

Verbs of falling in Tigrinya*

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Abstract. The paper gives a survey of verbs of falling in Tigrinya (an Ethio-Semitic language spoken in Eritrea and northern Ethiopia). The employment of each verb related to the situation of falling down is illustrated with phrasal examples. The Tigrinya data is further compared with Geez, a closely related extinct language. A special subsection deals with metaphorical use of the basic verb ‘to fall’ in Tigrinya.

Tigrinya possesses one basic verb of falling, *wädäkä*, which is applied to describe the downward movement of a solid object through the air or a loss of vertical position of a vertically oriented object. Falling of a solid, heavy object, either through the air or, less typically, along an oblique surface, can also be referred to by a special verb *šädäšä*. In all situations deviating from this default situation of falling in Tigrinya, special verbs are employed. Thus, the verbs *tägälbätä* ‘to be overturned, to topple’ or *tägämätälä* ‘to be turned over’ are used to describe the situation of toppling, overturning which does not involve physical falling from a higher level to a lower one. Detachment of an object which had been firmly fixed to another object, is usually denoted by the verb *moläkä* ‘to slip off; to become detached’. Falling to pieces of buildings or other built structures is described by the special verbs *färäsä* ‘to collapse, crumble, to fall’ or *šanäwä* ‘to collapse’ (but *šädäšä* can also be used in such contexts).

Detachment of parts of body or plants due to natural reasons is denoted by the special verb *rägäšä* ‘to fall off (leaves), to break off, break loose (fruit, leaf), to shed a coat (livestock)’ (although the physical falling which is caused by such a detachment can well be described by the verb *wädäkä* ‘to fall’). Furthermore, with respect to teeth, a special verb *goräšä* ‘to lose milk teeth, to have one’s tooth pulled out’ is used, with the possessor of the tooth encoded as the subject, and the tooth itself, as the object.

Downward movement of liquids is denoted by a wide range of verbs, such as *wähazä* ‘to flow’, *nätäbä* ‘to fall in drops, to drop (water), to drip (water)’, *fäsäsä* ‘to be spilled, poured (out) (water, grain, etc.), to flow (liquid, stream), to run (water), to fall (water)’, *šärär bälä* ‘to ooze, exude’, *lähak^{wä}* ‘to drip, run (water along a wall after leaking

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through a roof), to leak, to seep, filter through (intransitive)'. The verb *wärädä* 'to descend' is also used to describe the movement of liquids from a higher level to the lower.

Spilling of granular material is denoted by *fäsäsä* 'to be spilled, poured (out) (water, grain, etc.)'.

Rolling down is denoted by the verb *ʔankoraräyä/ʔankoraräwä* 'to roll'.

Downward movement in water is described by the verb *tähalä* 'to sink, to submerge'.

Intentional losing of vertical position is described by the verb *bäṭṭ bälä* 'to lie down', and intentional movement from a higher level to the lower is described by *wärädä* 'to descend'.

The metaphors of falling include the employment of the verb *wädäkä* to describe an abrupt, unexpected (and often unpleasant) change. This involves decrease in a measure, loss of interest, the destruction of a social power, arriving of a sudden calamity.

A separate group of metaphorical employment is the verb *wädäkä* as the standard predicate of such nouns as "lottery" and "lot", presumably by extension from the situation of dice falling to the ground. Finally, death in battle is also denoted by the verb *wädäkä*.

The Geez cognate of *wädäkä* likewise functions as the basic verb 'to fall', whose employment is very similar to, although not identical with, its Tigrinya equivalent. Similarly, Geez *šadfa* does not display any significant difference from Tigrinya *šädäfä* in its semantics and usage.

Keywords: verbs of falling, Tigrinya language, Geez language, Semitic languages, Ethio-Semitic languages.

Глаголы падения в тигринья

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Аннотация. В статье дается обзор глаголов падения в языке тигринья (эфио-семитский язык, распространенный в Эритрее и на севере Эфиопии). Использование каждого глагола, связанного с ситуацией падения, иллюстрируется фразовыми примерами. Кроме того, данные тигринья сопоставляются с данными языка геэз, близкородственного мертвого языка. Отдельный раздел посвящен метафорическому употреблению основного глагола падения в тигринья.

Язык тигринья использует в качестве основного глагола падения глагол *wädäkä*, который описывает направленное вниз движение по воздуху твердого объекта, или же утрату вертикального положения для объектов с вертикальной ориентацией. Падение твердого тяжелого предмета, по воздуху или, в более редких случаях, по наклонной плоскости, может также описываться специальным глаголом *šädäfä*.

Во всех случаях, отклоняющихся от этой типичной ситуации падения, тигринья использует особые глаголы. В геэзе глагол, родственный тигринья *wädäkä*, также используется как основной глагол падения. Его употребление очень сходно, хотя и не полностью идентично, употреблению его соответствия в тигринья. Семантика и употребление глагола *šadfa* в геэзе не обнаруживают значительных расхождений с глаголом *šädäfä* в тигринья.

Ключевые слова: глаголы падения, язык тигринья, язык геэз, семитские языки, эфиосемитские языки.

1. Introduction

The present contribution deals with verbs of falling in Tigrinya, a language spoken in Eritrea and northern Ethiopia (Tigray region) and belonging to the Ethio-Semitic branch of Semitic languages. Within this paper, the uncontrollable movement of a solid object from a higher to a lower point through the air is taken as the typical situation of falling. Various deviations in the mode of movement, the type of the moving object, the speed, the medium of movement, are regarded as subtypes of falling.

The paper is organized after the semantic principle: for each group of situations of falling, all applicable verbs are listed and supplied with sentential examples. A special section deals with metaphors involving falling and descending. The concluding section sums up the results of the investigation.

While the description of the pertinent verbs in Tigrinya is strictly synchronic, a few comparative observations have been made dealing with the employment of the cognate verbs in Geez, an extinct Ethio-Semitic language (documented since the first centuries A.D.) closely related to Tigrinya. In some cases, information on Geez semantic equivalents of certain Tigrinya verbs has been provided. Still, these remarks do not aim at a full description of the Geez system of verbs of falling. Moreover, such a description could not be entirely complete in view of the usual limitations of data on an extinct language: even for a well-attested verb such as the basic verb ‘to fall’, it is impossible to establish the contexts in which its employment was forbidden. Rather, the comparative data from Geez is adduced to give a glimpse on the differences in the employment of cognate verbs and in the mapping of the situation of falling in two genetically close languages. The comparative remarks are given as subsections in each of the sections of the paper,

and absence of such a subsection indicates that the pertinent examples for the basic verb of falling in Geez have not been detected, and that the other Tigrinya verbs discussed in the section lack cognates in Geez.

The Tigrinya examples are given in the conventional phonological transcription, same as used in Bulakh forthcoming (with the symbol *ä* standing for a mid central vowel, corresponding to the IPA symbol *ə*). Spirantization of the labial *b* and velars, which is a phonetic phenomenon, is not marked. The labialization of *ä* in the vicinity of *w* and as a result of distant vocalic assimilation, and some other phonetically conditioned changes, remain unmarked. The citation form of the verbs is the 3 sg. masc. old perfective (*wädäkä* ‘to fall’, etc.), in accordance with the tradition well-established in Semitic studies. For each verb references to the two-volume Tigrinya-English dictionary by [Th. L. Kane 2000] are adduced, with Kane’s transcription modified slightly.

2. Standard situation of falling

The basic verb ‘to fall’ in Tigrinya is *wädäkä* [Kane 2000:1787], which is attested with the same meaning in most Ethio-Semitic languages [Leslau 1987:604]. It will be seen that it is applicable to most situations of falling discussed in this paper, and it is only rarely that its employment is found infelicitous or entirely unacceptable.

The standard situation of an object falling from a certain elevated point to the ground is denoted by *wädäkä*, as in the following examples:

- (1) *kab gārāb tuffah wädika*
 from tree apple fall.PFV.3SF
 ‘An apple fell down from the tree’.
- (2) *?ita ?ärmus wädika täsäyra*
 ART.SF bottle fall.CVB.3SF be.broken.PFV.3SF
 ‘The bottle fell down and broke’.
- (3) *?ita näfarit wädika tähamšiša*
 ART.SF plane fall.CVB.3SF be.smashed.PFV.3SF
 ‘The plane fell down and was smashed to pieces’.
- (4) *?anä ?ab mängäddi ?inda-kädku källoku*
 1SG in road while-go.PFV.SBJV.1SG GOAL.AUX.PRS.1SG

kab ziban zingo ?imni wädikunni
 from back zinc stone fall.PFV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.1SG

‘As I was walking along the street, a stone fell down upon me from the roof’.

- (5) *säb nab gobo ?inda-ḥakorä šätät ?ilu*
 man towards mountain while-climb.PFV.SBJV.3SM slip CVB.3SM
wädiku
 fall.PFV.3SM

‘A man was climbing a rock, but slipped and fell down’ (contrast example (138)).

- (6) *?anä kab bisikletta wädikä*
 1SG from bike fall.PFV.1SG

‘I fell off from my bike’.

The verb *wädäkä* is applied indiscriminately to heavy or light objects:

- (7) *košli nab märet wädiku*
 leaf towards earth fall.PFV.3SM

‘A leaf fell down to the earth’ (but see also example (88)).

- (8) *wäräkät nab midri wädiku*
 paper towards earth fall.PFV.3SM

‘A sheet of paper fell to the floor’.

- (9) *nay sof kintit nab midri wädiku*
 poss bird feather towards earth fall.PFV.3SM

‘A bird feather fell to the earth’.

In order to indicate the way a light object moves through the air, the verb *fil fil bälä*, defined in [Kane 2000: 2649] as ‘to flutter, wave, flap (flag)’, can be introduced into the sentence (as an adjunct of the verb ‘to fall’):

- (10) *kintit filfil ?ila wädika*
 feather float CVB.3SF fall.PFV.3SF

‘The feather floated down’.

For the falling of a heavy object, a special verb *šädäfü* can be employed, defined in [Kane 2002: 2613] as ‘to fall down, to fall off a cliff, a high building, to fall in a chasm’. It describes the falling of a heavy object from a higher level to a lower, typically sudden and with a conspicuous effect of the action (usually disastrous for the object itself or for the surroundings).

- (11) *ʔizi hišan kab ʕarat ʕādifu*
 DEM.SM child from bed fall.PFV.3SM
 ‘The boy fell down from his bed’.
- (12) *kabzi gobo ʔimni yiʕūddif ʔallo*
 from.DEM.SM mountain stone fall.IPFV.3SM AUX.PRS.3SM
 ‘A stone is falling down from the mountain’.

The meaning of *ʕādāfā* is thus narrower than that of *wādākā*, and practically in all contexts the former can be replaced with the latter. Thus, in (11) and (12), *wādākā* can be used instead of *ʕādāfā*. On the other hand, *ʕādāfā* can replace *wādākā* in examples (2)–(6), but not in examples involving falling of light objects (examples (7)–(10)) or falling down of parts of natural objects in due time (example (1)).

2a. Comparison with Geez

In Geez, the verb *wadka*, cognate with Tigrinya *wādākā*, is likewise used as a basic verb of falling (see [Dillmann 1865: 930–931, Leslau 1987: 604]:

- (13) *kalabāt-ni yəballəsu fərfərāta za-wadka*
 dog.PL-even eat.IPFV.3PM crumb.PL.ACC REL-fall.PFV.3SM
ʔəm-māʔədda ʔagʔəstihomu
 from-table.CNST master.PL.POSS.3PM
 ‘Even dogs eat crumbs which fall from the table of their masters’.
 [Mt 15: 27]¹
- (14) *wa-yəballāf kuṣu ba-məsr wa-yəwaddək*
 and-be.eaten.IPFV.3SM sour.grape.POSS.3SM in-moment and-fall.IPFV.3SM
kama fəre za-yətnaggaf
 like fruit REL-fall.off.IPFV.3SG
 ‘His sour grape will be eaten in one moment, and it will fall as the fruit that fell off’. [Job 16: 33]; note that the second verb, *tanagfa*, used in this example as an equivalent of *wadka*, is restricted to the specific context of falling off of ripe fruits and withered leaves, see Section 7a.

¹ The quotations from Geez Bible are drawn from the following editions: Bachmann 1893 (Is), Dillmann 1853 (Ex, Deut, Lev), Dillmann 1861 (II Kings), Dillmann 1894 (Sir), Esteves Pereira 1989 (Job), Löfgren 1930 (Zech), Ludolf 1701 (Ps), Zuurmond 1989 (Mk), Zuurmond 2001 (Mt), *Haddis kidan* (Acts).

- (15) *wa-ʔi-təṭkarram* *ḥənbābāta* *waynəka*
 and-NEG-harvest.IPFV.2SM berry.PL.CNST grape.NOM.POSS.2SM

za-wadka

REL-fall.PFV.3SM

‘and you will not harvest your fallen grapes’. [Lev 19:10]

The Geez equivalent of *šādäfä* is the verb *šadfa* ‘fall off a cliff, fall into a hole, cast oneself down’ (see [Dillmann 1865: 1314, Leslau 1987: 547]). Predictably, it is used less frequently than *wadka*, and describes the falling from an extreme height or into depth:

- (16) *šadfa* *ʔəm-tašlās*
 fall.PFV.3SM from-third.floor

‘he fell off from the third floor’. [Acts 20: 9]

- (17) *wa-šabda* *marāšəyu* *wa-šadfa*
 and-be.mad.PFV.3SM cattle.PL.POSS.3SM and-fall.PFV.3SM

wəsta *bāhr*

in sea

‘And his herd became mad and rushed into the sea’. [Mk 5: 13]

- (18) *wa-ʔamma* *bo* *za-kašata* *šazaṭta* *wa-laʔəmmahi*
 and-if EXIST.3SM REL-uncover.PFV.3SM pit.ACC and-if

ʔakraya *wa-ʔi-kadan-o* *ʔafu-hu*
 dig.PFV.3SM and-NEG-cover.SBJ.3SM-OBJ.3SM mouth-POSS.3SM

wa-šadfa *wəstetu* *lāhm* *wa-ʔəmmahi* *ʔadg*
 and-fall.PFV.3SM in.3SM cow and-if donkey

‘And if somebody uncovers a pit or if he digs one and does not cover its surface, and a cow or a donkey falls into it...’. [Ex 21: 33]

All in all, the semantics and the combinatorial properties of the Geez verb do not display any significant difference from those of its Tigrinya cognate. Admittedly, the Tigrinya verb can designate a downward movement of an object along the oblique surface (see Section 9), but no such statement can be made concerning the Geez cognate, since no relevant contexts have been detected.

Finally, it is worth while to mention that the verbal root **šdf* (found, apart from Tigrinya and Geez, in Tigre and Amharic, see [Leslau 1987: 547]) is undoubtedly related to **šad(a)f* ‘precipice, cliff’, which is attested in Geez (*šadf*, see [Leslau 1987: 547]), Tigrinya (*šādfi*, [Kane 2000: 2614]), Tigre

(*šadaf*, [Littmann, Höfner 1962: 648]), Amharic (*tädf*, [Kane 1990: 2178]), and, interestingly, has a cognate in Arabic (*šadaf*- ‘anything lofty, such as a wall and a mountain’, [Lane 1863–93: 1666]). Furthermore, the Arabic verbs *šadafa* ‘to turn away’ and *šadifa* ‘to have a crookedness in the fore legs, an inclining in the hoof towards the off side (about a horse), or an inclining of the foot of the fore leg or of the hind leg towards the off side (about a camel)’ [Lane 1863–93: 1665] must also be related: their semantics may well be derived from the meaning ‘to turn over’, a likely narrowing of a general verb ‘to fall down’ (on the link between the meanings ‘to fall’, ‘to turn over’, and ‘to turn back’, see Section 3).

3. The loss of vertical orientation

For vertically oriented object the situation of losing the vertical position and coming to a horizontal position is likewise indicated by the verb *wädäkä* discussed in Section 2 (the verb *šädäfä* was explicitly rejected in such contexts). This involves objects like trees, street lamps, or chairs:

- (19) *ʔinda-täšawätna ʔiza sediya wädika*
 while-play.PFV.SBJV.1PL DEM.SF chair fall.PFV.3SF
 ‘As we were playing, the chair fell down.’

- (20) *ʔizi gäräb wädiku*
 DEM.SM tree fall.PFV.3SM
 ‘The tree fell down’.

The latter phrase can refer to the falling of a tree cut down by the woodcutters or uprooted by wind. The uprooting is more precisely described with the following phrase:

- (21) *ʔizi gäräb wädiku sirawru käʔa nab märet*
 DEM.SM tree fall.CVB.3SM root.PL.POSS.3SM and towards earth
wäsiʔom
 go.out.PFV.3PM
 ‘This tree fell down, and its roots appeared upon earth’.

When applied to human beings, this verb can also indicate loss of vertical orientation:

- (22) *bi-bäräd šätät ʔilä wädiḳä*
 in-ice slide CVB.1SG fall.PFV.1SG

‘I slid upon the ice and fell down’ (contrast example (6)).

Objects which are both high and long (but comparatively thin) are also considered as vertically oriented and are well compatible with the verb *wädäkä*:

- (23) *ʔiti mändäk wädiḳu*
 ART.SM wall fall.PFV.3SM

‘The wall overturned’.

- (24) *mäkkabäbiya wädiḳu*
 fence fall.PFV.3SM

‘The fence overturned’.

- (25) *ʔita bisikletta ʔab mändäk täšäggiša näyra*
 ART.SF bike in wall be.leaned.CVB.3SF AUX.PST.3SF
däḥar gin wädiḳa
 then but fall.PFV.3SF

‘The bike was leaned to the wall, then it fell down’.

Quadrupeds belong to the same group:

- (26) *ḥadä hadanay šaggazen tokkwisu šaggazen wädiḳa*
 one.M hunter antelope shoot.CVB.3SM antelope fall.PFV.3SF

‘When a hunter shot an antelope, the antelope fell down’.

- (27) *ʔiti färäs wädiḳu*
 ART.SM horse fall.PFV.3SM

‘The horse fell down’.

However, the verb *wädäkä* is not applied to the overturning of objects which are broad as well as long, such as a car, a bus, a train, or a table. For such an object, the verb *wädäkä* can only denote the situation of a proper falling down from an upper position to a lower level through the air (see Section 2):

- (28) *ʔita mäkkina ʔanfäta siḥita kab dildil*
 ART.SF car direction.POSS.3SF miss.CVB.3SF from bridge
wädiḳa
 fall.PFV.3SF

‘The car lost direction and fell down from the bridge’.

- (29) *ʔizi ʔawla kab laʔlay dābri wādīku*
 DEM.SM table from upper floor fall.PFV.3SM

‘The table fell down from the upper floor (to the ground)’.

If the situation of toppling, overturning does not involve physical falling from a higher level to a lower one, the verbs *tägälbäʔä* ‘to be overturned, to topple’ [Kane 2000: 2215] or *tägämʔälä* ‘to be turned over’ [Kane 2000: 2248] are used:

- (30) *mākkina šätät ʔila tögälbiʔa*
 car slide CVB.3SF overturn.PFV.3SF

‘A car slid and overturned’ (***wādika* is not acceptable in this context).

- (31) *ʔizi ʔawla tögälbiʔu*
 DEM.SM table overturn.PFV.3SM

‘This table was turned upside down’.

- (32) *mākkina/ʔawtobus tögämʔila*
 car/bus overturn.PFV.3SF

‘A car/bus overturned’.

- (33) *babur kab ḥadid taʔalya tögämʔila*
 train from track deviate.CV.3SF overturn.PFV.3SF

‘A train went off the track and overturned’.

These verbs can be applied to other objects to indicate the wrong, upside-down position (not necessarily a result of accidental toppling):

- (34) *ʔiza ʔärmuz tögälbiʔa/tögämʔila ʔalla*
 DEM.SF bottle overturn.CV.3SF/overturn.CV.3SF AUX.PRS.3SF

‘The bottle has been turned upside down’.

With animate subjects, both verbs acquire the meaning ‘to turn back’, and the verb *tägämʔälä* can also be used with the meaning ‘to somersault’:

- (35) *tögälbiʔa riʔyatinni*
 overturn.CV.3SF see.PFV.SBJ.3SF.OBJ.1SG

‘She turned back and looked at me’ (not much in use).

- (36) *tögämʔila riʔyatinni*
 overturn.CV.3SF see.PFV.SBJ.3SF.OBJ.1SG

‘She turned back and looked at me’.

- (37) *ʔizi hišan tågāmʔilu*
 DEM.SM child overturn.PFV.3SM

‘The kid made a somersault’.

The verb *tågämsäsä* ‘to lean over, lean to one side’ [Kane 2000: 2238] is used to denote a lesser degree of overturning, loss of normal vertical position:

- (38) *ʔita mäkkina tågämsisa*
 ART.SF car overturn.PFV.3SF

‘The car tipped over (on its side) or became inclined’.

- (39) *ʔizi ʔawla tågämsisu*
 DEM.SM table overturn.PFV.3SM

‘The table tipped over (on its side) or became inclined’.

Its basic meaning is ‘to lean (upon something)’, as in the following example.

- (40) *ʔizi ʔom wädiku ʔab mändäḳ tågämsisu*
 DEM.SM tree fall.CVB.3SM in wall overturn.PFV.3SM

‘The tree fell down and leaned upon a wall’.

With animate subjects, the verb *tågämsäsä* is consistently used to indicate the intentional lying down in order to sleep:

- (41) *ʔiti färäs ʔab märet tågämsisu*
 ART.SM horse in earth overturn.PFV.3SM

‘The horse lay down (and slept) on the ground’.

- (42) *ʔanä kigimsäs dälliya*
 1SG GOAL.overturn.IPFV.1SG want.PFV.1SG

‘I want to lie down’ (= ‘I want to sleep’).

The direction of falling / overturning (to the front, to one side, backwards) is not relevant for the choice of the verb of falling:

- (43) *wädikä gämbäräy täsäyrä*
 fall.CVB.1SG forehead.POSS.1SG be.broken.PFV.1SG

‘I fell down and my forehead was wounded’.

- (44) *wädikä ʔidäy täsäyrä*
 fall.CVB.1SG arm.POSS.1SG be.broken.PFV.1SG

‘I fell down and broke my shoulder’.

- (45) *nissu niṣay dəfiʔunni ni-dihrit wādiḳä*
 3SM ALL.1SG push.CVB.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.1SG ALL-backwards fall.PFV.1SG
 ‘He hit me so that I fell down backwards’.

For inanimate vertically oriented objects the verb *täṣaṣfa* ‘to be folded, turned; to be doubled, creased, to droop, to collapse’ [Kane 2000: 1947] can be applied to indicate that the base of the object did not change its position:

- (46) *nay godāna mābrahti täṣaṣifa*
 POSS street lamp be.bent.PFV.3SF
 ‘The street lamp was bent’.

The verb *ṣaṭäk bälä* can be used with a similar meaning. In [Kane 2000: 1938], it is defined as ‘to fall and break (object)’, but according to Täsfaldät Ḥadgämbäs, its proper meaning is ‘to be tilted’:

- (47) *ʔizi ʔom ṣaṭäk ʔilu wādiḳu*
 DEM.SM tree be.tilted CVB.3SM fall.PFV.3SM
 ‘The tree was bent and fell down’.
- (48) *ʔizi ʔom ṣaṭäk ʔilu täsäyru*
 DEM.SM tree be.tilted CVB.3SM be.broken.PFV.3SM
 ‘The tree was bent and broke’.

The situation of falling flat (with one’s whole body spread upon the ground) can be denoted by a special verb *ṣaḥ bälä* ‘to fall face forward, fall on one’s face, fall flat; to prostrate oneself, to lie flat’ [Kane 2000: 2549], which can be used as an adverbial adjunct to *wädäḳä*:

- (49) *nissu ʔab märet ṣaḥ ʔilu wādiḳu*
 3SM in earth fall.flat CVB.3SM fall.PFV.3SM
 ‘He fell flat upon the ground’.

3a. Comparison with Geez

The Geez verb *wadḳa* is likewise applicable to situations of loss of vertical position:

- (50) *ʔasma wadḳa zagbā*
 because fall.PFV.3SM cedar
 ‘For the cedar fell’. [Zech 11: 2]

- (51) *ǰəmuntu-ssa tašaḳṣu wa-wadḳu*
 3PM-EMPH stumble.PFV.3PM and-fall.PFV.3PM
 ‘They stumbled and fell down’. [Ps 19:9]
- (52) *wa-boʔa māʔkala ʕələwān wa-wagʔ-o*
 and-enter.PFV.3SM among rebel.PM and-pierce.PFV.SBJ.3SM-OBJ.3SM
la-1-ǰəmənnehomu ba-ʔafa kʷināt wa-wadḳa
 ALL-1-from.3PM INS-mouth.CNST spear and-fall.PFV.3SM
dəhrita
 backwards
 ‘And he entered into the midst of the rebels and pierced one of them with the point of spear, and he [the rebel] fell backwards’. [Marrasini 1993: 86]

The Tigrinya verbs *tägälbätä* and *tägämsäsä* do not have reliable cognates in Geez.

For the verb *tägämtälä*, it is tempting to suggest a connection with Geez *ganpala* ‘distort, turn upside down, overturn’ and its passive derivative *taganpala* [Leslau 1987: 198, Dillmann 1965: 1182]. The phonological correspondence is not fully reliable (Tigrinya *ʧ* should correspond to *ʧ* in Geez), yet acceptable in view of the fact that the phoneme *p* is extremely rare in Geez and mostly restricted to borrowings (the same is true of *p* in Tigrinya). It is therefore difficult to establish exact rules of its behaviour in the indigenous vocabulary, and the correspondence between *np* in Geez and *mʧ* in Tigrinya is easy to imagine: the shift from the labial ejective *p* to dental ejective *ʧ* is compensated by the shift from dental nasal *n* to labial nasal *m*. Semantically, the Geez and Tigrinya roots are extremely close. While *taganpala* in Geez is only attested in the figurative meaning ‘to be distorted’ [Dillmann 1865: 1182], the basic meaning of the root is clearly ‘to turn upside down’:

- (53) *ganpala manābərthomu*
 overturn.PFV.3SM chair.PL.POSS.3PM
 ‘he overturned their chairs’. [Dillmann 1865: 1182]

The rest of the Tigrinya verbs mentioned in this section either do not have cognates in Geez, or have cognates which are not used as verbs of falling or loss of vertical position.

Tigrinya *täšaṣfä* has a reliable cognate in Geez, *tašaṣfa/tašaṣafa* ‘clothe oneself’ [Leslau 1987: 74, Dillmann 1865: 1024]. It is commonly assumed that the meaning ‘to clothe oneself’ and ‘to put on clothes’ (attested both

for the derived verb *tašašfa/tašašafa* and the source verb *šašafa*) is a secondary development of ‘to fold up, to double (a piece of cloth)’, attested for the verb *šašafa* (‘bend, fold up, double’) and for the passive participle *šašuf* ‘folded up, double’ (see [Leslau 1987: 74, Dillmann 1865: 1024]).

The Geez and Tigrinya data thus mutually confirm the statement that the basic meaning of the root *ššf* is ‘to bend’. However, the root has a wide application in Tigrinya, where it can refer to bending of solid vertical objects and thus to the situation of loss of vertical position. In Geez, in all the passages quoted in [Dillmann 1865: 1024], the root refers to the folding of clothes, hence the meaning ‘to clothe oneself’ (< ‘to fold clothes around oneself’) and the figurative meaning ‘to double’ (< ‘to fold (cloth), to make a double layer (of cloth)’):

- (54) *ḥasma šašuf wəḥətu za-lāšleka*
 because double 3SM REL-upon.2SM
 ‘for what is upon you is twice as much’. [Job 11: 6]

Its use to describe the bending of a solid object is less frequent, but still not entirely absent:

- (55) *ḥamma wadka ḥi-yəkəl tanšəḥo ḥasma*
 if fall.PFV.3SM NEG-be.able.IPFV.3SM rise.INF because
ḥalbo ba-za-yašašəf bərakihu
 NEG.EXIST INS-REL-bend.IPFV.3SM knee.PL.POSS.3SM
 ‘If he [the elephant] falls down he cannot rise because there is nothing by means of which he can bend his knees’. [Hommel 1877: 35]

The Tigrinya verb *šaṭək bälä* ‘to tilt’ is probably derived from *šaṭākä* ‘to put a belt on one’s trousers (originally to gird one’s loins with a sash)’ [Kane 2000: 1937]. The semantic connection between bending, tilting and the girding goes along the same lines as the colexification of the meanings ‘to bend’ and ‘to clothe oneself’ in the root *ššf* discussed above in this subsection: obviously the girding is understood as bending, folding, or wrapping of the girdle. The cognate in Geez, *šaṭaka*, is found only with the meaning ‘to gird, put around the waist’ [Leslau 1987: 76, Dillmann 1865: 1017].

Finally, the verb *šaḥ bälä* ‘to lie flat’ must be cognate to Geez *šeḥa* ‘make level, make even, pave a road’ [Leslau 1987: 568, Dillmann 1865: 1308]. The Geez root, however, is not attested in the descriptions of the situation of falling.

4. Falling from inside of a container or through an aperture

There is no special verb denoting falling out of something, the verb *wädäkä* being applied to this situation:

- (56) *ʔiti miṯtaḥ kab borsay wädiḳu*
ART.SM key from bag.POSS.1SG fall.PFV.3SM
‘The key fell out of my bag’.
- (57) *ʔita čačwit kab säfär nab märet wädiḳa*
ART.SF chick from nest towards earth fall.PFV.3SF
‘The chick fell out of a nest’.
- (58) *ʔita diṁmu kab mäskot nab märet wädiḳa*
ART.SF cat from window towards earth fall.PFV.3SF
‘The cat fell out of window to the ground’.

Note that the verb *šädäfä* is acceptable in (57) and (58), but not in (56). The reason is that a key falling out of a bag is neither a heavy object, nor falls from a height, and thus, the result of its falling is insignificant.

5. Detachment of fixed objects

The falling down of objects which are loosely attached to some object, without special means of fixation, is denoted by the general verb for falling, *wädäkä*:

- (59) *ʔiti ġaket kab takkabanno šätät ʔilu wädiḳu*
ART.SM jacket from hanger slip CVB.3SM fall.PFV.3SM
‘The jacket slipped down from a hanger and fell down’.
- (60) *gämäd kab mänṯältäli wädiḳu*
rope from hook fall.PFV.3SM
‘A rope fell down from hook’.
- (61) *mänkäši ʔid čärki kab mänṯältäli wädiḳu*
dryer hand cloth from hook fall.PFV.3SM
‘A hand towel fell down from hook’.

- (62) *ḳobḳäy kab riʔisäy wädiḳa*
 hat.POSS.1SG from head.POSS.1SG fall.PFV.3SF

‘My hat fell down from my head’.

- (63) *ʔimni kab kräyn wädiḳu*
 stone from crane fall.PFV.3SM

‘A slab fell from a crane’.

In accordance with the semantic restrictions discussed in Section 4, the verb *ṣädäfä* can replace *wädäḳä* only in the last of these examples, where the falling object is heavy and falls from a height.

For an object which is firmly fixed (e.g. screwed) to another object, the verb *moläḳä* ‘to slip off; to become detached’ [Kane 2000: 327] is usually applied²:

- (64) *nay mäkkina goma moliḳa*
 POSS car tire slip.off.PFV.3SF

‘A tire fell off car’.

- (65) *ʔanä zi-sämmärkuwwo mišmar moliḳu*
 1SG REL-nail.PFV.SBJV.SBJ.1SG.OBJ.3SM nail slip.off.PFV.3SM

‘The nail which I nailed (into a wall) fell out’.

- (66) *mäkdän ʔärmus zäliḳa näyra*
 lid bottle be.loosened.CVB.3SF AUX.PST.CVB.3SF

moliḳa

slip.off.PFV.3SF

‘The bottle lid got loose and fell off’.

- (67) *gämäd täsämira näyra däḥar moliḳa*
 rope be.nailed.CVB.3SF AUX.PST.3SF afterwards slip.off.PFV.3SF

‘The rope was nailed (to a wall), but then it (got loose and) fell down’.

The verb *moläḳä* denotes the process of getting detached from the fixed position rather than the movement downwards (note that it is not applicable for instance in the example (59) because the object is not firmly fixed from the beginning). For some of the examples given above, the verb *wädäḳä* is also applicable, which then indicates the actual falling down to the ground:

² The verb is also used in the meaning ‘to steal off, to escape unobserved’ [see Kane 2000: 327]: *säb kab ʔisir bet moliḳu wäšiʔu* man from arrest house escape.CVB.3SM go.out.PFV.3SM ‘A man escaped from prison’.

- (68) *ʔanä zi-sämmärkuwwo mismar wädiķu*
 1SG REL-nail.PFV.SBJV.SBJ.1SG.OBJ.3SM nail fall.PFV.3SM
 ‘The nail which I nailed (into a wall) fell down’.
- (69) *gämäd täsämmira näyra däḥar wädiķa*
 rope be.nailed.CVB.3SF AUX.PST.3SF afterwards fall.PFV.3SF
 ‘The rope was nailed (to a wall), but then it fell down’.

The following examples, in each of them both *wädäķä* and *moläķä* are employed, illustrate the difference between the two verbs:

- (70) *natäy ḳäläbät nay ḳalkidanäy zälaklak*
 POSS.1SG ring POSS matrimony.POSS.1SG be.loosened
ʔilatinni däḥar kitmolluķ däliya
 PFV.SBJ.3SF.OBJ.1SG afterwards GOAL.slip.off.IPFV.3SF want.PFV.3SF
ʔanä gin käyyitwäddiķ ʔilä ʔawṣiyä
 1SG but GOAL.NEG.fall.IPFV.3SF say.CVB.1SG take.out.PFV.1SG
 ‘My wedding ring got a bit loose and then it was about to come off, so I took it off to prevent it from falling down’ (the speaker is not so much afraid of the ring getting detached from the finger as of its falling down to the ground and getting lost).
- (71) *ʔizi mismar kab mändäķ moliku nab märet*
 DEM.SM nail from wall slip.off.CVB.3SM towards earth
wädiķu
 fall.PFV.3SM
 ‘The nail got detached from its position on the wall and fell down to the ground’.

6. Falling to pieces

The situation of falling to pieces of buildings or other built structures normally is not described by the verb of falling *wädäķä*. On the contrary, the verb *ṣädäḳä* can be used in such contexts, as an equivalent of the verb *färsä* ‘to collapse, crumble, to fall’ [Kane 2000: 2660]. The latter is the default verb to describe such a situation:

- (72) *ʔiti gäza färisu/ṣädifu*
 ART.SM house collapse.PFV.3SM
 ‘The house collapsed’.

- (73) *ʔiti wāddi bi-čīka gāza sārīhu dīhar ʔiti*
 ART.SM boy INS-mud house make.PFV.3SM afterwards ART.SM
gāza baʕlu fārisu
 house self.3SM collapse.PFV.3SM

‘The boy built a house of mud, but then this house fell apart by itself’.

The verb *ʕanāwā* ‘to collapse’ [Kane 2000: 1889] can also be used in the same contexts, implying a stronger degree of destruction:

- (74) *ʔiti hiṣṣa ʕaniyu*
 ART.SM building collapse.PFV.3SM

‘The building was completely demolished’.

The application of the verb *wādākā* to the situation of destruction is only possible if the destruction is accompanied with the proper falling down, as in the case of a bridge, or of losing the vertical orientation, as in the case of a wall or a fence (see Section 3):

- (75) *ʔizi dīldīl wādīku*
 DEM.SM bridge fall.PFV.3SM

‘This bridge fell down’ (the same situation can also be described as *ʔizi dīldīl fārisu* DEM.SM bridge collapse.PFV.3SM ‘This bridge collapsed’, or *ʔizi dīldīl ʕaniyu* DEM.SM bridge collapse.PFV.3SM ‘This bridge was totally destroyed’).

- (76) *ʔiti māndāk wādīku*
 ART.SM wall fall.PFV.3SM

‘The wall fell down (the same situation can also be described as *ʔiti māndāk fārisu* ART.SM wall collapse.PFV.3SM ‘The wall collapsed’, or *ʔiti māndāk ʕaniyu* ART.SM wall collapse.PFV.3SM ‘The wall was totally destroyed’).

- (77) *mākkabābiya wādīku*
 fence fall.PFV.3SM

‘A fence fell down’ (the same situation can also be described as *mākkabābiya fārisu* fence collapse.PFV.3SM ‘A fence collapsed’ or *mākkabābiya ʕaniyu* fence collapse.PFV.3SM ‘A fence was totally destroyed’).

The same motivation — the fact that the destruction entails the physical fall of the object — must be behind the application of the verb *wādākā* to the situation of the ceiling falling down:

- (78) *ʔizi naḥsi zäʔiṭu kiwäddiḳ däliyu*
 DEM.SM ceiling be.curved.CVB.3SM GOAL.fall.IPFV.3SM want.PFV.3SM
 ‘The ceiling became curved and is threatening to fall’.

The verb *wädäkä* is also — quite predictably — applied to a man falling through the broken ceiling:

- (79) *bäzi naḥsi ʔintäḥalifka kitwäddiḳ ʔika*
 in.DEM.SM ceiling if.pass.PFV.2SM GOAL.fall.IPFV.2SM COP.2SM
 ‘If you walk over this ceiling you will fall through’.

As for the falling in of a riverbank, the verb *wädäkä* is applicable to this situation only if the subject denotes the earth which is falling:

- (80) *bisänki fiḡrä märet ʔizi ḥamäd wädiḳu*
 because erosion.CNST earth DEM.SM soil fall.PFV.3SM
 ‘Because of erosion the soil fell down’.
- (81) *ʔab gämḡäm wiḥiḡ zirikkäb märet wädiḳu*
 in bank river REL.be.situated.IPFV.3SM earth fall.PFV.3SM
 ‘The earth which was on the bank of the stream fell down’.

A special verb *täbaḡwägwä* ‘to be washed away, to be eroded’ [Kane 2000: 1108] is also used with the noun ‘earth’ or ‘soil’ as its subject:

- (82) *ʔab gämagim kälay zirikkäb märet*
 on bank.PL lake REL.be.situated.IPFV.3SM earth
täbaḡgigu
 be.eroded.PFV.3SM
 ‘The earth which was on the banks of the lake was eroded’

The term *gämḡäm* ‘(river)bank’ is compatible neither with *wädäkä* nor with *täbaḡwägwä*, nor with *färsä*: ***gämḡäm wädiḳu*, ***gämḡäm täbaḡgigu*, ***gämḡäm färsisu* are all unacceptable for the native speaker.

6a. Comparison with Geez

Unlike its cognate in Tigrinya, the verb *wadka* in Geez is well attested to refer to collapse of buildings:

- (83) *wa-ḥanaṣu kʷallo ʔəkma wa-kʷallo*
 and-build.PFV.3PM all.3SM.ACC wall.ACC and-all.3SM.ACC

ʔarafta za-wadqā ba-hagara gəbs
bulwark.ACC REL-fall.PFV.3SM in-land.CNST Egypt

‘And they built (again) every wall and every bulwark which collapsed in the land of Egypt’. [Vanderkam 1989: 239]

(84) *wa-zanma zənām wa-wəḥzu ʔaflāg wa-naḫḫu*
and-rain.PFV.3SM rain and-flow.3PM flood.PL and-blow.PFV.3PM

naḫāsāt wa-gaḫḫəwo la-wəʔətu bet
wind.PL and-oppress.SBJ.3PM.OBJ.3SM ALL-DEM.SM.NOM house

wa-wadqā wa-kona ḫabiya dəqatu
and-fall.PFV.3SM and-become.PFV.3SM big.M.ACC fall.POSS.3SM.NOM

‘The rain came, and floods flowed, and winds blew, and they afflicted this house, and it collapsed, and its destruction was great’. [Mt 7: 27]

(85) *wa-ʔəm-dəḫra-zə ʔagabbəʔā*
and-from-after-DEM.SM.NOM bring.back.IPFV.SBJ.1SG.OBJ.3SF

wa-ʔaḫannəṣā la-beta dāwit za-wadqat
and-build.IPFV.SBJ.1SG.OBJ.3SF ALL-house.CNST David REL-fall.PFV.3SF

wa-ʔənaddək mazbarā
and-build.IPFV.1SG ruin.POSS.3SF

‘And after this I will restore and build again the house of David which had collapsed, and I will build anew its ruins’. [Acts 15: 16]

This employment can well be explained by the Greek influence: all the relevant texts are translations from Greek, where in the corresponding passages the verb *πίπτω* ‘to fall’ or its derivatives are used.

7. Falling down of parts of natural objects which have reached the stage at which they are expected to be detached from the main body

The situation of a leaf falling from the tree or of petals falling from the flower can be denoted by a general verb for falling, *wädäkä* (see also examples (1), (7); note that the verb *šädäfa* is not used in such contexts):

(86) *ʔaḫṣulti wädikom*
leaf.PL fall.PFV.3PM

‘Leaves fell down (in the autumn)’.

- (87) *şigge nay űimbaba wădiku*
 petal POSS flower fall.PFV.3SM

‘The petals of a flower fell off’.

However, more natural is the employment of the special verb *răgăfă* ‘to fall off (leaves), to break off, break loose (fruit, leaf), to shed a coat (live-stock)’ [Kane 2000: 610]:

- (88) *koşli răgifu*
 leaf fall.off.PFV.3SM

‘A leaf fell down’.

- (89) *ʔaᵗşulti yirăgfu*
 leaf.PL fall.off.IPFV.3PM

‘Leaves fall down (in the autumn)’.

- (90) *ʔaᵗşulti răgiform*
 leaf.PL fall.off.PFV.3PM

‘Leaves fell down’.

- (91) *şigge nay űimbaba răgifu*
 petal POSS flower fall.off.PFV.3SM

‘The petals of a flower fell off’.

- (92) *űimbaba miş năkăşă şiggăűu răgifu*
 flower when wither.PFV.SBJV.3SM petal.POSS.3SM fall.off.PFV.3SM

‘When the flower withered, its petals fell off’.

- (93) *firă nay ʔorănşi răgifu*
 fruit POSS orange fall.off.PFV.3SM

‘The oranges fell down (from the orange-tree)’.

- (94) *firă miş băsălă răgifu*
 fruit when ripen.PFV.SBJV.3SM fall.off.PFV.3SM

‘When the fruits became ripe, they fell down (from the tree)’.

The verb *răgăfă* is consistently used with objects which are parts of human or animal body and which fall off for natural reasons (e.g. at a certain age):

- (95) *săb miş ʔarăgă şogru yirăggif*
 man when be.old.PFV.SBJV.3SM hair.POSS.3SM fall.off.IPFV.3SM

‘When a man gets old, his hair falls out’.

- (96) *ʔizi s̄ab mis ʔarägä ʔasnanu*
 DEM.SM man when be.old.PFV.SBJV.3SM tooth.PL.POSS.3SM

rägifu

fall.off.PFV.3SM

‘When this man got old, his teeth fell out’.

- (97) *ʂogri nayzi kälbi rägifu gäza ʔabbalašiyu*
 hair POSS.DEM.SM dog fall.off.CVB.3SM house spoil.PFV.3SM

‘The hair of this dog started to fall out and spoiled the house’ (***ʂogri nayzi kälbi wädiku* hair POSS.DEM.SM dog fall.PFV.3SM is not acceptable).

- (98) *nay tämän ʔorbot rägifu*
 POSS snake skin fall.off.PFV.3SM

‘A snake skin fell off’ (***nay tämän ʔorbot wädiku* POSS snake skin fall.PFV.3SM is not acceptable).

The verb *wädäkä* is incompatible with such objects as animal hair or snake skin, but can be applied (with some hesitation) to the falling out of teeth and human hair:

- (99) *sinnu wädiku*
 tooth.POSS.3SM fall.PFV.3SM

‘His teeth fell out’ (less acceptable than *sinnu rägifu*).

- (100) *ʔizi s̄ab mis ʔarägä ʂogru wädiku*
 DEM.SM man when be.old.PFV.SBJV.3SM hair.POSS.3SM fall.PFV.3SM

‘When this man got old, his hair fell out’ (less acceptable than *ʂogru rägifu*).

However, the verb *rägäfä* is not acceptable in a sentence which focuses on the actual falling down of the object:

- (101) *ʂogri riʔsäy nab migbi wädika*
 hair head.POSS.1SG towards food fall.PFV.3SF

‘A hair from my head fell into the dish’ (***rägifa* is not acceptable).

To describe the falling out of milk teeth of a child, the verb *goräfä* ‘to lose milk teeth’ [Kane 2000: 2278] is usually employed, with its subject encoding the person whose teeth fall out or are pulled:

- (102) *ʔita gʷal ʕadduš sinni kätäbuḳḳul däliya*
 ART.SF girl new tooth GOAL.let.grow.IPFV.3SF want.CVB.3SF

sinna ***gorifa***
tooth.POSS.3SF lose.teeth.PFV.3SF

‘Since the new teeth of the girl were about to grow, her (milk) teeth fell out (lit. she shed her milk teeth)’.

- (103) *ʔanä* *ʕidmäy* *šäduštä* *ʕamät* *mis* *bäšaḥku*
1SG age.POSS.1SG six year when reach.PFV.SBJV.1SG

sinnäy ***gorifä***
tooth.POSS.1SG lose.teeth.PFV.1SG

‘When I reached the age of six years, I lost my (milk) teeth’.

- (104) *wäddäy* *sinni* ***mugraf*** *ǧämmiru*
boy.POSS.1SG tooth lose.teeth.INF begin.PFV.3SM

‘My son started to lose his (milk) teeth’.

- (105) *kolʕa* *mis* *ʕabäyä* *sinni* ***yigorrif***
child when be.big.PFV.SBJV.3SM tooth lose.teeth.IPFV.3SM

‘When a child grows up, he loses his (milk) teeth’.

The verb *goräfä* was defined by Täsfaldät Ḥadgämbäs as referring to teeth being pulled out by force. The falling out of milk teeth is thus perceived as involving external aid.³ The verb *goräfä* is not restricted to a situation of losing one’s milk teeth, as one can infer from the following example (about a grown-up person):

- (106) *ʔanä* *nab* *ḥakim* *käydä* *sinnäy* ***gorifä***
1SG towards doctor go.CVB.1SG tooth.POSS.1SG lose.teeth.PFV.1SG

‘I went to a doctor and had my tooth pulled out’.

7a. Comparison with Geez

Neither *rägäfä* nor *goräfä* have reliable cognates in Geez (Leslau [1987: 464–465] mentions *ragafa* ‘fall to the ground (fruit, leaves)’, but no such root is attested in [Dillmann 1865], and the entry in Leslau’s dictionary must be founded on local glossaries of Geez which are not fully reliable).

³ But its subject cannot encode a person pulling someone else’s tooth. For this situation, the causative derivative *ʔag^wräfä* is applied: *ʔiti ḥakim ni-sinnäy ʔag^wrifulläy* DEM. SM doctor ALL-tooth.POSS.1SG pull.out.PFV.SBJ.3SM.APPL.1SG ‘The doctor pulled out my tooth’.

While the verb *wadḥa* is applicable in the situation of leaves or fruits falling off the tree (see above, examples (14), (15)), the most common lexeme to describe such a situation is apparently the verb *tanagfa* ‘fall off’ [Leslau 1987: 391, Dillmann 1865: 696]:

- (107) *kama k^waṣla ʕəṣ za-ṣəfuḥ k^waṣlu za-ḳadāmi*
 like leaf.CNST tree REL-dense.M leaf.POSS.3SM REL-first.M
yətnaggaf wa-daḥāri yəṣarrəṣ
 fall.off.IPFV.3SM and-last.M sprout.IPFV.3SM

‘Like the leaves of a tree with dense foliage: the first one falls off and the last one sprouts’. [Sir 14: 18]

- (108) *k^waṣl za-tanagfa ʔəm-naḥās*
 leaf REL-fall.off.PFV.3SM from-wind

‘A leaf which had been shaken off because of wind’. [Job 13:25]

- (109) *wa-tātarri ʕəṣawāta zayt wəsta k^wəllu*
 and-possess.IPFV.2SM tree.PL.CNST olive in all.3SM.NOM
dawaləka wa-ʔi-tətkabbāʔ ḳəbʔa
 region.NOM.POSS.2SM and-NEG-be.anointed.IPFV.2SM oil.ACC
ʔəmānnehu ʔəsmā tanagfa fərehu
 from.3SM because fall.off.PFV.3SM fruit.POSS.3SM

‘You shall possess olive trees in each of your regions, but you will not anoint yourself with its oil because its fruit will fall off’. [Deut 28: 40]

The semantic and functional similarity between Geez *tanagfa* and Tigrinya *rägäfä* is also demonstrated by the fact that the Amharic *räggäfä* (which corresponds to Tigrinya *rägäfä* both etymologically and functionally, see [Kane 1990: 422]) is used as a gloss to Geez *tanagfa* in the traditional Geez-Amharic lexical list quoted in [Dillmann 1865: 696].

The Geez verb *tanagfa* is a reflexive-passive derivative from *nagafa* ‘shake, shake off, knock off’, which is typically used with an animate agent to denote shaking or casting something off one’s body, or simply shaking or casting something:

- (110) *nəgafu ṣabala ʔəgarikəmu*
 shake.IMP.PM dust.CNST foot.PL.POSS.2PM
 ‘Shake the dust off your feet!’ [Mt 10: 14]

- (111) *wa-nagafa pāwlos ʔədehu*
 and-shake.PFV.3SM Paul hand.POSS.3SM
 ‘And Paul shook his hand’. [Acts 28: 5]

- (112) *nagafomu* *la-gəbš* *māʔkala* *bāhr*
 shake.PFV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.3PM ALL-Egypt among sea
 ‘He (the God) knocked the Egyptians into the middle of the sea’. [Ex 14: 27]

Remarkably, the same verb can be used with non-agentive subjects:

- (113) *ʕəša* *tarbenʔos* *ʔanta* *nagafat* *ķʷašlā*
 tree.CNST terebinth REL.SF shake.PFV.3SF leaf.POSS.3SF
 ‘The terebinth which cast off its foliage’. [Is 1: 30]⁴

Furthermore, in post-Aksumite Geez there is at least one attestation of the same verb *nagafa* intransitively, with the meaning ‘to fall off’ (about the spines of a hedgehog):

- (114) *wa-yəbelā* *la-ķənfəz* *yəngəf*
 and-say.PFV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.3SF ALL-hedgehog fall.off.JUSS.3SM
šagʷrəki *ba-ħayla* *ʔamlākiya* *wa-soba*
 hair.NOM.POSS.2SF INS-power.CNST lord.POSS.1SG and-when
yəbe *kama-zə* *nagafa* *šagʷrā*
 say.PFV.3SM like-DEM.SM.NOM fall.off.PFV.3SM hair.POSS.3SF
wa-konāt *ʕərāķā*
 and-become.PFV.3SF naked.POSS.3SF

‘And he told the hedgehog: let your fur fall off by the power of my Lord! and as he said so, the fur of the hedgehog fell off, and it became naked’ [Marrassini 2003: 303 (ed.), 106 (tr.)]⁵

The influence of the above-mentioned Amharic *rəggəfä* can well account for this change of diathesis. Whether the Geez root *ngf* is etymologically related to Tigrinya *rgf* and/or *gʷrf* remains an open question (the irregular phonological correspondence *n* — *r* is an obstacle, but the semantic proximity is remarkable).

⁴ See a similar employment of *gorəfä* ‘to shed (milk) teeth’ in Tigrinya. It is this usage of *nagafa* which apparently gave rise to the derivative *tanagfa* (lit. ‘to be shaken off’) used with the meaning ‘to fall off (about leaves etc.)’.

⁵ This meaning is attested neither in [Leslau 1987] nor in [Dillmann 1865], but see TraCES online edition of [Dillmann 1865] with additions, <http://betamasafeft.eu/Dillmann/?mode=none&q=%E1%8A%90%E1%8C%88%E1%8D%88&id=Lb33f230d206c46e9948b412d6e71e25b> (accessed on 01.02.2019).

8. Falling down of liquids and granular materials

The verb *wädäkä* is never applied to liquids. Thus, sentences like ***may yiwäddik* ‘Water falls’ or ***may wädiku* ‘Water has fallen down’, ***šimša nab ?idäy wädikunni* ‘Wax fell upon my hand’ are unacceptable. Similarly, the verb *šädäfa* is not used to describe the falling/streaming down of liquids.

Instead, verbs of flowing, leaking and dripping are applied, such as *wähazä* ‘to flow’ [Kane 2000: 1718], *nätäbä* ‘to fall in drops, to drop (water), to drip (water)’ [Kane 2000: 1381], *fäsäsä* ‘to be spilled, poured (out) (water, grain, etc.), to flow (liquid, stream), to run (water), to fall (water)’ [Kane 2000: 2677], *šärär bälä* ‘to ooze, exude’ [Kane 2000: 2563], *lähakwä* ‘to drip, run (water along a wall after leaking through a roof), to leak, to seep, filter through (intransitive)’ [Kane 2000: 71]. Of these, the verb *wähazä* is said to denote unconstrained, usually horizontal movement of water or other liquids:

- (115) *zinab mis zänäbä may ?ab märet wihizu*
 rain when rain.PFV.SBJV.3SM water in earth flow.PFV.3SM
 ‘After rain, water flooded over the earth’.

For flowing downwards, the verb *fäsäsä* is most commonly used:

- (116) *bumba takäfita may füsisu*
 tap be.opened.CVB.3SF water flow.PFV.3SM
 ‘The water tap was opened and the water flowed (from the tap)’.

- (117) *nay šimša mikkak nab kidanäy*
 POSS wax liquid towards dress.POSS.1SG
fäsisunni
 flow.PFV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.1SG
 ‘The melted wax flowed upon my dress’.

Other verbs are used to describe various modes of movement of water:

- (118) *may nä?ibu*
 water drip.PFV.3SM
 ‘(A drop of) water has dripped’.
- (119) *šimša nab ?idäy nä?ibunni*
 wax towards hand.POSS.1SG drip.PFV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.1SG
 ‘Wax dripped upon my hand’.

- (120) *nibḥat šārār ḡilu*
 tear flow PFV.3SM
 ‘The tears flowed down’.

- (121) *kab naḥsi may šārār yibil ḡallo*
 from ceiling water flow IPFV.3SM AUX.PRS.3SM
 ‘Water is flowing from the ceiling’.

- (122) *kab naḥsi may liḥiku*
 from ceiling water leak.PFV.3SM
 ‘Water has leaked from the ceiling’.

For description of waterfall, a special verb *ḡančaḥčḥä* ‘to cascade’ [Kane 2000: 2528] is used (see also *mänčaḥčḥäta* ‘cascade, cataract, waterfall’, *ibid.*):

- (123) *may yänčaḥčḥä ḡallo*
 water cascade.IPFV.3SM AUX.PRS.3SM
 ‘Water is cascading’.

The verb *wärädä* ‘to descend’ [Kane 2000: 1733] is also applicable to water:

- (124) *may kab gobo yiwärrid ḡallo*
 water from mountain descend.IPFV.3SM AUX.PRS.3SM
 ‘Water is flowing down from the mountain’.

The verb *wädäḳä* is not applied to rainfall. A number of special verbs and lexical constructions are used for rain, with *zinab* ‘rain’ or *may* ‘water’ as subject, and the verbs such as *zänäbä* ‘to rain’ [Kane 2000: 1996], *harämä* ‘to hit, strike; to pelt (rain)’ [Kane 2000: 14], *kafäyä* ‘to drizzle’ [Kane 2000: 1697], *nätäbä* ‘to drip (water)’ [Kane 2000: 1381] as predicates:

- (125) *zinab zänibu*
 rain rain.PFV.3SM
 ‘It rained’.

- (126) *may harimu*
 water strike.PFV.3SM
 ‘It rained’.

- (127) *may kafiyu*
 water drizzle.PFV.3SM
 ‘It drizzled’.

- (128) *may yinätṭib silä-zällo şilal hizki*
 water drip.IPFV.3SM because-REL.AUX.PRS.3SM umbrella take.CVB.2SF
wişʔi
 go.out.IMP.SF

‘Since it is drizzling, take your umbrella before going out’.

The verb *wädäkä* is not used to describe the situation of snowing. The noun *bäräd* ‘snow, ice’, when combined with this verb, is interpreted as a designation of a solid object:

- (129) *bäräd dubb ʔilu wädiku*
 ice fall.loudly CVB.3SM fall.PFV.3SM

‘An icicle fell with a loud noise’.

Snowfall can be denoted with the verb *wärädä* ‘to descend’:

- (130) *bäräd yiwärrid ʔallo*
 snow descend.IPFV.3SM AUX.PRS.3SM

‘It is snowing’.

For granular materials, the verb *wädäkä* is sometimes applicable, but only when a large quantity of the substance is involved (in which case the whole mass is apparently perceived as a solid object):

- (131) *nab märet bizuh hariç silä-zi-wädäkä*
 towards earth much flour because-REL-fall.PFV.SBJV.3SM
mişrag ʔalloni
 sweep.INF be.PRS.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.1SG

‘Since a lot of flour fell down to the floor, I have to sweep (the floor)’.

The verb *wädäkä* is predictably applied to describe a container with a granular material falling down (the grammatical subject of the verb may denote the granular material itself):

- (132) *ʔab kārätit zällo ʔikli wädiku*
 in sack REL.be.PRS.3SM grain fall.PFV.3SM

‘The grain in a sack fell down’.

However, if granular material is spilled to the surface, the use of *wädäkä* is blocked. Instead, exactly as with liquids, a special verb denoting spilling is used (*fäsäsä* ‘to be spilled, poured (out) (water, grain, etc.)’, [Kane 2000: 2677]):

- (133) *kab* *kofo* *hiruç* *fäsisu*
 from container flour spill.PFV.3SM
 ‘The flour from the container spilled (upon the floor)’.
- (134) *kab* *mäkkina* *hamäd* *fäsisu*
 from car soil spill.PFV.3SM
 ‘Some soil spilled from the car (which was carrying a load of soil)’.
- (135) *kärätit* *täkädidu* *ʔikli* *fäsisu*
 sack be.torn.CVB.3SM grain spill.PFV.3SM
 ‘The sack tore, and the grain spilled’ (***kärätit täkädidu ʔikli wädiku*
 sack be.torn.CVB.3SM grain fall.PFV.3SM is not acceptable).

Remarkably, the verb *fäsäsä* is not compatible with solid objects in large quantities, where the verb *wädäkä* is used instead:

- (136) *kärätit* *täkädidu* *hašin* *wädiku*
 sack tear.CVB.3SM nail fall.PFV.3SM
 ‘The sack tore, and the iron nails fell out’ (contrast example (135)).

8a. Comparison with Geez

Among the verbs related to movement of liquids and granular materials discussed in this section, only two have reliable cognates in Geez. Tigrinya *wähazä* has an exact phonetic and semantic equivalent in Geez *wähza* ‘flow (stream, water)’ [Leslau 1987: 610, Dillmann 1865: 892]. Tigrinya *nätäbä* corresponds to *naṭba* ‘drop, trickle’ [Leslau 1987: 408, Dillmann 1865: 696].

9. Downward movement along the oblique surface

In a situation of falling down from a rock or a mountain, it is distinguished between falling down through the air and between rolling down. The first situation is described by *wädäkä* (see example (5)), whereas for the second one, the verb *ʔankoraräyä/ʔankoraräwä* ‘to roll’ [Kane 2000: 1606] is used, sometimes as an adverbial adjunct to *wärädä* ‘to descend’:

- (137) *ʔimni kab gobo ʔankorariyu*
stone from mountain roll.PFV.3SM

‘A stone rolled down from the mountain’.

- (138) *säb kab gobo šätät ʔilu kab gobo*
man from mountain slip CVB.3SM from mountain
ʔankorariyu
roll.PFV.3SM

‘A man, having slipped down, rolled down from the mountain’ (contrast example (5)).

- (139) *kuʕso kab laʕli ʔankorariya wärida*
ball from above roll.CVB.3SF descend.PFV.3SF

‘A ball rolled down from an upper level’.

- (140) *ʔiti ʔom kab gobo ʔankorariyu wäridu*
ART.SM tree from mountain roll.CVB.3SM descend.PFV.3SM

‘The tree rolled down from the mountain’.

However, the verb *ʔankoraräyä* is not restricted to movement downwards, rather it denotes a rolling movement in general:

- (141) *kuʕso ʔab märet tankoraru ʔalla*
ball in earth roll.IPFV.3SF AUX.PRS.3SF

‘A ball is rolling on the ground’.

While *wädäkä* is not compatible with the verb *ʔankoraräyä/ʔankoraräwä*, the verb *šädäfä* can be used to indicate the direction, with the implication that the moving object is heavy:

- (142) *ʔimni kab gobo ʔindankoraräwä yišäddif*
stone from mountain while.roll.PFV.SBJV.3SM fall.IPFV.3SM
ʔallo
AUX.PRS.3SM

‘The stone rolled down from the mountain’.

9a. Comparison with Geez

It is tempting to compare the Tigrinya verb *ʔankoraräyä* with the Geez *ʔank^wark^wara* ‘roll (transitive, intransitive)’ [Leslau 1987: 292, Dillmann

1865: 838]. The two verbs are extremely close semantically, while formally they represent different extensions of the biradical element *k^wr*.

10. Movement downwards in water

Neither *wädäkä* nor *šädäfä* is not applicable to the situation of an object sinking in the water. Instead, a special verb *tähalä* ‘to sink, to submerge’ [Kane 2000: 2409] is employed:

- (143) *däbtäräy* *ʔab may* *tihila*
 notebook.POSS.1SG in water sink.PFV.3SF

‘My notebook sank into the water’ (contrast *däbtäräy nab may wädika täʔalika* notebook.POSS.1SG towards water fall.CV.3SF become.soaked.PFV.3SF ‘My notebook fell into the water and got wet’, where the verb *wädäkä* refers to the fall through the air to the water surface, which may or may not be following by sinking).

- (144) *galba* *tihila*
 boat sink.PFV.3SF
 ‘A boat sank’.

10a. Comparison with Geez

The verb *tähalä* is apparently related to Geez *tahala* ‘settle (dregs)’ [Leslau 1987: 590; Dillmann 1865: 1216], which seems to be a development of ‘to sink into water (about dregs)’. The only relevant passage quoted in [Dillmann 1865: 1216], however, does not refer to sinking at all: *wästa manṭaft yəṭəḥəl ḥašar* in sieve settle.IPFV.3SM straw ‘the straw remains as dregs in the sieve’ [Sir 27: 4]. As Leslau [1987: 590] suggests, the verb can well be a denominative from *tāhl* ‘sediments, dregs’ [Leslau 1987: 590; Dillmann 1865: 1216], whereas the noun can go back to the root ‘to sink’. Its further connection with the root *thl* ‘to throw’, marginally attested in Geez (see [Leslau 1987: 589; Dillmann 1865: 1216]), but widespread in South Ethio-Semitic (for the etymology see [Leslau 1987: 589]), cannot be excluded.

11. Intentional fall

The verb *wädäkä* is never used to denote intentional movement downwards. Thus, about a soldier rushing down in order to escape the bullets the verb *bätt bälä* ‘to lie down’ [Kane 2000: 1206] would be used:

- (145) *wättahadär* *ʔab midri bätt ʔilu tähabiʔu*
 soldier in earth lie.down CVB.3SM be.hidden.PFV.3SM
 ‘A soldier hid himself by falling down to earth’ (the use of *wädäkä* in this phrase would mean that he fell down by accident).

Similarly, in a description of a parachute jump, the employment of the verb *wädäkä* implies that the parachute is out of order:

- (146) *ʔizi wäddi kab sämay wädiku mikniyatu ʔiti*
 DEM.SM boy from sky fall.PFV.3SM because ART.SM
zi-tätäkämällu ğančila
 REL-use.PFV.SBJV.SBJ.3SM.APPL.3SM parachute
silä-zi-täbalašäwo
 because-REL-be.spoiled.PFV.SBJV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.3SM
 ‘This boy fell down because the parachute which he was using was damaged’.

For a normal parachute jump the verb *wärädä* ‘to descend’ [Kane 2000: 1733] or *ʔansafäfa* ‘to soar, glide, hover (in the air); to float (transitive)’ [Kane 2000: 800] can be used:

- (147) *ʔab sämay bi-ğančila ʔansafifu*
 in sky INS-parachute float.PFV.3SM
 ‘He floated in the sky with a parachute’.
- (148) *bi-ğančila wäridu*
 INS-parachute descend.PFV.3SM
 ‘He came down with a parachute’.

On the contrary, the verb *wärädä* is inapplicable in some situations of uncontrolled fall: ***košli nab märet wäridu* leaf towards earth descend. PFV.3SM ‘A leaf descended to the ground’ is unacceptable (but note the employment of *wärädä* in (124), (130), (139), (140)).

Interestingly, the verb *šädäfa* can be applied to intentional action at least in informal speech:

- (149) *bāzi* *gerka* *šidäf*
 in.DEM.SM do.CVB.2SM fall.IMP.2SM

‘Go down this way!’ (used when showing the road in the mountains).

11a. Comparison with Geez

Unlike its Tigrinya cognate, the Geez verb *wadka* can be used to describe intentional movement downwards:

- (150) *wa-soba boʔa* *ḥaba* *dāwit* *wadka* *diba* *mādr*
 and-when enter.PFV.3SM towards David fall.PFV.3SM on earth
wa-sagada *lottu*
 and-prostrate.PFV.3SM ALL.3SM

‘When he came to David he fell to the ground and prostrated before him’. [2 Kings 1: 2]

Similarly, the employment of *šadfa* in Geez does not seem to be incompatible with the intentionality (see the example (17), where the interpretation of the movement as intentional cannot be excluded).

The Tigrinya verbs *bätṭ bälä* and *ʔansafäfä* do not have reliable cognates in Geez (although the Geez verb *safafa* is rendered as ‘float, be afloat’ in [Leslau 1987], this interpretation is not supported by the actual attestations in the texts quoted in Dillmann 1865: 409).

The Tigrinya verb *wärädä* goes back to the common Semitic root **wrd* ‘to descend, come down’ (see [Kogan 2015: 385]), well attested in Geez as *warada* with the same meaning [Leslau 1987: 617, Dillmann 1865: 901]. Both the Tigrinya and Geez verbs (as well as their cognates in the other Semitic languages) usually refer to regular agentive movement downwards and are not associated with proper falling.

12. Change of level

In the course of the present investigation I have been able to detect only one example of *wädäkä* applied to a physical process which does not involve fall in a proper sense:

- (151) *biḥuḵ wādiḵu*
dough fall.PFV.3SM

‘The dough fell down (after it had raised)’ (see also [Kane 2000: 1788]).

However, *wādākā* is not applicable to a similar situation of a water level sinking (for instance, in the dike), where, instead, the verb *wārādā* ‘to descend’ is used:

- (152) *nay diga ṣaḵān may wāridu*
POSS dike measure water descend.PFV.3SM

‘The level of water in the dike dropped’.

13. Metaphors of falling

The basic verb for falling, *wādākā*, is somewhat restricted in its metaphorical usage. When used to describe various changes of state, it mostly implies an abrupt, unexpected (and often unpleasant) change, and is opposed to the verb *wārādā* ‘to descend, to go down’, which is the default means to describe gradual, normal change of state.

13.1. Decrease in measure

Decrease in a scalar measure is normally described by the verb *wārādā* (see also example (152)):

- (153) *ṣaḵān muḵot kab ṭimali lomi wāridu*
measure heat from yesterday today descend.PFV.3SM

‘The heat has diminished today in comparison to yesterday’.

- (154) *ḡab ḥaḡay nay ḡatkilti waga yiwārrid*
in summer POSS vegetable price descend.IPFV.3SM

‘In summer the vegetable prices fall’.

- (155) *ḡizi wāddi biḡuḡ gize silā-zi-ḥamāmā*
DEM.SM boy much time because-REL-be.ill.PFV.SBJV.3SM
mizanu wāridu
measure.POSS.3SM descend.PFV.3SM

‘The weight of this boy went down because he was ill for a long time’.

- (156) *nayzi telefon waga wäridu*
 POSS.DEM.SM phone price descend.PFV.3SM

‘The price of this (cellular) phone has decreased’.

The verb *wädäkä* ‘to fall’, if used in similar contexts, implies an abrupt change:

- (157) *nayzi telefon waga wädiku*
 POSS.DEM.SM phone price fall.PFV.3SM

‘The price of this (cellular) phone has fallen drastically’ (contrast example (156)).

- (158) *nay rubl waga ḡab haṣṣir gize wädiku*
 POSS rouble price in short time fall.PFV.3SM

‘The rate of rouble has fallen drastically within a short period of time’.

However, the use of *wädäkä* in this function is restricted. This must be due to the fact that the notion of the lowest point is an integral part of the semantics of *wädäkä*, but not of *wärädä*. The examples (157) and (158) can be rephrased as “the price has reached its lowest point”, “the price has reached the zero point”. In example (159) (and in similar sentences about temperature of human body and blood pressure), the native speaker was reluctant to use *wädäkä* even to describe a drastic change. The verb *wärädä* was used as a more or less full synonym of *kännäsä* ‘to diminish’:

- (159) *ḡizi wäddi räsni neruwo ḡita doktor*
 DEM.SM boy fever be.PFV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.3SM ART.SF doctor
mädhanit mis habätto natu ṣaḳän
 medicine when give.PFV.SBJV.SBJ.3SF.OBJ.3SM POSS.3SM measure
räsni wäridu
 fever descend.PFV.3SM

‘This boy had fever. When the nurse gave him medicine, his temperature went down’.

- (160) *nay ḥiṣan mäṭän räsni kab sälasan ṣommontän nab*
 POSS child amount fever from thirty.and eight.and towards
sälasan ṣobṣatän wäridu/kännisu
 thirty.and seven.and descend.PFV.3SM/diminish.PFV.3SM

‘The child’s fever has diminished from 38 to 37 degrees’.

- (161) *nayti säb ṣäḳṭi däm kab miṭtin ḥamsan*
 POSS.ART.SM man pressure blood from hundred.and fifty.and

nab sabʕa wäridu
towards seventy descend.PFV.3SM

‘The man’s blood pressure went down from 150 to 70’.

(162) *nayti säb şäkti däm kab miʔtin ʕamsan*
POSS.ART.SM man pressure blood from hundred.and fifty.and

nab miʔtin ʕisran wäridu/ʕännisu
towards hundred.and twenty.and descend.PFV.3SM/diminish.PFV.3SM

‘The man’s blood pressure went down from 150 to 120’.

(163) *ʔanä bä-zigäbro sportawi niʕfätat nay*
1SG INS-REL.do.IPFV.SBJ.1SG.OBJ.3SM sport activity.PL POSS

kibdätäy ʕaʕän wäridu
weight.POSS.1SG measure descend.PFV.3SM

‘My weight went down because of my sport activities’.

According to Täsaldät Hadgämbäs, the use of *wädäkä* in these contexts is unacceptable because it would mean ‘to go to zero point’. Only in the context of weight measuring, with some reluctance, he produced a sentence with *wädäkä*, to describe a rapid and conspicuous change (example (164), which differs from example (165) only in quantitative characteristic of the change):

(164) *ʔizi säbʔay nay kibdätu mizan kab miʔti*
DEM.SM man POSS weight.POSS.3SM measure from hundred

nab ʕamsa wäridu/wädiku
towards fifty descend.PFV.3SM/fall.PFV.3SM

‘The weight of this man went down from 100 to 50’ (*wädäkä* is less preferable than *wärädä*).

(165) *ʔizi säbʔay nay kibdätu mizan kab miʔti*
DEM.SM man POSS weight.POSS.3SM measure from hundred

nab sämanya wäridu
towards eighty descend.PFV.3SM

‘The weight of this man went down from 100 to 80’ (*wädäkä* not acceptable).

13.2. Decrease or loss of interest, desire

Both *wädäkä* and *wärädä* can be applied in situation of decrease in desire, enthusiasm, willingness to do something, although *wädäkä*, interpreted

as a stronger variant of *wärädä* (compare examples (166) and (167)), is less acceptable for Täsfaldät Hädgämbäs.

- (166) *nay mimhar bahgäy wäridu*
 POSS study.INF desire.POSS.1SG descend.PFV.3SM

‘My desire to study has diminished’.

- (167) *nay mimhar bahgäy wädiku*
 POSS study.INF desire.POSS.1SG fall.PFV.3SM

‘My desire to learn has totally disappeared’ (the wording is less common than in (166)).

- (168) *ʔizi wäddi nay kuʕso ʔigri mirʔay simmiʕitu*
 DEM.SM boy POSS ball foot see.INF feeling.POSS.3SM

wäridu

descend.PFV.3SM

‘This boy has lost interest in watching football’.

- (169) *ʔizi wäddi nay kuʕso ʔigri mirʔay simmiʕitu*
 DEM.SM boy POSS ball foot see.INF feeling.POSS.3SM

wädiku

fall.PFV.3SM

‘This boy has absolutely lost interest in watching football’ (less acceptable than (168)).

13.3. Loss of power

The verb *wädäkä* is regularly used to describe the destruction of a social power: fall of a political regime, disintegration of a state. Since the verb in its direct meaning never describes buildings falling apart (see Section 6), the metaphor “state is a building” can hardly underlie the examples (170) or (171). Rather, a calque from Amharic or from European languages can be suspected.

- (170) *ʔab šihin tšifattä miʔtin ʔarbiʕan hadän*
 in thousand.and nine hundred.and forty.and one.M.and
mängisti ʕilyan giʕʔatu ʔab ʔeritra wädiku
 government Italian rule.POSS.3SM in Eritrea fall.PFV.3SM

‘In 1941 the rule of Italian government in Eritrea came to end’.

- (171) *nay sovyät ħibrät mis wädäkä ħaddiš sirʕat*
 POSS Soviet union when fall.PFV.SBJV.3SM new regime
tämäsritu
 be.founded.PFV.3SM

‘When Soviet Union collapsed, a new regime was founded’.

This employment is restricted to the entities of political rule and the verb *wädäkä* is never used to describe the surrender of a fortress or a town, liquidation of an enterprise, separation of spouses. Furthermore, the employment of *wädäkä* in the examples above indicates that the change was abrupt and brought about by force. A peaceful change of power can be indicated by the verb *wärädä* with an animate subject, as in example (172).

- (172) *nay ʔityoʔya ʔäklali ministär kab siltan wäridu*
 POSS Ethiopia general minister from power descend.PFV.3SM

‘The Prime Minister of Ethiopia has retired’.

13.4. Sudden calamity

Both *wädäkä* and *wärädä* (without significant difference in meaning) can be used with subjects denoting various negative events, the affected participant(s) being encoded as direct object (the same government is also possible with the literal meaning ‘to fall’, see example (4)). The employment of the verb *wärädä* is usually preferred:

- (173) *zäyħassäbkuwo mäkära*
 REL.NEG.think.SBJV.PFV.SBJ.1SG.OBJ.3SM misfortune

wäridunni/wädikunni

descend.PFV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.1SG/fall.PFV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.1SG

‘An unexpected misfortune has befallen me’ (*wärädä* is preferable).

- (174) *ni-sidra betom ħadäga*
 ALL-family house.POSS.3PM calamity

wädikuwom/wäriduwom

fall.PFV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.3PM/descend.PFV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.3PM

‘Their family was afflicted by a calamity’.

The arriving of a common disaster is usually described by the verb *wärädä* (whereas the afflicted participants are left unexpressed), as in examples (175)–(178).

- (175) *kʷinat wäridu*
 war descend.PFV.3SM
 ‘A war began’.
- (176) *rähab wäridu*
 hunger descend.PFV.3SM
 ‘A famine began’.
- (177) *ʔabzi ʕamät tämähalaläfti himamat ʔabzi ʔakkababi*
 in.DEM.SM year contagious.PL disease.PL in.DEM.SM area
wäridu
 descend.PFV.3SM
 ‘This year contagious diseases have spread in this area’.
- (178) *ʔabza hagär kiliwliw nay kuṭuba wäridu*
 in.DEM.SF land crisis POSS economy descend.PFV.3SM
 ‘An economic crisis has begun in this country’.

The verb *wädäkä* can be applied in situations of sudden emergence of something entailing additional amount of work. A more specific verb *dubb ʔilu* ‘to fall with a thud, to plop’ ([Kane 2000: 3220]; for a direct employment see example (129)) can be used in the same contexts.

- (179) *ni-bet kursna bizhi zallowom*
 ALL-house breakfast.POSS.1PL abundance REL.be.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.3PM
ʕamawil handäbät dubb ʔilomuna/wädiqomuna
 client.PL suddenly fall.loudly PFV.SBJ.3PM.OBJ.1PL/fall.PFV.SBJ.3PM.OBJ.1PL
 ‘Suddenly too many clients appeared in our café (more than we can accommodate)’.

If the event is welcome, the verbs of falling are inappropriate, contrast examples (180) and (181) (but compare also example (186)).

- (180) *haddiš sirah wädiqunni*
 new work fall.PFV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.1SG
 ‘I unexpectedly got new work to do’.
- (181) *gänzäb ʔaynäbärännin gin zäyḥassäbkuwo*
 money NEG.be.PFV.SBJV.3SM but REL.NEG.think.PFV.SBJV.SBJ.1SG.OBJ.3SM
sirah mäšiʔunni
 work come.PFV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.1SG
 ‘I had no money, but unexpectedly I got new job’ (*wädäkä* is less acceptable here).

13.5. Falling of a lot

The nouns *fičča* ‘lot, drawing of lots, lottery’ [Kane 2000: 1940] and *lottori* ‘lottery’ (*lotärya* in [Kane 2000: 104]) are consistently used with the verb *wädäkä* as the subject. The motivation here is in all probability the conceptualization of a lottery as falling of dice or similar objects (importantly, this employment of *wädäkä* is not extended to such situations as election, where the decision is not made by chance).

- (182) *fičča nay märet wädiku*
 lot POSS earth fall.PFV.3SM

‘The drawing of lots for land (a procedure to distribute the land) took place’.

- (183) *lottori wädiku*
 lottery fall.PFV.3SM

‘A lottery drawing was held’. [Kane 2000: 1788]

More common is construction with the organizer of the lottery encoded as the subject of the causative verb *Ɂawdäkä* ‘to cause to fall’ [Kane 2000: 1788], as in examples (184) and (185).

- (184) *fičča Ɂawdikna niɁay bäsihatinni*
 lot let.fall.CVB.1PL ALL.1SG reach.PFV.SBJ.3SF.OBJ.1SG

‘We drew lots, and I won’.

- (185) *mängisti lottori Ɂawdiku niɁay*
 government lottery let.fall.CVB.3SM ALL.1SG
bäsihatinni
 reach.PFV.SBJ.3SF.OBJ.1SG

‘The government organized a lottery, and I won’.

The predicate *wädäkä* can also attach a direct object expressing the recipient of the good or bad lot, as in (186) (although the verb *bäšhä* ‘to reach, to come’ is more commonly used in this function, see (185)).

- (186) *šibbuk fičča wädikunni*
 good.M lot fall.PFV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.1SG

‘I drew a happy lot’.

The metaphor of casting lots may also underlie the use of *wädäkä* in the examples (187)–(189).

- (187) *ʔanä lomi ʔimmaḵ ʕiddil wädikunni*
 1SG today bad luck fall.PFV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.1SG
 ‘I had bad luck today (unexpectedly)’ (*wäridunni* is also possible, compare also examples (173), (174)).
- (188) *nissu ʔab fütäna ʔimmaḵ ʔittotat wädikomwo*
 3SM in examination bad question.PL fall.PFV.SBJ.3PM.OBJ.3SM
 ‘He got difficult questions during the examination’ (*wäridomwo* is also possible, compare also examples (173), (174))
- (189) *ʔizi habti handäbät wädikuwom*
 DEM.SM wealth suddenly fall.PFV.SBJ.3SM.OBJ.3PM
 ‘The wealth unexpectedly came to them’

Example (189) is especially interesting, since in the discussion of the example (181), my language consultant explicitly stated that *wädäkä* is usually associated with negative unexpected events. In (189), the event is definitely positive, but the use of *wädäkä* is still allowed by Täsfaldät ʔadgämbäs, who explained it as an indication of the suddenness, unexpectedness and lack of control on the part of the involved person: the event is perceived as drawing a happy lot.

13.6. Death in a battle

The verb *wädäkä* is consistently used to describe the glorious death of soldiers in a battle (the subject being typically the noun *gägna* ‘hero’).

- (190) *kindäy gäganu wädikom*
 how.many hero.PL fall.PFV.3PM
 ‘How many heroes have fallen (in the battle)?’

However, according to Täsfaldät ʔadgämbäs, the same verb can be applied with negative connotations, meaning ‘to be thrown (on the battlefield), left unburied’. The verb *tädärbäyä* ‘to be thrown away; to be abandoned’ [Kane 2000: 2084] can be used in the same context as a more colloquial expression.

- (191) *nay ʕälaʔi wättähadärat ʔabzi wädikom/tädärbiyom*
 POSS enemy soldier.PL in.DEM.SM fall.PFV.3PM/be.thrown.PFV.3PM
 ‘The (bodies of) enemy’s soldiers are dispersed here’.

13.7. Attack

In [Kane 2000: 1788], an example of the verb *wädäkä* in the meaning ‘to attack’ is given:

- (192) *lomi läyti ʔab ʕadna šiftatat wädiqomna*
 today night in village.POSS.1PL brigand.PL fall.CVB.SBJ.3PM.OBJ.1PL
kʷillu gäzatat gorgoru
 all house.PL ransack.PFV.3PM

‘Last night, brigands suddenly fell upon our village and ransacked all the houses’.

However, this usage was explicitly rejected by Täsaldät ʕadgämbäs.

14. Conclusion

The basic verb in Tigrinya used strictly to denote the physical falling down of a solid object is *wädäkä*. Its default interpretation is (an accidental) falling down through the air of a solid object. With vertically oriented objects it normally denotes loss of vertical position, with animate vertically oriented objects it can denote falling down through the air or loss of vertical position. It is extremely rarely used to denote any other types of downward movement (the only pertinent example is discussed in Section 12).

A verb of falling with a narrower semantics and different combinatorial properties is *šädäfä*. It is used to denote the fast downward movement of a solid, heavy object, either through the air or, less typically, along an oblique surface. The denoted situation is a sudden event with a perceptible effect, usually negative for the object itself or for its surroundings. This verb is not applied to loss of vertical position.

In all situations where the physical falling down through the air or loss of a vertical position of a solid object is not involved or is not in the focus of the statement, special verbs are used. With liquids and granular materials, verbs of flowing, dripping, and spilling are used (see Section 8). For rain and snow, special meteorological expressions are employed (see Section 8). For detachment from a fixed position of artefacts and natural objects, the verbs ‘to slip off’ and ‘to fall off’ are used (see Sections 5, 7). For collapsing of buildings and various structures, the verbs with the meaning ‘to be

destroyed’ are applied (see Section 6; the verb *šādäfä* can also be used in such contexts). For downward movement in water, the verb ‘to sink’ is used (see Section 10).

Comparison with Geez reveals two important differences in the mapping of falling down: firstly, the Geez basic verb for falling can denote collapse of buildings and other constructions (see Section 6a); secondly, it can refer to intentional loss of vertical orientation (see Section 11a). It is interesting to observe that Geez, exactly as Tigrinya, employs a special verb to denote falling of ripe fruits or withered leaves, although the Geez verb is morphologically more complex than its Tigrinya equivalent (see Section 7a). Both in Tigrinya and Geez, in certain contexts the non-agentive participant an integral part of which falls off due to natural reasons can be encoded as the subject (and the fallen off part is encoded as the direct object; see Section 7).

Abbreviations

ACC — accusative; APPL — applicative; ART — article; AUX — auxiliary; CNST — constructus state (marker of the head of the possessive construction); COP — copula; CVB — converb; DEM — demonstrative; Deut — Deuteronomy; EMPH — emphasis; Ex — Exodus; EXIST — existential copula; GOAL — goal; IMP — imperative; INF — infinitive; INS — instrumental; IPFV — imperfective; Is — Isaiah; Job — Job; Lev — Leviticus; M — masculine; Mk — Mark; Mt — Matthew; NOM — nominative; NEG — negative; OBJ — object; PFV — perfective; PL — plural; PM — plural masculine; POSS — possessive; PRS — present; Ps — Psalms; PST — past; REL — relative; SBJ — subject; SBJV — subjunctive; SF — singular feminine; SG — singular; Sir — Sirach; SM — singular masculine; Zech — Zechariah.

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