woratf'im</i>
17b	widen	<i>bättätäm</i>	<i>abättätäm</i>	— <i>awät^wfäfim</i>
18	roll	<i>inkiballäläm</i>	<i>ankiballäläm</i>	— <i>ank^wowallälim</i>
19	develop	<i>tälä?äm</i>	<i>atlä?äm</i>	<i>(tälä?^wim</i> ‘people grew up’) <i>atlä?^wim</i>
20	get lost/lose	<i>k'ärräm</i>	<i>a?ärräm</i>	<i>k^wärrim</i> [no data]
21	rise/raise	<i>tänässam</i>	<i>nässam</i>	<i>tänäffem</i> <i>näffem</i>
22	improve	<i>alläfäm</i>	—	—
23	rock	<i>ink'ijäkk'ä'äm</i>	<i>ank'ijäkk'ä'äm</i>	—
24	connect	—	<i>gätt'ämäm</i>	<i>gätt'äm^wim</i>
25	change	—	<i>fäggä'äm</i>	<i>fäggojm</i>
26	gather	<i>täsässäbäm</i>	<i>sässäbäm</i>	<i>(täswässäwim</i> ‘people gathered’) <i>suwässäwim</i>
27	open	<i>täkäffätäm</i>	<i>käffätäm</i>	— <i>käff^wäfim</i>
28	break	<i>täsäbbäräm</i>	<i>säbbäräm</i>	— <i>säbb^wärim</i>
29	close	<i>tatf'äm</i>	<i>atf'äm</i>	— <i>atf'im</i>
30	split	<i>täfäkk'am</i>	<i>fäkk'am</i>	— <i>fäkk^wem</i>
31	die/kill	<i>m^wätäm</i>	<i>k'ätt'ä'äm</i>	<i>m^wäfim</i> <i>k'ätt'ojm</i>

Regarding the verb pairs for ‘boil’ (#1) and ‘melt’ (#8) no impersonal could be elicited because my consultants do not use them in their speech (for ‘boil’ see also fn. 8). Table 6 also shows that the three verbs without a noncausal counterpart, namely ‘begin’ (#16), ‘connect’ (#24), and ‘change’ (#25), employ the impersonal to describe events with a foregrounded patientive object, i.e. functionally they

represent a morphosyntactic alternative to the noncausal derivation. Similarly, the verbs whose non-causal mediopassive derivation has acquired a rather specialized meaning, i.e. ‘gather’ (#26), ‘open’ (#27), ‘close’ (#29), and ‘split’ (#30), usually employ the impersonal of the transitive verb rather than their derived mediopassive counterpart, to express events with a foregrounded patientive object.

Generally, a noncausal verb differs from the verb in the impersonal with regard to the conceptualization of the situation. The impersonal typically conveys a reading with a foregrounded patient that is affected by an implied but unspecified human instigator (24b, d), while the noncausal verb lacks such an opaque instigator (24c, d).

- (24) a. *rawda tikäça att’äβättum.*
 rawda tikä-h’a att’äb-ätt-u-m
 Rawda.F child-POSS.3SG.F wash\PFV-SBJ.3SG.F-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘Rawda washed her child.’
- b. *jä-rawda tikä att’äwim.*
 jä-rawda tikä attäb-wj-i-m
 GAD-Rawda.F child wash\PFV-IPS-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘Rawda’s child is washed (i.e. one washed Rawda’s child).’
- c. *jä-rawda tikä tatt’äβäm.*
 jä-rawda tikä t(ä)-att’äb-ä-m
 GAD-Rawda.F child MP-wash\PFV-SBJ.3SG.F-CSM
 ‘Rawda’s child is washed/washed himself.’
- d. *sin att’äwim. / *tatt’äβäm.*
 sin attäb-wj-i-m t(ä)-att’äb-ä-m
 cup wash\PFV-IPS-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM MP-wash\PFV-SBJ.3SG.F-CSM
 ‘(The) cups have been washed.’

With the impersonal in (24b), it is evident that the child did not wash himself but that someone washed him. In (24c), in contrast, the mediopassive verb is ambiguous. It is usually implied that the child washed himself (reflexive reading), but also another person may have washed him (passive reading). With a non-human entity as patientive object, as in (24d), only the impersonal can be used to foreground it (passive-like reading), whereas the mediopassive would yield an unacceptable expression (at least for some speakers).²⁵

The same phenomenon can also be observed with the suppletive pairs ‘wake up’ (#4) ‘dissolve’ (#11), ‘burn’ (#12), ‘finish’ (#15), and ‘die/kill’ (#31). When the reading of the noncausal verb, e.g. *eḷäm* ‘be finished’ (14a) or *m^wätäm* ‘die’ (26), is contrasted with the impersonal of its causal counterpart, i.e. *f^wädḡim* ‘one finished’ (25) from *fädḡäm* ‘finish’ and *k’ätt’ojm* ‘one killed’ from *kätt’ääm* ‘kill’ (26), then the impersonal clearly supposes that there is a person who finished the food or the salt, but the identity of this person is not relevant to the discourse. With the noncausal verb, such an interpretation is lacking.

- (25) *färätwe/assawäwe f^wädḡim.*
 färät-we assawä-we fädḡä-wj-i-m
 food-DEF salt-DEF finish\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
 ‘The food/salt is finished (lit. one finished the food/salt).’

25. Some Muher speakers accept the mediopassive of ‘wash’ with nonhuman nouns, when there is no information about the instigator of the event, i.e. whether the cups have been washed by a person or, for instance, by the rain.

(26)	<i>m^wətäm</i>	vs.	<i>k'ätt'ä^εm</i>	vs.	<i>k'ätt'ö^jm</i>
	m ^w ät-ä-m		k'ätt'äi-ä-m		k'ätt'äi-wi-i-m
	die\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-CSM		kill\PFV-SBJ.3SG.M-CSM		kill\PFV-IPS-OBJ.3SG.M-CSM
	'he died'		'he killed'		'he was killed; one killed him'

Thus, the difference between a noncausal verb and the impersonal has mainly to do with a possible or hypothetical instigator of the expressed verbal event. Although the two constructions differ formally, functionally they both express a verbal event with a foregrounded patientive object. Moreover, the impersonal is preferred in this type of construction and seems to be in the process of replacing the mediopassive derivation, which in turn is often no more available as a verbal derivation of a causal verb or has acquired a more specialized meaning.

6. CONCLUSION

Out of the 31 noncausal/causal pairs in Haspelmath's (1993) list, only 27 occur in Muher. Four verb pairs from Haspelmath lack a noncausal verb in Muher, and for one verb pair the causal member is unattested in Muher.

For the formation of noncausal/causal pairs, the directed alternation prevails in Muher. It amounts to about two-third of the data. Furthermore, the causative strategy is more frequent than the anticausative strategy. The latter seems to be in the process of being replaced by a functionally similar morpho-syntactic verb form, the impersonal. The impersonal is currently the most productive way to express verbal events with a foregrounded patientive constituent, while the mediopassive has acquired more specialized semantics in many cases. In directed pairs, the derived causal verb is usually marked by the direct causative prefix *a-*, and the derived noncausal verb by the mediopassive prefix *tä-*.

Within the smaller set of nondirected alternations, only one labile verb is attested in the dataset: *männam* 'fill', whereas suppletive and equipollent pairs are almost equally frequent. The two verbs in the equipollent pairs contain derivational prefixes, either mediopassive *tä-* vs. direct and indirect causative *a-* and *at-*, or the nonproductive intransitive and transitive derivations marked by the prefixes *in-* and *an-*. In addition, equipollent pairs marked by light verbs (*bääm* 'say' for the noncausal and *amäññäm* 'make' for the causal correspondent) express the causal alternation with complex predicates, which are not included in the Muher translational equivalents of the original 31-item list.

In addition to the basic noncausal/causal alternation, a number of verbs have secondary correspondents, which for causal expressions are typically derived by the indirect causative marked by *at-*, while a secondary noncausal correspondent usually occurs in the mediopassive derivation.

ABBREVIATIONS

1, 2, 3	1st, 2nd, 3rd person or root consonant/radical
CAUS	causative
CAUS.DR	direct causative
CAUS.IDR	indirect causative
CVB	converb
CSM	clausal status marker
DEF	definite
DIR	directional
F	feminine
FOC	focus
GAD	genitive, accusative, dative marker
IPFV	imperfective

IPS	impersonal passive
INTR	intransitive
JUSS	jussive
M	masculine
MIL	malefactive, instrumental, locative marker
MP	mediopassive
OBJ	object
PFV	perfective
PL	plural
POSS	possessive
REL	relative clause
SG	singular
SBJ	subject
SM	singular masculine
TR	transitive
VN	verbal noun

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