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# 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> -	Suffix set
	II. Imperfective      -C <sub>1</sub> äC <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub> -	Circumfix set
	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> -	

(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
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- (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>ɔrdʒijatt*    *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 amäññäm* (causal)  
‘be/make very dry’ (related to no. 3)
- b. *tʃ’ififf bä’äm* (noncausal) vs. *tʃ’ififf amäññäm* (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'arrä?äm</i>	<i>at'arrä?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>atmäräm<sup>iv</sup></i>		E
8	melt		<i>k'allät'äm</i>	<i>a?allät'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		

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