

**First Report on a Survey of the Shinasha and Agew Dialects and
Languages**

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1 Introduction

The plan for this field trip was to collect word lists and gather information for sociolinguistic questionnaires. The languages considered for the survey were Shinasha and Agew.*

Shinasha (N. Gongga) is an Omotic language spoken in the Dibate and Bulen areas south-west of Chagni, as well as in the villages around Mambuk near the Tana-Beles project west of Pawi.

The Agew languages, namely Awngi, Qemant, and Xamtanga, are spoken in Gojjam, Gonder, and Wello respectively. Different opinions had been expressed as far as the status of these three Agew languages was concerned, i.e., whether they are languages or dialects.

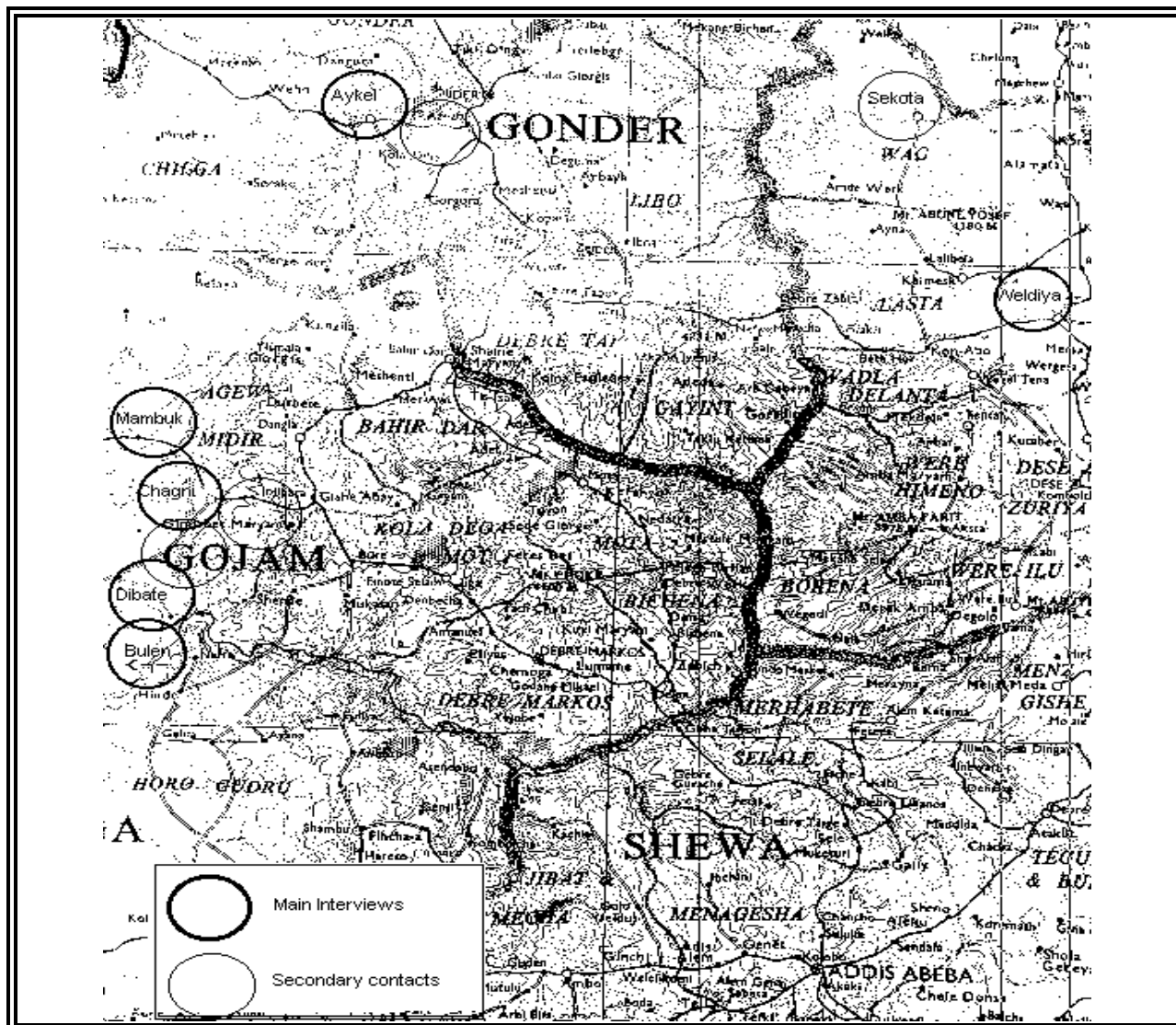
2 Shinasha Dialects

The first step in our plan (I was assisted by Dr. and Mrs. Wedekind) was to study the variations between the two dialects of Shinasha, Worwi-Bora or Tari-Bora (Lowland Shinasha), and Gayi-Bora (Highland Shinasha). Unfortunately, we lost all of our Shinasha data in an armed assault on the survey car (we also lost most of the Awngi data as well as the research equipment). But the contents of most of the interviews can be recalled, and certain data can be reconstructed from what we remember.

From what we can reconstruct concerning our data on the Shinasha dialects, the following can be said:

The two dialects, Lowland and Highland, show some phonological differences, but they are similar in almost all other linguistic features. It would not be correct to stress the differences between the dialects of Shinasha: they are linguistically very similar, and there are no intelligibility problems.

*An earlier version of this report appeared in Survey of Little-known Languages of Ethiopia (S.L.L.E.) Linguistic Report 18, May 1994. Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies and Summer Institute of Linguistics.



Road Map of the Survey

(based on: Ethiopian Mapping Agency, 1985 [repr. 1986] "Ethiopia" 1:2,000,000)

3 Agew Languages

3.1 Awngi

Regarding Awngi, we have seen evidence that the language is still widely spoken in the areas of Agew Midir and Metekel to the extent that there are people, even youngsters, who do not speak Amharic at all.

3.2 Qemant

The third area to be surveyed was Qemant. We have gathered evidence that Qemant is not a "dead" language, but it must be considered endangered. In other words, even though many people may think of Qemant as a dead language, we found this to be incorrect. We have met a number of elderly bilingual people who speak both Amharic and Qemant. However, even these people seem to be more proficient in Amharic than in Qemant, and they seem to use Amharic more than Qemant.

With Ato Nega, Chairman of the "Qemant Association" (as he refers to it), we traveled to Aykel (sixty-six kms from Gonder) which is considered a center of the Qemant-speaking area, in order to meet Qemant informants there.

According to Ato Nega there are more than one million Qemant people, of whom 350,000 still speak the language, and of whom around 100,000 are Orit believers (the Law of Moses). Ato Nega, who does not actually speak the language himself, said that Qemants inhabit the following areas: Chilga, Armachoho, Gonder, Zuria, Wogera, Matebia, Qara, and others.

He also added that in some of the rural areas there are people who speak only Qemant (i.e., monolinguals), but we did not encounter any such people since we did not walk into the countryside during this survey trip.

However, at this stage the researchers would like to express some reservations especially about the figures in Ato Nega's report. On the basis of our one-day survey trip to Aykel, we can only state that the majority of the people whom we met at the roadside, particularly young people, responded to us that they are Amharas by nationality and Amharic speakers by language. Except for a few old people, the majority of the population around the road to Aykel seemed to be Amharic speakers.

Therefore, linguistically speaking, one could say that Qemant is being replaced by Amharic, and there is a tendency for the language to die.

At Aykel we collected word lists of the Qemant language. A comparison of Qemant and Xamtanga is based on this list, and it is presented following. We would like to thank W/ro Yelfiga Meketat and Ato Belay Asnake for providing the Qemant data.

Above all, we would like to thank Ato Nega for his dedicated cooperation from the beginning to the end of our stay around Gonder.

3.3 Xamtanga

Xamtanga data were collected in Weldiya, where there is an association of Xamtanga speakers, even though the center of the language area is about one hundred kms further north.

3.4 Comparisons

3.4.1 Qemant / Xamtanga word list (transcr.: Z. L.)

| <i>Gloss</i> | <i>Qemant</i> | <i>Xamtanga</i> |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| <i>arm</i> | təŋkäl | nan |
| <i>aunt</i> | jitijer | jiñäsən |
| <i>back</i> | säg | sigəd |
| <i>bad</i> | amäräla | xəβärä |
| <i>belly</i> | gozgu | gizu |
| <i>big</i> | lägäzaq | xəjäu |
| <i>bird</i> | dʒela | arβa |
| <i>black</i> | ʃämäna | nətʃ'ər |
| <i>blood</i> | bər | bər |
| <i>brother</i> | zän | jizən |
| <i>cat</i> | damija | awtʃina |
| <i>clay</i> | kärtama | tʃ'ən |
| <i>come!</i> | läqu | läw |
| <i>cow</i> | kañi | ləwa |
| <i>dog</i> | gəziŋ | gəzən |
| <i>door</i> | bäla | bila |
| <i>dove</i> | ərgəβ (Amh.) | zila |
| <i>drink!</i> | dʒax | zatʃ' |
| <i>ear</i> | əŋxu | k'ärəz |

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>eat!</i> | xoj | x ^w aj |
| <i>eight</i> | säxota | sot'a |
| <i>eighty</i> | saxotiŋ | säwt'ərgən |
| <i>eleven</i> | fiklaxu | sətʃ'lawa |
| <i>eye</i> | jəltät | əlt'an |
| <i>face</i> | gäʃ | gas' |
| <i>fat</i> | däg ^w äsä (Amh.) | dinäw |
| <i>father</i> | jaba | abäwä (Amh.) |
| <i>female</i> | jəwnex ^w ä | əwna |
| <i>fifty</i> | aŋkuŋəŋ | akurŋən |
| <i>fire</i> | wəzəŋ | lija |
| <i>five</i> | aŋk ^w a | ak ^w a |
| <i>fly N</i> | ʃəŋʃa | s'əs'a |
| <i>four</i> | sädza | siza |
| <i>forty</i> | arβa (Amh.) | arβa (Amh) |
| <i>Friday</i> | arb (Amh.) | arβəz (Amh.) |
| <i>generous</i> | ʃarä | k'asäwŋ |
| <i>go!</i> | faj | fit' |
| <i>goat</i> | fətsiira | fəntəra |
| <i>good</i> | ʃarax | k'asaw |
| <i>greedy</i> | bisät'jimot (Amh.) | əftawəm |
| <i>hair</i> | ʃəβka | awər |
| <i>he</i> | ní | ŋäŋ |
| <i>heart</i> | ləβäka | əzänd |
| <i>horse</i> | farza (Amh.) | firza (Amh.) |
| <i>hundred</i> | lex | s'ək'ərgən |
| <i>hyena</i> | wija | wik'a |
| <i>I</i> | an | jan |
| <i>knee</i> | gərbäxoj | ləku |
| <i>leaf</i> | aʃa | xas'a |
| <i>lion</i> | ambesa (Amh.) | gəräkia |
| <i>male</i> | guruwa | gələwä |
| <i>many</i> | fəraq | bətʃ'ək' |
| <i>Monday</i> | sän | sinəz |
| <i>money</i> | sama | ginzəβ (Amh.) |
| <i>monkey</i> | dzigri | zägoj |
| <i>mother</i> | jiğäna | jiŋ:a |
| <i>mouth</i> | məkäj | bəza |
| <i>mule</i> | dägora | bik'ələ (Amh.) |
| <i>nine</i> | säsa | s'ajtʃ'a |
| <i>ninety</i> | säsiŋ | s'ajtʃ'ərgən |
| <i>nose</i> | χamba | əsəŋ |
| <i>one</i> | lax ^w a | läwa |
| <i>ox</i> | bəri (Amh.) | bira (A.) |
| <i>rat</i> | ʃe ^w la | atʃ' ^w a |

| | | |
|------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>red</i> | säraq | säro |
| <i>sand</i> | ʃäʃära | k'ərŋa |
| <i>seven</i> | naŋäta | lant'a |
| <i>seventy</i> | näŋätivəŋ | lant'ərŋən |
| <i>she</i> | nī | ŋəj |
| <i>sheep</i> | bäga (Amh.) | biga (Amh.) |
| <i>sister</i> | ʃän | jisən |
| <i>six</i> | wälta | wälta |
| <i>sixty</i> | wältivəŋ | walt'ərŋən |
| <i>small</i> | ʃag ^w aq | ət'ən |
| <i>snake</i> | ʃələw | siβra |
| <i>stick</i> | kəmbə | gəβ |
| <i>Sunday</i> | sänaβtə | k'ədan- sinβət |
| <i>ten</i> | ʃika | s'ək'a |
| <i>that</i> | jəni | k'art'ən |
| <i>they</i> | əndəw | kətaj |
| <i>thirteen</i> | ʃikisex ^w a | s'etʃ' ʃaq ^w a |
| <i>thirty</i> | saxojəŋ | soŋən |
| <i>this</i> | əni | ənin |
| <i>those</i> | jəndəw | k'art'ənu |
| <i>thread</i> | məlx ^w a | näʃ |
| <i>three</i> | sex ^w a | ʃaq ^w a |
| <i>Thursday</i> | aməz (Amh.) | sinu |
| <i>today</i> | nəŋ | nän |
| <i>tomorrow</i> | amär | ämər |
| <i>Tuesday</i> | säləz | siləz |
| <i>twelve</i> | ʃikiniŋa | s'ətʃ'liŋa |
| <i>twenty</i> | nänajəŋ | lärən |
| <i>two</i> | niŋa | liŋa |
| <i>uncle</i> | jaŋ | jirzən |
| <i>water</i> | axu | ak'u |
| <i>we</i> | an:ew | jənaj |
| <i>Wednesday</i> | lävo | ərəβ (Amh.) |
| <i>what?</i> | wäni | wäräŋaru |
| <i>where?</i> | awət | awəl |
| <i>white</i> | ʃajäw | s'aro |
| <i>why?</i> | wäz | wərəj |
| <i>wood</i> | kana | k'an |
| <i>you FS</i> | əntə | ŋiŋ |
| <i>you MS</i> | əntə (Amh.) | kət |
| <i>you PL</i> | əntädəw | ŋaj |

3.4.2 Qemant and Xamtanga comparison

There are a total of 108 Qemant/Xamtanga words that can be compared. Of these 108 words, forty-six are similar (cognates or “look-alikes”) and sixty-two are dissimilar. So the similarity is about forty-five percent. Hence, we can confirm that Qemant and Xamtanga are not dialects of the same language but different languages.

Our evidence is not only based on the previous comparison of word lists, however. We have also conducted a short test of mutual intelligibility, and it was obvious that Xamtanga speakers could not understand the text collected from a Qemant speaker. It should be stressed that there is need for further sociolinguistic research and data collection.

3.4.3 Awngi word list (transcr.: Z. L.)

| <i>Gloss</i> | <i>Awngi</i> |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>all</i> | wəl:a |
| <i>another</i> | iliwi |
| <i>arrow</i> | warämi |
| <i>ashes</i> | omi |
| <i>bad</i> | dagawi |
| <i>big</i> | duŋguri |
| <i>black</i> | s'ärki |
| <i>bought 3MSg</i> | zäx ^w a |
| <i>brown</i> | bunu segerej |
| <i>clay</i> | korʃi |
| <i>cloth</i> | əs:i |
| <i>cloud</i> | wəkini |
| <i>cold, became</i> | qäqəti |
| <i>come! PL</i> | wani |
| <i>come! SG</i> | aw |
| <i>dew</i> | tʃaŋk ^w i |
| <i>dirty</i> | sami |
| <i>door</i> | ger:i |
| <i>downward</i> | kukra |
| <i>drop N</i> | tiptipna |
| <i>dry</i> | kagask ^w a |
| <i>dust</i> | aβ ^w ari (Amh.) |
| <i>earth</i> | bəti |
| <i>empty</i> | naqəjsi |
| <i>fat</i> | bəz:i |
| <i>fence</i> | ətsi |
| <i>fire</i> | legi |
| <i>full</i> | wax ^w a |
| <i>gold</i> | worki (Amh.) |
| <i>good</i> | gudi |
| <i>green</i> | xasa səgiri |
| <i>he</i> | əntuʒi |
| <i>heavy</i> | zək ^w i |
| <i>here</i> | ənda |
| <i>hot</i> | umpini |

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>hot</i> | əŋk ^w ini |
| <i>how / why?</i> | wätəŋa |
| <i>I</i> | ani |
| <i>it burned</i> | bəβrəx ^w a |
| <i>jumped 3MSg</i> | gʊŋgux ^w a |
| <i>knew 3MSg</i> | jakux ^w a |
| <i>knife</i> | kari |
| <i>lay 3MSg</i> | xurux ^w a |
| <i>left</i> | səŋgaxa |
| <i>light</i> | bərəhani (Amh.) |
| <i>little</i> | səl:a |
| <i>long</i> | ləg:ismi |
| <i>many</i> | mənʃi |
| <i>market</i> | geβäli |
| <i>moist</i> | səx ^w ani |
| <i>money</i> | genzäβi (Amh.) |
| <i>moon</i> | arfa |
| <i>mountain</i> | gahi |
| <i>mud</i> | tʃəqi |
| <i>narrow</i> | səŋazi |
| <i>new</i> | əskawi |
| <i>night</i> | hara |
| <i>no</i> | əl:a |
| <i>nothing</i> | əmpla |
| <i>old</i> | binizi |
| <i>pot</i> | korʃi |
| <i>poured 3MSg</i> | tʃimβux ^w a |
| <i>pulled 3MSg</i> | gəsux ^w a |
| <i>pushed 3MSg</i> | təβsux ^w a |
| <i>rain</i> | əri |
| <i>red</i> | dəm:i |
| <i>right</i> | bəʔewa |
| <i>river</i> | bəni |
| <i>road</i> | dadi |
| <i>sand</i> | aʃewi (Amh.) |
| <i>scratched 3MSg</i> | x ^w ankix ^w a |
| <i>sharp</i> | afuti |
| <i>shield</i> | gaʃi |
| <i>short</i> | gendəni |
| <i>silver</i> | bəri (Amh.) |
| <i>sky</i> | dəβani |
| <i>slept 3MSg</i> | xurux ^w a |
| <i>smoke</i> | pəʃi |
| <i>smooth</i> | läslasi (Amh.) |
| <i>sold 3MSg</i> | wäjəx ^w a |

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>star</i> | beʔewa |
| <i>stick</i> | gəmbi |
| <i>stone</i> | kärəŋi |
| <i>stream</i> | ali |
| <i>strong</i> | jisani |
| <i>sun</i> | awa |
| <i>that</i> | an:i |
| <i>they</i> | aniŋa |
| <i>thin</i> | wis'u |
| <i>this</i> | ən:i |
| <i>threw 3MSg</i> | səgəx ^w a |
| <i>upward</i> | jalā |
| <i>war</i> | seltuŋoxa |
| <i>water</i> | axu |
| <i>we</i> | ŋəzi |
| <i>went 3MSg</i> | kusux ^w a |
| <i>what?</i> | wata |
| <i>when?</i> | wani |
| <i>where?</i> | wanda |
| <i>white</i> | futʃ:i |
| <i>who?</i> | aj:i |
| <i>whose?</i> | aj:əŋi |
| <i>wide</i> | as:ani |
| <i>wind</i> | nəfasi (Amh.) |
| <i>yawned 3MSg</i> | karatsəx ^w a |
| <i>yellow</i> | muʃa səgiri |
| <i>yes</i> | jiŋa |
| <i>yesterday</i> | ajəŋa |
| <i>you M</i> | ənti |
| <i>you PL</i> | əntuʒi |

3.4.4 Awngi

Awngi (*Awñi*) data had been collected from various speakers in Mambuk, but we lost most of them. Only a few of these data, the last one hundred words of the word list, were tape recorded from Haimanot Gebeyehu. Haimanot is a Junior High School student at Mambuk, and we would like to thank him for providing us these word lists. The few Awngi data which we saved are included in the word lists of this report.

3.4.5 Awngi/Qemant/Xamtanga word list (transcr.: Z. L.)

| <i>Gloss</i> | <i>Awngi</i> | <i>Qemant</i> | <i>Xamtanga</i> |
|----------------|--------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| <i>bad</i> | daɣawi | amäräla | xəβärä |
| <i>big</i> | duŋguri | lägäzaq | xəjäw |
| <i>black</i> | s'ärki | ʃämäna | nətʃ'ər |
| <i>clay</i> | korʃi | kärtama | tʃ'ən |
| <i>come!</i> | aw | laqu | läw |
| <i>door</i> | geri | bäla | bila |
| <i>fat</i> | bəzi | däg ^w asa | dinäw |
| <i>fire</i> | legi | wəzəŋ | lija |
| <i>good</i> | gudi | ʃarax | k'äs'äw |
| <i>he</i> | əntuzi | ni | ŋäj |
| <i>I</i> | ani | an | jan |
| <i>many</i> | mənʃi | fəraq | bətʃ'ək' |
| <i>money</i> | genzäβi | sama | ginzəβ |
| <i>red</i> | dəm:i | səraq | säro |
| <i>sand</i> | aʃewi | ʃäʃära | k'ərŋa |
| <i>small</i> | səl:a | ʃag ^w aq | ət'ən |
| <i>stick</i> | gəmbi | kəmbə | gəβ |
| <i>that</i> | an:i | jəni | k'alt'ən |
| <i>they</i> | aniŋa | əndew | kətaj |
| <i>this</i> | ən:i | əni | ənin |
| <i>we</i> | ŋəzi | an:ew | jənaj |
| <i>what?</i> | wata | wäni | wäräŋaru |
| <i>where?</i> | wanda | awət | awəl |
| <i>white</i> | futʃ:i | ʃajew | s'aro |
| <i>why?</i> | wätəŋa | wäz | wəraj |
| <i>you SG?</i> | ənti | əntə | ŋiŋ |

3.4.6 Conclusion from the Awngi / Qemant / Xamtanga comparisons

Concerning the similarities and differences between Awngi, Qemant, and Xamtanga, the comparisons can only be tentative. We regret that we do not have a complete set of Agew word lists from Awngi, Qemant, and particularly we regret that the Xamtanga data were lost. In the data given above, only twenty-seven words can be compared; only seven of the twenty-six words are similar, i.e., about twenty-five percent.

Hence, we can confirm that Awngi, Qemant, and Xamtanga are not different varieties of an “Agew language” but independent languages.