

**WOLF LESLAU**  
**ENGLISH-AMHARIC CONTEXT DICTIONARY**

To

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*Every other author may aspire to praise; the lexicographer can only hope to escape reproach, and even this negative recompense has been granted to very few.*

SAMUEL JOHNSON  
Preface to a Dictionary  
of the English language

## PREFACE

Amharic is the national language of Ethiopia. The scientific investigation of Amharic goes back to the 17th century, but little attention was given to furnishing the student with practical tools for the acquisition of the language.

The most recent English-Amharic dictionaries are those of C. H. Armbrüster, *Initia Amharica*, part II, 1910, and of C. H. Walker, *English-Amharic Dictionary*, 1928. Since these publications Amharic has developed considerably. The progress that Ethiopia has made in the field of education, the literary documents of the last fifty years, the technical needs for new expressions, the contact with the Western world, and the natural development within the language itself have contributed greatly not only to the enrichment of the language but also to numerous changes within the existing vocabulary. A few examples taken from Armbrüster's dictionary illustrate the changes in the expressions. Thus, 'address' is rendered in Armbrüster by ምልክት in contrast with the present-day አድራሻ; 'bank' ግምጃ ፣ ቤት as against ባንክ; 'bicycle' የሰይጣን ፣ ፈረስ as against ቢሊክሌት; 'cigarette' በወረቀት ፣ የተጠቀለለ ፣ ትምሳሌ (lit. 'tobacco that is wrapped in paper') as against ሲጃራ; 'coin' መሐለቅ as against ባንቲም; 'doctor' ባለ ፣ መድኃኒት as against ሐኪም or ዶክተር; 'general' ደቫዝግኝት as against ጄኔራል; 'map' ያገር ፣ ምዕል as against ካርታ; 'sea' የውጭ ፣ ባሕር as against ባሕር; 'story of a house' ደርብ as against ፎቅ, and many more.

Needless to say, in Armbrüster's time there was no need for expressions such as 'United Nations, Trusteeship committee, Security Council, control tower, review of books, agenda, airlines, basketball, elevator', and so on. Moreover, the practical interest in Amharic has increased in the last few decades. If to all this we add the fact that at present English is the language of instruction in the high schools of Ethiopia as well as at the University, we can easily justify the urgent need for a modern English-

Amharic dictionary.

The most useful approach to the understanding of English lexical items and to the translation process from English into Amharic appears to be to illustrate English words in context, that is, in a sentence showing the usage of the word, rather than simply to enumerate the various Amharic renderings of any given single English lexeme. This is particularly important wherever a single English lexeme varies in meaning according to the context of the sentence. A few examples bear out the point.

The English 'box' can be rendered by ሰንዳቅ ፣ ጋኮ and by በሱጢ ፣ መመታት. It is only the context that helps the reader to choose the appropriate Amharic expression. Thus, in the sentence, "Shall I put the shoes in a box?" ጫግምቼን ፣ ሰንዳቅ ፣ ውስጥ ፣ ላደርጋችሁ, 'box' is rendered by ሰንዳቅ. In the sentence, "I have another box of cigars" ሌላ ፣ ጋኮ ፣ ሲጋራ ፣ አለኝ, 'box' is rendered by ጋኮ. Finally, in the sentence, "A box on the ear hurts" ጆር ፣ ላይ ፣ በሱጢ ፣ መመታት ፣ ያላግል, 'box' is rendered by በሱጢ ፣ መመታት.

Or, the English 'draw' can be rendered in Amharic by ሳበ ፣ ጣለ ፣ ቀዳ ፣ አወጣ ፣ ተጣጣለ ፣ አስገባ ፣

አተረፈ ፤ ግረክ ፤ መዘዘ, and probably by other expressions. Here again, only the context helps the reader to choose the appropriate expression. Thus, "The horses draw the wagon" ፈረሶቹ ፣ ሰረገላ ፣ ይስባሉ; "He drew a picture of his teacher" ያስተማራውን ፣ ሥዕል ፣ ግለ; "The boy drew water from the well" ልጁ ፣ ከጉዳግድ ፣ ውኃ ፣ ቀዳ; "He drew his hands from his pockets" እጆቹን ፣ ከኪሉ ፣ አወጣ; "They drew lots to see who should go first" መጀመሪያ ፣ ግን ፣ እንደግዜድ ፣ ዕጣ ፣ ተጠጣሉ; "You should draw fresh air into your lungs" ንጹሕ ፣ አየር ፣ ወደ ፣ ላምባህ ፣ ግስገባት ፣ እሉባህ; "His speech drew long applause" ንግግሩ ፣ ረዘም ፣ ያለ ፣ ጭብጨባ ፣ አተረፈላት; "Her elegant dress drew the eyes of all onlookers" ያሸበረቀው ፣ ልብዚ ፣ የተመልከቶቹን ፣ ዓይን ፣ ሁሉ ፣ ግረክ; "He drew his sword and ran at the enemy" ጉራዱን ፣ መዘ ፣ ወደ ፣ ጠላቅ ፣ ሮጠ.

The ambiguity of meaning applies to many English lexemes, and it therefore dictated the principle of using the lexeme in context.

The various meanings of the same English lexeme were taken from the existing English dictionaries. Sentences were chosen to illustrate the various meanings. Nevertheless, not all the meanings of the same lexeme were always considered, since to do so would have greatly increased the bulk of the dictionary. Occasionally, a sentence is limited to a specific situation. See, for example, 'incidence' where the sentence refers to 'a high incidence' only; or 'going, get going' is limited in reference to holding a conversation. The verb 'adulterate' (no. 2) refers only to adulteration of meat, but of course in Amharic for other kinds of food the verb 'adulterate' has to be translated differently.

In other situations, a main entry has to supplement a subentry or the other way around. Thus, in the entry 'inhospitable', the sentence of the subentry 'be inhospitable' refers only to the desert, but if the reader needs to translate 'be inhospitable' speaking of a host in relation to his guests, he must choose the translation of the main entry 'inhospitable' አስተናጋጅነት ፣ የጉደለው and convert the relative የጉደለ into the verb ጉደለ. Or, in the entry 'reasonable', it is evident that the subentry 'be reasonable' illustrated with the sentence "chicken is reasonable this week" refers to a specific situation. The translation of the verb 'be reasonable' in any other context is made possible by using any of the five adjectives translating 'reasonable' by the addition of ነው 'he is'.

There are sentences illustrating a lexeme in which the context does not seem to vary from the standpoint of English, but nevertheless require different Amharic translations. See the entry 'attitude', or 'uncover', nos. 3 and 4.

It is true that some lexemes have only one meaning and an illustrative sentence may not have been necessary. For other entries, the sentence may be considered superfluous since it is not meaningful, as "my father left for Harar" to illustrate the noun 'father' አባት. However, it is interesting to see that the same Amharic አባት is also used in the sentence "God is called Our Father," but in the sentence "I talked with Father Giyorgis about the church", 'father' is rendered by አባ.

For the sake of consistency I therefore thought it advisable to illustrate every word with a sentence. An additional reason for doing so was to provide the learner of Amharic as well as the Ethiopian student studying English with concrete illustrations.

An exception has been made for a few categories, such as the numerals (outside of the numerals 1 to 12 referring to time), certain animals, and a few isolated words.

## INFORMAL USAGE, SLANG

The English usage is mostly that of American English. Likewise, the orthography is that of American English.

Expressions that are considered informal in a dictionary such as "The Holt's Intermediate Dictionary of American English" are occasionally included. Thus, 'close call'; 'easy' in 'take it easy'; 'fancy' as in 'fancy rates,' and so on.

Slang expressions are not given.

## TECHNICAL EXPRESSIONS

Technical expressions in the fields of technology, mechanics or exact sciences are not included since normally Amharic would use the foreign word. Thus, 'electrodynamics, electron, helium, hydrogen, biopsy, biochemistry' will not be found in the dictionary. However, the everyday expressions dealing with electricity, cars, and telephone are included even though most of them are foreign loanwords.

## TRANSLATION

The translation of each sentence was checked with several translators. The main objective was to have a correct translation of the English sentence in idiomatic Amharic. Needless to say, because of stylistic preferences, various translators rendered the same sentence differently. Only one translation was chosen in order to keep the bulk of the dictionary within bounds.

For many words, Amharic offered only an approximate translation and thus the translation proved to be pale.

Since the main objective is a correct translation in idiomatic Amharic, stylistic and syntactic divergencies between the English sentences and the Amharic translations are inevitable. Only a few examples illustrate this point.

"He *banged* his fist on the table" ጠረጴዛውን ሰቡጢ ፣ ሙታው (English *bang on*, Amharic ሙታ with the direct object).

"Under the *guise of friendship*, he plotted treachery" ወዳጅ ፣ ሙሰሎ ፣ ክፈደትን ፣ አሰበ (lit. "looking like a friend").

"Donations *are welcome*" አርዳታ ፣ እንቀበላለን (lit. "we accept help" or "donation").

"It is evident *that he cannot come*" ለመምጣት ፣ አለመቻሉ ፣ ግልጽ ፣ ነው (lit. "his not being able to come").

"His *brief* was printed in the newspaper" የሰጠው ፣ አጭር ፣ መግለጫ ፣ በጋዜጣ ፣ ታተመ (lit. "the brief that he gave").

"Can you discriminate *good books from bad*?" ሙተሮና ፣ ጥሩ ፣ ሙደሐሮችን ፣ ለመለየት ፣ ትችላላህ? (lit. "bad and good books").

"You will be surprised *how he changed*" እንዴት ፣ እንደተለወጠ ፣ ብታይ ፣ ይገርምሃል (lit. "if you see how he changed").

"The boy's apology *conciliated the angry father*" የልጁ ፣ ይቅርታ ፣ ሙጠየቅ ፣ ያባቱን ፣ ንዴት ፣ አሰረደ (lit. "appeased the father's anger").

"*What* is the frequency of the Addis Ababa station?" የአዲስ ፣ አበበ ፣ ረዲዮ ፣ ጣቢያ ፣ ድግግሞሽ ፣ ምን ፣ ያህል ፣ ነው? (lit. "how much?").

"*She is in the work* heart and soul" ሥራዋን ፣ አልባ ፣ ትሠራለች (lit. "she does her work").

"*He is thirty years of age*" ሠላሳ ፣ ዓመቱ ፣ ነው (lit. "his age is").

"She waited *at the street corner* for a bus" በመንገድ ፣ ዳር ፣ ቆሞ ፣ አውቶቡስ ፣ ጠበቀች (lit. "standing at the street corner").

## GEEZ AS SOURCE OF NEW EXPRESSIONS

Geez morphological patterns as well as the Geez vocabulary are occasionally used for the creation of new expressions. Thus, the passive participle *qatuf* is used in: ንኡብ ፣ ኮሚቴ 'subcommittee', ጽሑፍ 'article', ሎም 'axiom'.

Verbal nouns with -ot, -o: በፊ ፣ አድራጎት 'welfare', ለድናቆት 'admiration', አክብሮት 'respect',

አገደርት ፣ ቃል (in the so-called construct state) 'abbreviation', አድልዎ 'bias', ገልጽ 'theory', ተገደሎ 'campaign', ተጽዕኖ 'influence', በአርምጥ ፣ ተቀበለ 'acquiesce'.

Geez construct state : ክፍለ ፣ አገር 'region', ክፍለ ፣ ዘመን 'century', ሥረ ፣ ነገር 'bottom of things', ክብረ ፣ በዓል 'celebration'. A reversed construct state, that is, the Amharic word order with the -*a* of the Geez construct state : ውስጠ ፣ ደንብ 'bylaw', ውስጠ ፣ ገሴ 'subconscience', ግብረ ፣ አባር 'accomplice', አንደበተ ፣ ርቱዕነት 'eloquence'.

With an adjective as second element : መሠረት ፣ ቢስ 'baseless', መንፈስ ፣ ርጉ 'calm', ዓይነት ፣ ስውር 'blind'.

## CALQUE TRANSLATIONS

With the spread of foreign languages, and particularly of English, it is to be expected that calque translations are being used in Amharic. Examples : 'weekend' የሳምንት ፣ መጨረሻ; 'cross-examination' መስቀለኛ ፣ ጥያቄ; 'slide rule' ተንሸራታች ፣ መሥመሪያ, and others.

Of particular interest is the usage of the verb ወሰደ 'take'. The example of ወምበር ፣ ውሰድ for 'take a seat' is recognized by most Ethiopians as a calque and is frowned upon. The verb ወሰደ 'take' seems to be extended in usage, however, and it is at times difficult to decide whether we are faced with a calque translation or a correct Amharic expression. Thus, for instance, 'take' is idiomatically translated by ፈጀ in the sentence, "it took the firemen two hours to put out the blaze" ቃጠጥውን ፣ ሰማጥፋት ፣ የእሳት ፣ አደጋው ፣ ሠራተኞች ፣ ሁለት ፣ ሰዓት ፣ ፈጀዋቸው. However, 'take' is rendered by ወሰደ in the sentence "the wound took a long time to heal" ቁስሉ ፣ እስኪሸር ፣ ብዙ ፣ ጊዜ ፣ ወሰደ. The question arises whether this is a calque translation or whether it is idiomatic Amharic.

Another important question is the plural marker. Amharic does not normally use the plural marker. Thus, "there are many trees in this park" is normally rendered by በዚህ ፣ መኖሪያ ፣ ቦታ ፣ ብዙ ፣ ዳፍ ፣ አሉ. There is, however, an increasing tendency to use the plural marker -*oḥ*, a tendency that is probably due to the influence of foreign languages. The above-mentioned sentence is translated by በዚህ ፣ መኖሪያ ፣ ቦታ ፣ ብዙ ፣ ዳፍች ፣ አሉ. Or, in the sentence "they raise fine cattle in this country" በዚህ ፣ አገር ፣ ውስጥ ፣ ጥሩ ፣ ከብቶች ፣ ያረባሉ, 'cattle' has the plural marker. Whether the tendency to use the plural marker is due to the influence of a foreign language or whether it is a natural development within Amharic itself can be ascertained only by examining the writings of authors who are not familiar with a foreign language.

## CULTURE-BOUND TRANSLATIONS

Many English expressions cannot be translated into Amharic because the object or the institution does not exist in Ethiopian culture. Thus, there is no way of translating 'jury' or 'cheese' in Amharic, since the institution of jury does not exist in the legal system of Ethiopia, and Amharic አይብ is really not 'cheese'. The method adopted in the dictionary is to give an explanation in brackets (see 'ale, allergy, delta, galley'), or to use an existing loanword as in the case of 'cheese' rendered by ፎርማጅ, Italian 'formaggio', even though some loanwords are rarely used outside the confines of the literate class of Ethiopians.

Likewise complicated is the rendering of lexemes that are not equivalent in English and Amharic. This is the case of 'winter' and 'summer'. Neither the time nor the character of the continental winter or summer corresponds to the seasons in Ethiopia. The only recourse was to translate 'winter' by ከረዎች (actually 'the rains' from July to September) and 'summer' by ቢጋ (actually 'the dry season').

It is due to the culture-bound phenomena that no literal translation can be given for certain English expressions. This is the case of 'temperate climate' in the sentence "we live in a *temperate climate*"

rendered by የምኖርበት ፣ በታ ፣ ወይኖ ፣ ደጋ ፣ ነው, but ወይኖ ፣ ደጋ (the intermediate region between highland and lowland) applies only to Ethiopia.

The sentence, "write the alphabet in *reverse order*" is rendered by ፈደሉኹን ፣ ከታች ፣ ወደ ፋይ ፣ በተራ ፣ ጽፋኛው because the Ethiopian student when studying the alphabet writes it from top to bottom.

The expression 'period' is translated by አራት ፣ ነጥብ 'four dots' in the sentence, "you forgot to put a *period* here" እዚህ ፣ አራት ፣ ነጥብ ፣ ግድረግ ፣ ረሳህ because Amharic uses four dots where English uses a period.

The sentence, "I did not get your *last name*" rendered by ያባትህ ፣ ስም ፣ አልሰግሁም means literally "I did not get your father's name" because the last name in Western culture is in reality the father's name in Ethiopian culture.

The expression 'hang out' is rendered by አሰጣ 'spread out on the ground' in the sentence "she was *hanging out* the wash when I came" ሰሙጣ ፣ የታጠበ ፣ ልብስ ፣ ታሰጣ ፣ ነበር because the Ethiopian woman spreads out the wash near the river instead of hanging it out. The verb ሰታለ 'hang out' could probably be used in the sentence, but the verb አሰጣ 'spread out on the ground' is a more natural expression.

Another interesting lexeme inherent to Amharic is the verb 'borrow' or 'lend'. While English uses the same verb for borrowing money or objects, Amharic differentiates between borrowing money or grain (ተብደረ) and borrowing objects (ተዋሰ). The same differentiation is expressed for lending money or grain (አበደረ) and lending objects (አዋሰ).

English 'empress' expresses both the wife of an emperor or a woman who rules an empire. Amharic differentiates between the two meanings using አቴጌ for the wife of an emperor, and ንግሥተ ፣ ነገሥታት for a woman ruler. In the entry 'empress', in the first sentence the empress Menen was the wife of the emperor (therefore አቴጌ) whereas in the second sentence Zawditu was empress in her own right (therefore ንግሥተ ፣ ነገሥታት).

## LOANWORDS

The purist will probably object to the listing of loanwords in the dictionary. These loanwords are, however, normally used in the language and no systematic attempt has been made to replace them with Amharic expressions. There are about 300 loanwords in the dictionary from English, French and Italian.

## NEW EXPRESSIONS

There are many English lexemes for which there is no Amharic equivalent, mostly because they are culture-bound expressions. An attempt was made to create an Amharic equivalent, as in the case for 'dessert' ግጣጣሜዩ; 'dressing (for salad)' ግጣፈሜ; 'lawn' የግቢ ፣ መስክ; 'oasis' የበረካ ፣ ገነት, and others.

Other lexemes are ad-hoc creations, such as 'brochure' መግለጫ ፣ ጽሑፍ; 'leaflet' ጽሑፍ (also 'article in a newspaper'); 'diagram' ሥዕላዊ ፣ መግለጫ; 'dock' የመርከብ ፣ ግራገፈያ; 'drain' የአጣቢ ፣ መውረኛ, and others.

## ORTHOGRAPHY AND PUNCTUATION

An important decision had to be made in the domain of the orthography of Amharic. The Amharic alphabet has various letters representing originally only consonants, some of which have become iden-

tical in pronunciation. This is the case of *h* and *θ* (letters that have lost their consonantal value and serve mainly when a word must be written with an initial vowel); *θ*, *h* and *ḡ* pronounced *h*; *w* and *ñ* pronounced *s*; *ʀ* and *θ* pronounced *ʃ*. As a result of the identical pronunciation of these letters, there is lack of consistency in Amharic spelling. There are three possible solutions in dealing with Amharic spelling: 1, a radical reform of the alphabet; 2, the adoption of the commonly accepted orthography; and 3, the standardization of spelling through etymology.

In a radical reform of the alphabet, wherever there is a choice of two or three letters for the same pronunciation, one would have to adopt arbitrarily only one letter, regardless of the origin of the root. Thus, if in the case of *h* and *θ*, one were to choose, say, the letter *h*, one would have to write *hñ* 'imprison', *həw* 'know', *həy* 'eye', all with the *h*, even though *həw* goes back to Geez *ʃw* (with *θ*), and *həy* likewise goes back to Geez *əy* (cognate with Semitic 'ayn). Similarly, if between *w* and *ñ* one were to choose *ñ*, one would have to spell *ñw* 'vow' and *ñw* 'be painted' both with *ñ*, even though etymologically *ñw* 'vow' goes back to Geez *ñw*, and *ñw* 'paint' goes back to Geez *wñ*. The same arbitrary principle would have to be applied to the other letters that have become identical in pronunciation. I did not feel that I could use this solution in a dictionary that is intended for use by Amharic speakers.

The orthography currently and commonly accepted is highly unsatisfactory. Indeed, not only different speakers of Amharic, but even the same speaker will spell indiscriminately *hḡ* and *hñ* 'sister', *hḡ* and *hñ* 'well', *hñ* and *hñ* 'culture', *hḡ* and *hñ* 'just', *hñ* and *hñ* 'know', and so on. In this connection it is interesting to mention two authoritative dictionaries published by Ethiopian scholars. Abba Yohannes Gābrä Eǧzi'abäher (*hñ* : *ʃw* : *ñw* : *hñ* : *hñ* : *hñ* : *hñ*) in his *hñ* : *ʃw* : *ñw* : *hñ* (a Tigrinya-Amharic dictionary) spells the Amharic verbs *hñ* (p. 46), *hñ* (p. 47), *hñ* (p. 49), all with *h*, whereas Kidanä Wäld Kəḥe (*hñ* : *hñ* : *hñ*) in his *hñ* : *ʃw* : *ñw* : *hñ* : *hñ* : *hñ* (A Geez-Amharic dictionary) spells the same words with *θ*; thus, *hñ* (p. 470), *hñ* (p. 473), and *hñ* (p. 478). Incidentally the word for 'Amharic' is spelled *hñ* (with *h*) by Abba Yohannes Gābrä Eǧzi'abäher, but *hñ* (with *θ*) by Käsate Barhan Täṣämma (*hñ* : *hñ* : *hñ*) in his *hñ* : *hñ* : *hñ* (Amharic-Amharic dictionary), p. 979. On the basis of this evidence it seems to me that it is not practical to follow the normally accepted spelling.

I decided to adopt the principle of standardization through etymologies even though this principle, too, presents certain pitfalls. In the case of *h* and *θ*, Geez as well as Tigre and Tigrinya and the other Semitic languages could be used as guides for correct spelling. In the case of *θ* (*h*), *h* (*h*) or *ḡ* (*h*), only Geez (and Arabic) could serve as a guide since Tigre and Tigrinya retain only *θ* *h* and *h* *h*, this last sound representing a merger of *h* *h* and *ḡ* *h*. For *w* and *ñ* as well as for *ʀ* and *θ*, Geez alone could serve as source of information, since in both Tigre and Tigrinya *w* and *ñ* are represented as *ñ* *s*, and *ʀ* and *θ* have merged into *ʃ* *ʃ*. It is on the basis of this principle that I adopted spellings such as *hñ* 'know' (Geez *ʃw*), *hñ* 'ten' (G. *hñ*), *hñ* 'sister' (G. *hñ*), *hñ* 'three' (G. *hñ*), *hñ* 'building' (G. *hñ*), *hñ* 'baby' (G. *hñ*), *hñ* 'things, baggage' (Tigrinya *hñ*), *hñ* 'fortune, luck' (Tigrinya *hñ*), and so on. Less generally accepted spellings are those of *hñ* 'double', *hñ* 'mow', *hñ* 'wood', and *hñ* : *hñ* 'whirlwind', but here again the spelling with *θ* was adopted because these roots have an *θ* as first radical in Geez : *hñ* : *hñ* : *hñ* and *hñ*, respectively.

Special mention should be made of *hñ* 'work, do', and its derivatives *hñ* 'work' (noun), *hñ* 'worker', *hñ* 'tool', all with *w*. It is true that this root is the closest connected with Geez *hñ* 'labor, endeavor' (with *ñ*), but it can also be connected with Geez *hñ* 'arrange, dispose' (with *w*). If one adds to it the fact that the most frequently used Amharic spelling is *hñ* (with *w*), I thought it advisable to spell it with *w*.

The Amharic verb for 'to take a rest, to die' is spelled *hñ* (with *h*) even though the root is *hñ*. The spelling with *h* is justified since Amharic *hñ* comes from *hñ* becoming *hñ*, the *h* of which is that of the prefixed morpheme of the *h*-stem. The noun 'rest, vacation' is spelled, however, *hñ* (with *θ*) going back to its root.



Etymological spelling is also used in Arabic loanwords. Thus, ስጋላ 'bill', Arabic حساب; ሰኪፕ 'doctor', Ar. ሰኪም; ዓላማ 'aim', Ar. ዓላማ; ዓላማ 'object, purpose', Ar. ዓላማ, and so on. It is likely that ለቅድ 'plan' comes from Arabic عقد but since its origin is doubtful and it is normally written with ለ, I adopted the spelling ለቅድ.

The standardization of spelling through etymology is not intended to conflict with actual pronunciation of a lexeme. Thus, for instance, the verb 'he went out' is pronounced wāssa, with *f*, and is therefore written መጣ (with ጣ), and not ወደ as it would be if one adhered strictly to the origin of the verb, namely Geez ወደላ. Also, the verb 'he is' is pronounced allā, with an initial *al*. It is therefore written ለሰ and not ሀለ as it would be if one adhered strictly to the etymology, namely Geez ሀለፀ. The same consideration applies to 'new' addis, written ለዲስ and not ሐዲስ as the etymology would have required.

In roots for which there is no corresponding Ethiopic or Semitic etymology, I have adopted ለ for an initial vowel, ሀ for *h* (except in መጋ 'water'), ሰ for *s*, and ቁ for *ʃ*.

A labiovelar with the vowel *ä* is often reduced in pronunciation and in writing to a velar followed by *o*. Generally, I kept the spelling with the labiovelar; thus ቁጠረ (and not ቁጠረ). This spelling is, however, not consistent.

In the verb forms of the 1.2.2. verbs in which the last two consonants are in contact I have adopted the spelling with one consonant; thus, መቶ (pronounced mātto) for መቶቶ (from መቶ).

In forms in which there is a meeting of the vowels *ä-a* I have normally adopted the system of eliding the vowel *ä*; thus, ታገር for የላገር. In entries, however, I also keep both vowels; thus, የላየር (see 'airlines'). In the meeting of the vowels *ä-ə* I have normally kept the two vowels; thus የላጅ (and not የጅ), but ስለሱ (and not ስለላሱ).

The conjunctions are not separated from the verbs; thus, ስለመጣ. The prepositions that have more than one letter are written separately; thus, ስለ ፡ ዝግብ. They are not separated from a pronoun; e.g. ስለሱ (for ስለላሱ), or occasionally in combination of nouns in which the የ of the first noun is omitted as in ስለሀገራች ፡ ኑር for ስለ ፡ (የ)ሀገራች ፡ ኑር.

The end of the Amharic sentence is not marked by ።. Only the question mark (?) is given wherever required, and occasionally the exclamation mark (!).

## PRONUNCIATION

No pronunciation is given for the English lexemes. The student will have to know that the pronunciation of 'entrance' (n.) is different from that of 'entrance' (v.). Only in exceptional cases where the same part of speech is pronounced in two different ways is there an indication for the pronunciation; see 'row' (n.) rhyming with 'low' or 'how'; or 'tear' (n.) rhyming with 'pear' or 'fear'.

As for the Amharic lexemes, it would have been highly desirable to indicate the gemination with a special symbol, but this would have increased the cost of the dictionary considerably.

## ENTRIES AND THEIR ARRANGEMENT

In the enumeration of entries, the verb is given before the noun.

Within each entry, the arrangement is alphabetical. Example : 'close, close down, close in, close in on, close out'. A word in parentheses does not count for alphabetic arrangement; therefore '(be) closed up' is not placed under 'be', but after 'close out'. In the subentries in which the word of the main entry is at the beginning, it is treated first. Thus, under the main entry 'near', the subentries 'near at hand, near here', are listed first. Only then follow the subentries in alphabetical order where 'near' is not the first word, as in 'as near as, come near, get near, nowhere near.'

An English entry is occasionally translated by two Amharic entries. In this case the symbol I is used to separate the equivalents; see 'anger' (vt.) አገደደ I አሰቁጣ; 'abduct' ጠሰፈ I አጥፍ፣ ጠሰፈ. The second Amharic lexeme is either illustrated with a different sentence (as in the case of 'anger'), or is used in the same sentence. The second lexeme is then put in parentheses (as in the case of 'abduct').

Wherever there is only one meaning for the English entry, the Amharic equivalent follows immediately after the English entry (see 'ail'). If the English entry has more than one meaning, no Amharic equivalent follows the entry directly, but the Amharic equivalents are below the entry and are numbered according to the various meanings of the entry (see 'aim').

The English verb entry is normally rendered by the Amharic verb in the perfect, singular 3rd masculine; e.g. 'build' ሠራ, lit. 'he built'. The Amharic verb is cited in a verb form other than the perfect wherever the perfect is not used; see 'not bad' (under 'bad') ምንም ፣ አይል since in this idiom the verb is used only in the negative imperfect.

The Amharic verbs translating the English verbs with the prefix un- are also occasionally given in a verb form other than the perfect; see '(be) uninhabited'.

The 3rd person singular, masculine is also used if the Amharic entry is a gerundive or a relative imperfect translating an adjective. This is the case of 'late' (adv.) በግድቶ, but one of the cited sentences is 'she arrived late' በግድታ ፣ ደረሰች where the form is that of the 3rd person, singular, feminine. Or, 'favorite' (adj.) የሚወደው, lit. 'that he likes it', but the cited sentence is 'my favorite' የምወደው, lit. 'that I like it', that is, the first person.

The Amharic impersonal verbs are cited in the perfect, singular, 3rd masculine followed by the object suffix pronoun of the singular, 3rd masculine in parentheses; thus '(be) thirsty' ጠግ(ው); 'understand' ገባ(ው).

An Amharic verb that is used with prepositional suffixes is cited with the prepositional suffixes in parentheses. Examples: 'rage' ባሰ(በት); 'rally (to)', 2. ደረሰ(በት).

While the Amharic verb entry is cited in the perfect, singular, 3rd masculine, the verb of the translated sentence can be used in any verb form. Thus, in 'base' (v.) መሠረተ, the verb of the translated sentence is likewise in the perfect (መሠረትከው); in 'backbite' (አግ), the verbal noun (ግግካን) is used in the Amharic sentence; and in 'benefit' (ጠቀመ), the imperfect (ይጠቅማል) is used.

Occasionally an active or a transitive verb is illustrated with a passive in the English sentence. In this case, the Amharic verb is cited in the active with its passive form in parentheses. Thus, for 'announce', no. 6, the sentence has the verb 'was announced'; the Amharic entry is therefore ነገረ (ተነገረ):

At other times, the cited English entry is in the passive rather than in the active; see '(be) imprinted', without the active 'imprint'. This procedure was adopted for cases where the passive usage is more frequent than the active usage. When an active form is required, the reader will then use the Amharic active verb of the cited verbs ተቀረጸ and ታተመ, that is ቀረጸ and አተመ.

Whenever a stative verb is expressed by 'be + adjective', it may occasionally have a special entry beside the adjective entry. Most often, however, this kind of verb has no special entry, but can easily be translated by using the cited Amharic adjective followed by ነው 'he is'. Thus, the adjectives 'curious, nasty, hollow' and others can serve as bases for the stative verbs ('be + adjective') by the addition of ነው 'he is' to the adjective: 'be nasty' አስጠያፊ ፣ ነው, or መጥፎ ፣ ነው.

The passive of an English verb is not cited as subentry since normally the passive is formed in Amharic by the ተ-stem. For instance, only 'betray' ከጻ is cited, since 'be betrayed' would normally be expressed by ተከጻ. However, in verbs in which the passive is not rendered in Amharic by the ተ-stem, but rather by the basic stem or by another root altogether, the English passive is cited as subentry. Examples: 'demolish' አወደመ (expressed by the አ-stem), but 'be demolished' ወደመ (expressed by the basic stem); or 'lift' አትግ ነ ከፍ ፣ አደረገ, but 'be lifted' is translated by other roots (አሰቃ ፣ ተሰረዘ). See also 'affect' and 'be affected'; 'form' and 'be formed'.

Verbal nouns ending in -ing ("weeding") or abstracts (such as 'condemnation') are usually not cited, since they are expressed either by the Amharic verbal noun that can automatically be formed from the verb or by a verb form.

Phrasal or complemented verbs such as 'go in, throw away' are listed separately as subentries since the translation cannot be inferred from the main entry. More complicated is the question of a method for listing those verbs which are followed by a complement, but the combination is not a phrasal verb. Thus, for instance, 'deal with' in the sentence "how shall we deal with this problem?" is not a phrasal verb. This combination is, however, listed separately because the proper Amharic equivalent for 'deal with' could not be inferred from the equivalent of 'deal' followed by the Amharic preposition 'with'. Besides, the Amharic equivalents ተገዳጅ (no. 1) and ያዘ (no. 2) are not even used with a prepositional element, but are combined with the marker -ን of the direct object. Combinations of that kind are, therefore, listed separately. See also 'contribute' and 'contribute to'; 'bore into' (under 'bore'); 'zip through' (under 'zip').

A good illustration of separate listing of nonphrasal verbs is 'ask after' (as in "he asked after your health") or 'ask for' (as in "did anyone ask for me?"). It is true that in both these cases the verb 'ask' is translated ጠየቀ which is the translation of English 'ask'. However, since Amharic does not express 'ask after' or 'ask for' by a combination of ጠየቀ 'ask' with the prepositions 'after' or 'for', but by the direct complement, the separate listing seemed advisable.

Occasionally the preposition is put in parentheses, as in 'account (for)', 'adhere (to)', 'answer (for)', 'cut (through)', 'depend (on)'. A preposition placed in parentheses after the verb indicates that while the combination is not a phrasal verb, the preposition is required for the special meaning.

The Amharic key word does not always indicate the syntactic structure of the sentence which is conditioned by the key word. The reader should, therefore, read the whole sentence to familiarize himself with the function of the key word in the sentence. For instance, 'make believe' (under 'believe') አስመሰሰ does not indicate that it requires the verb to be in the relative. Indeed, the sentence "the boys made believe they were fighting the enemy" is translated ልጆቹ ፣ ጠላትን ፣ የግጥ፡ አስመሰሰ (with the relative verb የግጥ፡).

The functioning of the key word ያህል for 'about' (no. 4) is understood only through the whole sentence "this house is about as high as that tree" ይህ ፣ ቤት ፣ ያንን ፣ ዛፍ ፣ ያህል ፣ ይረዝግል where it becomes clear that the compared object 'that tree' has the suffix -ን (in ያንን).

Or, the position of ቢስ 'devoid of' after the noun in the construct state is evident only from the sentence 'she is devoid of shame' እድረተ ፣ ቢስ ፣ ናት.

## LABELS

An English verb is labeled transitive (vt.) or intransitive (vi.) according to the usage in the existing English dictionaries. A verb is considered transitive if it has a direct object; it is intransitive if it does not have a direct object. Thus, 'read' in the sentence "he reads a book" is transitive, but in the sentence "he reads well" it is intransitive.

The labels vt. and vi. are used only when the same verb can be either transitive or intransitive; see, for instance, 'clutter, read'.

Most normally an English transitive verb is translated by an Amharic transitive, and an English intransitive is translated by an Amharic intransitive. At times, however, this is not the case. An example of this is 'circle' (vt.) in "the moon circles the earth" translated ጨረቃ ፣ በመረት ፣ ዙሪያ ፣ ትዞራለች (where ዞረ is used with the preposition and postposition በ - - ዙሪያ). Or, 'bang at' (an intransitive usage) in "he banged at the door to be let in" is translated ለመግባት ፣ በጎጥ ፣ ደብደቦ (that is, a transitive in Amharic).

## XVI

The labels vt. (transitive) or vi. (intransitive) are not indicated for the Amharic verbs. It is through the translation that the reader will be able to deduce whether the Amharic verb has a transitive or intransitive usage.

The label n. (= noun) or v. (= verb) is used only for entries that could lend themselves to confusion when taken out of context. Thus, 'abuse' out of context can be either a noun or a verb. The label 'abuse' (v.), 'abuse' (n.) is therefore necessary. But there is no need for a part-of-speech label for 'accessory' or 'accommodate'.

### INFLECTED FORMS

Plural of nouns. The most frequently used plural marker -s, -es (dog-s, match-es) is not indicated. Any other plural marker is given in parentheses; thus 'calf (calves), child (children)'. Besides, the special plural form is found in the appropriate place with a reference to the singular; thus 'children, see child'.

Past tense. The most frequent marker for the past tense -ed is not indicated. Any form of the past tense that deviates from the regular form is given in parentheses; thus 'come (came), carry (carried), commit (committed)'. These forms of the past tense (except those of the 'carry' and 'commit' type) are also found in the appropriate places with the reference to the main entry; thus 'came, see come'.

### CROSS REFERENCES

The cross references are indicated as [See also...] placed at the end of the entry; see such entries as 'advance' [See also 'pacific']; or 'advantage' [See also 'operate']. The choice of placing a subentry under one or another main entry is arbitrary. For instance, 'make pacific advances' could have been entered under the main entry 'advance' rather than under 'pacific' where it is placed.

There are no cross references to the verbs 'get, keep, make, put, take' since they are frequently combined with other parts of speech. Nor are there cross references to the prepositions used in phrasal verbs, such as 'come in, come out, come by' and so on.

### SYMBOLS

The symbols used are : \*, +, (=), and [ ].

The symbol \*.

This symbol is used wherever there is no exact Amharic equivalent for the English entry. For instance, there is no precise Amharic equivalent for English 'afterthought'. The meaning of 'afterthought' can, however, be rendered in Amharic in a sentence such as "the idea came to me as an afterthought" ነገሩን ፣ የተገኘው በብኩት ፣ በግድጅ ፣ ነው. It would, indeed, be misleading to translate the entry 'afterthought' by any of the Amharic lexemes in the above-mentioned sentence. It is the translation as a whole that renders the idea of 'afterthought'. Or, the idea of the noun 'adhesion' in the sentence 'adhesion of the intestine to the muscles requires surgery' አገጃት ፣ ከጡንቻ ፣ ጋር ፣ ሲጣበት ፣ ቀዶ ፣ ጥገና ፣ ያስፈልጋል is undoubtedly understood in the verb form ሲጣበት 'when it adheres'. It would be misleading, however, to translate the noun adhesion by ሲጣበት. The symbol \* is, therefore, used.

A sentence preceded by \* is not necessarily the first sentence following the entry. For example, the first sentence following the entry 'advent' has the Amharic equivalent መምጣት, but in the second sentence 'since the advent' is translated by ከመጣ ፡ ወዲህ. It is the whole unit 'since the advent' that is translated and not the isolated word 'advent'. The sentence is, therefore, preceded by \*.

When the English entry has neither an Amharic translation following it nor a \*-sentence, it means that the key word equivalent is lengthy and is shown only in the translation. This is done in cases where the sentence that illustrates the entry contains only few additions to the entry. See, for instance, 'false alarm' (under 'alarm') illustrated with the sentence "it was a false alarm" የሆነች ፡ ግስግስታቷ ያ ፡ ጭቆች ፡ ነበር. I adopted this procedure for the sake of economy.

#### The symbol †.

This symbol indicates that the Amharic sentence has a different subject from that of the English sentence. This symbol is used if the difference in subjects affects the entry. This is the case in the so-called impersonal verb of Amharic; see, for instance, 'understand' no. 1 ተገባ(ው).

The subjects may differ between the English entry and its Amharic translation in many other verbs. Thus, for instance, 'be bored' (under 'bore') where the subject of the English sentence is the person whereas in the Amharic sentence the subject is the speech. See also 'absolve, be absolved'.

#### The symbol (=).

Occasionally a specific part of speech of the English entry is not rendered by the same part of speech in Amharic. In this case, the Amharic entry is preceded by the symbol (=). Examples: 'advance' no. 3 (= adv.); 'literal' no. 1 (= adv.); 'oddly' (= adj.).

This is likewise the case when an active verb of English is rendered by a passive; or when a passive of English is rendered by an active or transitive; or when an intransitive verb of English is rendered by a transitive verb in Amharic; see '(be) knocked down' (= tr.); 'lean over', vi. (= vt.); 'bark', vt. 2 (= passive).

For many sentences an equivalent part of speech could have been obtained by forcing the Amharic translation, but the more natural way of translating the English sentence was through a different part of speech in Amharic. The Amharic part of speech preceded by the symbol (=) was therefore kept.

Incidentally, the adverb (= adv.) in these cases refers not only to regular adverbs, as under 'vain' (= adv.) በከጎቱ, but also to adverbial or circumstantial expressions, as under 'twofold' (= adv.) ሁለት ፡ እጅ; 'token' (= adv.) ለሰሙ ፡ ያህል, or ለሰሙ ፡ ጎንብ.

#### The bracket symbol [ ].

An English lexeme that has no equivalent in Amharic is explained by a definition. The definition is placed in brackets; see 'ale, allergy, delta, galley, jury', and so on.

### ABBREVIATIONS

act.	=	active	intr.	=	intransitive
adj.	=	adjective	masc.	=	masculine
adv.	=	adverb	n.	=	noun
com.	=	common	pl.	=	plural
conj.	=	conjunction	prep.	=	preposition
fem.	=	feminine	pron.	=	pronoun
ger.	=	gerundive	resp.	=	respect

## XVIII

sg.	= singular	v.	= verb
tr.	= transitive	vi.	= intransitive verb
trans.	= transitive	vt.	= transitive verb

(zero) indicates that the English lexeme is not translated.

The motto at the head of the introduction is merely intended to express my own feelings while working for the last six years on the compilation of this dictionary. I am well aware of all the pitfalls inherent in a work of this kind. There undoubtedly are occasional inconsistencies in the arrangement of the subentries and even in the orthography. For some readers the material offered in this dictionary may be too abundant, for others too scanty. As for the translations themselves, in many cases other renderings could have been used. Notwithstanding the difficulties of all kinds and my own occasional hesitations, I thought that the time had come to put at the disposal of the student of Amharic as well as of the Ethiopian student learning English a dictionary that would prove helpful in furthering Amharic studies.

Many persons and institutions were involved in the preparation of the dictionary. The technical execution of the work was made possible through the financial support of the Office of Education of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Additional financial aid came from different parts of the University of California, Los Angeles, namely the Near Eastern Center, the African Studies Center, and the Committee on International and Comparative Studies. The printing expenses were partly covered by the Agency for International Development (AID) which purchased a certain number of copies and made them available for distribution to the Haile Sellasie University and to the Ethiopian Ministry of Education. The publication of the dictionary would not have been possible, however, without the enterprising spirit of the publisher Otto Harrassowitz. I wish to thank in particular Dr. Helmut Petzolt whose extraordinary attention to detail and sound advice in publication matters helped me in many stages of my work. The Imprimerie Orientaliste in Louvain was cooperative and very patient in accepting the many changes that I had to make as the printing went along.

Many Ethiopian students were involved in the translation of the sentences. I would like to mention in particular Tesfaye Shewaye and Girma Wolde Sellasie who were very helpful thanks to their excellent knowledge of Amharic and their perseverance. Abebe Bekele also helped me greatly in solving problems of language usage. I am especially grateful to my student Dr. Thomas Kane who participated in many stages of this work, including proofreading. His thorough familiarity with Amharic as well as his exceptional understanding of translation problems proved to be of considerable value from beginning to end.

I take once more the opportunity to express my profound admiration and my sincerest thanks to my teacher Marcel Cohen who initiated me into the study of Amharic and whose spirit guided me in my scientific endeavors.

The completion of this dictionary would not have been possible without the wholehearted cooperation, patience, understanding, sacrifice, and encouragement of my wife. My deepest gratitude goes to her.

Los Angeles, December 1972

Wolf Leslau