



**HAL**  
open science

# THE CAUSAL-NONCAUSAL RELATION IN MUHER (ETHIOSEMITIC)

Ronny Meyer

► **To cite this version:**

Ronny Meyer. THE CAUSAL-NONCAUSAL RELATION IN MUHER (ETHIOSEMITIC). 10th World Congress of African Linguistics (WOCAL), Jun 2021, Leiden, Netherlands. hal-03831906

**HAL Id: hal-03831906**

**<https://hal.science/hal-03831906v1>**

Submitted on 27 Oct 2022

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

# THE CAUSAL-NONCAUSAL RELATION IN MUHER (ETHIOSEMITIC)

Ronny Meyer (INALCO/LLACAN, Paris)

(1) ROOT	TEMPLATES	SUBJECT INDEXES
√ C <sub>1</sub> -C <sub>2</sub> -C <sub>3</sub>	I. Perfective	C <sub>1</sub> äCC <sub>2</sub> äC <sub>3</sub> -
	II. Imperfective	-C <sub>1</sub> äC <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub> -
	III. Jussive	-C <sub>1</sub> C <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub> - or -C <sub>1</sub> äC <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub> -
		Suffix set
		Circumfix set

(2) ROOT	TEMPLATE	SUBJECT
√ s-b-r 'BREAK'	CäCCäC <sub>-PFV</sub> <i>säbbär-</i>	-ä <sub>(3SM)</sub> * <i>säbbärä</i> 'he/it broke' (= perfective base)

↓

<i>-m</i> <sub>(CSM)</sub>	<i>säbbäräm</i>	= citation form
----------------------------	-----------------	-----------------

- (3) a. *birtf'ikk'o-we säbbär-mu-jî-m*      b. *birtf'ikk'o säbbär-mu-m*  
 glass-DEF      break\PFV-SJ.3PM-OJ.3SM-CSM      glass-DEF      break\PFV-SJ.3PM-CSM  
 'They broke the glass.'      'They broke a glass.'

(4) SIMPLEX VERB

- a. *k'äbbäräm* (TR)      'plant; bury'

DERIVED VERBS

- b. *at-k'äbbäräm* (ICAUS)      'let plant; let bury'  
 c. *tä-?äbbäräm* (MPAS)      'be buried /\*'be planted'

(5) SIMPLEX VERB

- a. *k'ärräbäm* (ITR)      'be near'

DERIVED VERBS

- b. *a-?ärräbäm* (DCAUS)      'bring near'  
 c. *at-k'ärräbäm* (ICAUS)      'cause to bring near'

- (6) *t'ämb<sup>w</sup>a bäjäm* (NONCAUSAL) 'crack (with a sharp noise)'  
 (lit. 'it said *tämbwa*')  
*t'ämb<sup>w</sup>a amäjñäm* (CAUSAL) 'cause to crack (with a sharp noise)'  
 (lit. 'he/it made *tämbwa*')

- (7) **SIMPLEX VERB**
- a. *färrädäm* (TR) ‘judge’                      b. *näbbäräm* (ITR) ‘live’
- IMPERSONAL PASSIVE: marker <sup>w+j</sup> (labialization and palatalization)**
- jif<sup>w</sup>ɔrɕijatt*    *näbb<sup>w</sup>ɔrim*  
*j-färd-<sup>w+j</sup>ja-tt*    *näbbär-<sup>w+j</sup>i-m*  
 3-judge\IPFV-IP-OJ.3SF-CSM                      live\PFV-IP-OJ.3SM-CSM  
 ‘she was sentenced’                                      ‘people/one lived’  
 (lit. one judged her)

Table 1 Summary of causal–noncausal relations in Muher

	DIRECTIONAL PAIRS		NON-DIRECTIONAL PAIRS			TOTAL
	ANTICAUSATIVE	CAUSATIVE	LABILE	SUPPLETIVE	EQUIPOLLENT	
Number	11	10.5	1	3	4.5	30
Percent	37%	35%	3%	10%	15%	100%

Table 2 Anticausative/causative alternation

ANTICAUSATIVE (14 pairs)				CAUSATIVE (11 pairs)			
4	wake up	24	connect	1	boil	9	stop
11	dissolve	25	change	2	be cool/cool	10	turn
12	burn	26	gather	3	dry	13	destroy
15	finish	27	open	5	go out/put out	17	<b>spread (&gt; be wide)</b>
16	begin	28	break	6	sink	20	get lost/lose
17	<b>spread (&gt; disperse)</b>	29	close	8	melt		
21	rise/raise	30	split				

- (8) a. **SIMPLEX**  
 PFV              IPFV              JUSS  
*bättät-ä-m*    *jī-bätt-u*    *jä-bätt*  
 C<sub>1</sub>äCC<sub>2</sub>äC<sub>3</sub>              C<sub>1</sub>äC<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub>  
 ‘be wide’
- b. **DIRECT CAUSATIVE a-**  
 PFV              IPFV              JUSS  
*abättät-ä-m*    *j-abättit-u*    *j-abättit*  
 a-C<sub>1</sub>äCC<sub>2</sub>äC<sub>2</sub>              a-C<sub>1</sub>äCC<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub>  
 ‘enlarge’
- (9) a. **SIMPLEX**  
 PFV              IPFV              JUSS  
*la?-ä-m*    *jī-lk’-u*    *jä-la?*  
 C<sub>1</sub>aC<sub>3</sub>              C<sub>1</sub>C<sub>3</sub>              C<sub>1</sub>aC<sub>3</sub>  
 ‘surpass’
- b. **INDIRECT CAUSATIVE at-**  
 PFV              IPFV              JUSS  
*atlä?-ä-m*    *j-atlä?-u*    *j-atlä?*  
 C<sub>1</sub>äC<sub>3</sub>  
 ‘develop, raise’
- c. **MEDIO-PASSIVE tä-**  
 PFV              IPFV              JUSS  
*täla?-ä-m*    *jī-tlä?-u*    *jä-tla?*  
 C<sub>1</sub>aC<sub>3</sub>              C<sub>1</sub>äC<sub>3</sub>              C<sub>1</sub>aC<sub>3</sub>  
 ‘be developed, have grown up’

- (10) a. *ḡämil su? tä-lah-ä-m* / (\**lah-w-i-m*)  
 Jamil.M shop MPAS-send\PFV-SJ.3SM-CSM  
 ‘Jamil was sent to shop [i.e. agreed to go to the shop to buy things].’
- b. *däbdabe-we lah-w-i-m* / (\**tä-lah-ä-m*)  
 letter-DEF send\PFV-IP-OJ.3SM-CSM  
 ‘The letter was sent.’
- (11) *in-kiballäläm* (noncausal) vs. *an-kiballäläm* (causal) (no simplex: \**kiballäläm*)  
 ‘rolled’ (no. 18)
- (12) *tä-la?äm* (noncausal) vs. *at-lä?äm* (causal) (simplex: *la?äm*)  
 ‘develop’ (no. 19) ‘surpass’
- (13) a. *kaffə bä’äm* (noncausal) vs. *kaffə amäṅṅäm* (causal)  
 ‘be/make very dry’ (related to no. 3)
- b. *tʃ’iʃiʃf bä’äm* (noncausal) vs. *tʃ’iʃiʃf amäṅṅäm* (causal)  
 ‘be/make completely full’ (related to no. 14)
- (14) *m<sup>w</sup>ätäm* vs. *k’ätt’ä’äm* vs. *k’ätt’ojim*  
 ‘die’ ‘kill’ ‘be killed’ (impersonal passive)

Annex: Verb list with 31 causal/noncausal pairs based on Haspelmath (1993)

		(OTHER NON-CAUSATIVE)	NON-CAUSATIVE	CAUSATIVE	(OTHER CAUSATIVE)	TYPE
1	boil	<i>täfännam<sup>i</sup></i>	<i>fännam</i>	<i>afännam</i>		C
2	freeze > be cool/cool		<i>gizäggäzäm</i>	<i>agzäggäzäm</i>		C
3	dry		<i>t'ärrä?äm</i>	<i>at'ärrä?äm</i>		C
4	wake up		<i>tänässam<sup>ii</sup></i>	<i>k'isäkk'äsäm</i>		S
			<i>k'u'fäkk'<sup>w</sup>ä'fim</i>	<i>k'isäkk'äsäm</i>		A
5	go out/put out		<i>wätt'am</i>	<i>ɔatt'am</i>		C
6	sink		<i>b<sup>w</sup>ännam<sup>iii</sup></i>	<i>ab<sup>w</sup>ännam</i>		C
7	learn/teach		<i>tämaräm</i>	<i>atmäram<sup>iv</sup></i>		E
8	melt		<i>k'allät'äm</i>	<i>a?ällät'äm</i>		C
9	stop		<i>k<sup>w</sup>ämäm</i>	<i>a?<sup>w</sup>ämäm</i>		C
10	turn (around)		<i>ɜaräm</i>	<i>aɜaräm</i>		C
11	dissolve	<i>täbt'äbbät'äm<sup>v</sup></i>	<i>t'ämmam</i>	<i>bit'äbbät'äm</i>		S
			<i>bu'f'äbb'<sup>w</sup>ä'f'im</i>	<i>bit'äbbät'äm</i>		A
12	burn		<i>näddädäm</i>	<i>mäjäm</i>		S
			<i>mäggojm</i>	<i>mäjäm</i>		A
13	destroy		<i>färräsäm</i>	<i>afärräsäm</i>		C
14	fill		<i>männam</i>	<i>männam</i>		L
15	finish		<i>e?äm</i>	<i>fädɟäm</i>	<i>atfädɟäm</i>	S
			<i>f<sup>w</sup>ädɟim</i>	<i>fädɟäm</i>		A
16	begin		<i>k<sup>w</sup>ärrä'fim</i>	<i>k'ärräsäm</i>	<i>a?ärräsäm</i>	A
17	spread		<i>täbrattf'äm</i>	<i>brattf'äm<sup>vi</sup></i>		A
			<i>bättätäm<sup>vii</sup></i>	<i>abättätäm</i>		C
18	roll		<i>inkiballäläm</i>	<i>ankiballäläm</i>		E
19	develop	<i>la?äm<sup>viii</sup></i>	<i>täla?äm</i>	<i>atlä?äm</i>		E
20	get lost/lose		<i>k'ärräm</i>	<i>a?ärräm</i>		C
21	rise/raise		<i>tänässam</i>	<i>nässam</i>		A
22	improve		<i>alläfäm</i>			—
23	rock		<i>ink'ijäkk'äläm</i>	<i>ank'ijäkk'äläm</i>		E
24	connect		<i>gätt'äm<sup>w</sup>im</i>	<i>gätt'ämäm</i>	<i>adgätt'ämäm</i>	A
			<i>tägemum<sup>ix</sup></i>	<i>adgemum</i>		E
25	change		<i>fäggojm</i>	<i>fäggä'äm</i>	<i>afäggä'äm</i>	A
26	gather	<i>täsbässäbäm<sup>x</sup></i>	<i>suwässäwim</i>	<i>sibässäbäm</i>	<i>assibässäbäm</i>	A
27	open	<i>täkäffätäm<sup>xi</sup></i>	<i>käff<sup>w</sup>ä'fim</i>	<i>käffätäm</i>	<i>atkäffätäm</i>	A
28	break		<i>täsäbbäräm / säbb<sup>w</sup>ärim</i>	<i>säbbäräm</i>	<i>assäbbäräm</i>	A
29	close	<i>tattf'äm<sup>xii</sup></i>	<i>attf'im</i>	<i>attf'äm</i>		A
30	split	<i>täfäkk'am<sup>xiii</sup></i>	<i>fäkk<sup>w</sup>em</i>	<i>fäkk'am</i>	<i>atfäkk'am</i>	A
31	die/kill		<i>m<sup>w</sup>ätä-m</i>	<i>k'ätt'äläm</i>	<i>atk'ätt'äläm</i>	S

- i 'overflow'
- ii 'get up, rise'
- iii 'disappear (from view by penetrating into something, e.g. field, water, hole, etc.)'
- iv variant: *astämmäräm*
- v 'be turbid'
- vi 'disperse, scatter'
- vii 'enlarge, widen'
- viii 'surpass'
- ix 'meet each other' (only plural animate subject)
- x 'participate in a meeting, gather (only human subject)'
- xi 'open with difficulties/hardly'
- xii 'close with difficulties/hardly'
- xiii 'split easily'

### Abbreviations

1,2,3 Person	M Masculine
CNV Converb	MPAS Medio-passive
CSM Clausal status marker	OJ Object
DCAUS Direct causative	PFV Perfective
DEF Definite	PM Plural masculine
F Feminine	SJ Subject
ICAUS Indirect causative	SF Singular-feminine
IP Impersonal passive	SM Singular-masculine
IPFV Imperfective	TR Transitive
ITR Intransitive	
JUSS Jussive	

### Literature

- Aregawi, Maru. 2018. *Descriptive grammar of Muher*. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University (PhD Dissertation).
- Haspelmath, Martin. 1993. More on the typology of inchoative/causative verb alternations. In Bernard Comrie & Maria Polinsky (eds.), *Causatives and transitivity*, 87–120. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1979. *Etymological dictionary of Gurage (Ethiopic)*. 3 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1981. *Ethiopians speak: studies in cultural background. Part IV: Muher*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Meyer, Ronny. 2019. Gurage (Muher). In John Huehnergard & Na’ama Pat-El (eds.), *The Semitic languages*, 227–256. 2nd edn. London: Routledge.
- Meyer, Ronny. 2011. Gurage. In Stefan Weninger (ed.), *The Semitic languages: an international handbook*, 1220–1257. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

INALCO  
Département Afrique et Océan Indien  
65 rue des Grands Moulins  
75013 Paris / France

ronny.meyer@inalco.fr  
ronny.meyer@cnrs.fr

[http://llacan.cnrs.fr/p\\_meyer.php](http://llacan.cnrs.fr/p_meyer.php)

