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Verb Inflection in Xïmt'äŋa (Awwi)

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This study was conducted to assess the inflectional forms of verbs in [Xïmt'äŋa][i]. It was a descriptive analysis which focused on the specific parts of the structure of verb inflections. The study used theoretical frameworks on verb inflections and qualitative method which were used to gather data from the informants. The central theme of the study was description and discussion of the data gathered concerning inflectional forms of the verbs in the variant language. Accordingly, three types of verbs were identified based on their stems infixing vowels between the first and other radicals, and four types of verbs were clearly indicated based on their radicals. In the discussion, it was revealed that verbs are inflected for person, number and gender. There are past and non-past tenses; perfective and imperfective aspects; and debitive and potential moods in the inflections of the [Xïmt'äŋa] verbs. Finally, it gave conclusion concerning the results of the discussion and analysis.

Key words: Verb inflection, Xïmt'äŋa, Awwi, inflectional morphology, verb radicals.

INTRODUCTION

"The term *Cushite* primarily refers to a linguistic designation and the standard way of referencing groups with an ethno-linguistic designation" (http://www.ethnologue.com). The Cushitic languages are one of the main branches of the Afro-Asiatic language family. The description and classification of this family is controversial due to the inconveniency of the distribution of languages, and even due to the fact that some languages are structurally one and the same (http://www.koeppe.de/html/e_kusch.htm). However, there are scholars like Greenberg and Tucker (cited in Palmer) who tried to classify these Cushitic languages keeping their geographical distributions. From these scholars, Tucker was the one who, arguably, tried to divide the Cushitic languages normally into four geographical sub-branches. These are high, northern, eastern and central Cushitic groups. According to this classification, central Cushitic includes the [Awwi][1] language (Palmer n.d:169).

The Awwi are perhaps the original inhabitants of much of the northern Ethiopian highlands. They currently exist in a number of scattered enclaves, which include the Bilin in and around Keren in Eritrea; the Kemant and the Kuara, who live around Gondar in the Semien Gondar Zone of the Amhara Region, west of the Tekeze River and north of Lake Tana; a number of Awwi live south of Lake Tana, around Dangila in the Awwi Zone of the Amhara Region; and another group live around Sekota in the former province of Wollo, now part of the Amhara Region, along its border with the Tigray Region (http://tripatlas.com/Agaw).

The Awwi language, which belongs to Cushitic family, forms four alternate small group memberships or language variants. These are internally related groups which are named as Bilin (the Northern Awwi), Khamtanga [Xïmt'äŋa][ii] (the Eastern Awwi), Kemant (the Western Awwi) and Awngi (the Southern Awwi). These variants have their own lexical systems which are inflected by attaching different affixes, but Awngi preserves any inflectional suffixes (Appleyard, 1984:357). Xïmt'äŋa, which is the target of this study, is spoken by eighty thousands of people who live in Sekota area. It is bounded by Tigray in eastern and north eastern, Gonder in northern and north western and Wollo in southern and south western. This group has different sub-dialects (CSA,

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2007).

This study focuses on the inflection of verbs in Xïmt'äŋa -the variant/dialect of the Awwi language in speech and writing contexts, and it looks at the dynamics of the relations of the inflections. It also explores the convergence between the theoretical frameworks and the contexts in the dialect. The study previews the discourses concerning the nature of the verbs, and it tries to address the following questions:

- What are the composite elements attached to verbs to show inflections?
- Is there any relationship between the inflectional forms in different categories?

These questions are answered based on the following objectives. The main objective of the study is to investigate the inflections of verbs in Xïmt'äŋa (the variant/dialect of the Awwi language) and to indicate the relations of inflections in the variant language; under this general objective, the study specifically tries to:

- Examine the inflections of verbs to person, number and gender.
- Assess the tense, aspect and mood markers in the verbs of the dialect.
- Highlight theoretical approaches concerning that particular dialect of Awwi.

The result of this study is expected to be shared by the scholars who want to formulate theories on inflectional morphology of the Awwi language, particularly of Xïmt'äŋa. The scholars can get awareness regarding the influence of verb inflections on the language the people use. On the other hand, people of the language, after reading the result of this research, are expected to understand the nature of verbs in their language. Finally, this research work can serve as a base for any researcher on similar field of study.

This study is limited to verb inflection analysis of Xïmt'äŋa-the dialect of the Awwi language which is spoken particularly in Sekota area, and revision of some theories concerning the language. Other morphological aspects of the variant/dialect and the remaining three variants (Bilin, Kemant and Awngi) are not included under the study.

Xïmt'aŋa is one of the sub-groups/variants of the Awwi language on which different studies were made by different linguists and graduate students. These are Palmer (n.d.), Zaborski (1983), Appleyard (1984), Mengistu (1984), Mengistu (1989) and Teshome (2007).

Palmer (n.d.) is one of the very beginning scholars who studied the Awwi language even if his research does not have definite time. The title of the study was "Cushitic". In his studies of Cushitic families, he tried to categorize Awwi (the former Agaw) under Central Cushitic languages. He did not go to the details of particular languages.

Zaborski (1983) is another scholar who studied the language in the research entitled by "The verb in Cushitic: Studies in Hamito-Semitic I". This scholar identified the prefix conjugations in the four variations of Awwi- Bilin, Awngi, Kemant and [Xïmt'äŋa [iii]. From these variants, Awngi has verbs which are inflected by attaching prefixes. This study focuses on comparison of the above sub-groups.

There is also another foreigner who studied the Awwi language. Appleyard (1984), under "The Agaw language: A comparative morphological perspective", examined a selected number of morphological categories and patterns relevant to Awwi. He tried to identify case and number inflection in nouns, the morphology of main and subordinate paradigms in the inflection of verbs in the four variants of the Awwi language.

More related research works to the current study were conducted by graduating student-Mengistu (1984). This student, in his Bachelor of Art thesis- "The verb morphology of Khamta"-discussed inflection and derivation of Khamta [Xïmt'äŋa]. Under inflection, he identified that verbs can be inflected for person, number, gender, tense, aspect and mood while under derivation, he described some ways in which new words (especially, nouns and adjectives) are formed from the existing verbs.

Mengistu (1989), in his study, described the noun phrases of Xïmt'äŋa. His study was named as "The structure of noun phrase complement in Khamtanga". Even if this has no extreme relation with the present study, it took the same language variant (Xïmt'äŋa) of Awwi.

The study which was conducted recently concerning Xïmt'äŋa is the Master of Art thesis done by Teshome (2007). Teshome, in "The syntax of Xïmt'äŋa", provided basic descriptions and theoretical explanations about the nature of the language under study.

The preceding works fail to give adequate description about the nature of verb inflection in Xïmt'äŋa. They did not relate the analysis with the updated theories concerning morphology and syntax. They even did not show the proper ways in which verbs can be classified and inflected for different aspects, tenses or agreement. Let alone these short comings, the above research conductors did not name the language and the society by using the correct names.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND METHODOLOGY

Morphology is the science which deals with different methods of discovering the smallest meaningful units of sentences or utterances (Hodge, 1973:38; Bauer, 2003). These smallest units which carry meaning or fulfill some grammatical functions are said to be morphemes. A morpheme which stands by itself can be called a free morpheme while the one which cannot stand by itself as it would have no meaning is bound morpheme; hence, bound morpheme needs another part to convey complete meaning (O'grady et al., 1997:134). The systematic combinations of these units make each language unique and vary greatly in the regularity of its morphological structure. Though there are various languages which commonly take prefixes and suffixes (affixes which are attached at the beginning and the end of a stem respectively) to have complete syntactic structure, there are some languages which add

infixes (affixes attached inside a stem) within their stem forms.

A very striking feature of morphemes in human language is the fact that they are produced continuously by using similar principles: Speakers can produce a number of structures which they have never heard and said before, and that there is no theoretical limit to the number of morphemes that can be produced (Crystal, 1971:192). These units convey complete meaning, which leads people to consider the theory that every utterance consists of morphemes.

Inflection is the notion which carries grammatical information and relational categories such as person, number, gender, tense, mood, aspect, case and the like. “Inflectional morphemes do not change cognitive or referential meaning” (Katamba, 1993:51). Morphological feature is most typically realized by adding bound morphemes (affixes) to the stem or root. Different word forms of particular lexeme are also formed by means of this technique (Harris, 1951:163; Wardhaugh, 1977:83).

Inflection changes grammatical properties of a word within its systematic category, which is to mean it is part of morphology that can be governed by syntax (Anderson, 1992:102). Each constituent in syntactic configurations should agree in order to produce an utterance/a sentence which has important effect (Encyclopedia of language and linguistics 2nd ed. vol. 5, 2006:654). Thus, we can say that inflection can be used for a number of semantic and syntactic categories in nouns and verbs: Number, gender, case, aspect tense, etc.

There are various properties of inflection which make it differ from word formation processes like derivation and compounding. One of these properties is its productiveness. It should be notified that the forms of lexemes which are usually regular can take the same affixes. It is affected by syntactic components in that the choice of the correct inflectional form of lexeme determines the syntactic context in which it occurs (Katamba, 1993:206-07; Encyclopedia of language and linguistics 2nded. vol.5, 2006:657). Unless the correct form of affix is selected, the utterance/sentence results in incorrect grammar.

In general, it can be said that inflection is concerned with whatever information about structure of word is relevant to syntax (Katamba, 1993:205). The word-forms interact with each other and form appropriate phrases or sentences that tend to be meaningful which should be studied under this category.

Different scholars (Anderson, 1992:103; Katamba, 1993:220) for instance, argue that verbs show greatest morphological complexity than any other word categories. This might be due to different features of verbs which make them to be exposed to various word formation processes. They also show the extents of language specificity and greater variation with respect to meaning across different languages. Besides, verbs are central to the meanings of clauses/phrases, and have relational meaning to different constituents in an event expression (Encyclopedia of language and linguistics 2nded. vol.13, 2006:408).

The primary function of verbs is to talk about events and actions. They crucially involve change in morphemes by attaching different markers which are usually affixes. Morphological markers on verbs are particularly agreement (number, gender, and/or person), tense (past or non past), aspect (perfective or imperfective) and mood (necessity, permission or possibility). These property markers are common in most languages (Katamba, 1993:220-25; Encyclopedia of language and linguistics 2nded. vol.5, 2006:655-6).

Agreement indicates the functioning of certain grammatical rule contrary to reflecting frequent appearance in the forms of sentences (Anderson, 1992:102; Encyclopedia of language and linguistics 2nd ed. vol.13, 2006:408). Verbs have agreement markers which can be influenced by constituents in that particular construction. The notions which are common in many languages can be person, number and gender markers.

Person concerns the grammatical concept which can be viewed in the distinctions between participants involved in speech activities. From a practical point of view in speech, many such distinctions play a role in communication: For example, the difference between those persons who actually attend a speech and those who are referred to, between those to whom an utterance is besieged and those who happen to hear it as unusual listeners. Scholars typically categorize the system to three terms: The role of speaker (first person), addressee (second person) and other (third person).This harmony is the most common system in world languages (Encyclopedia of language and linguistics 2nd ed.vol.5, 2006:658).

Number is, simply, an opposition of singular to plural. Less common numbers are dual (two individuals), and trial (three individuals). This is reflected on both nouns and verbs in a certain construction. It should be apparent that in a particular sentence, there must be agreement between noun and verb in number: if the noun is singular, the verb should be singular (Encyclopedia of language and linguistics 2nd ed.vol.5, 2006:658).

Gender implies the role given for both male and female in a way that it is described either as masculine or as feminine respectively. Gender and number are agreement categories which can be marked on heads (noun, adjectives or verb). For instance, a verb agrees in gender and number with a case and dependents.

The time of an action or event can be indicated in relation to particular moment with the help of tense. The point of reference for tense is usually the time of speaking or writing (Katamba, 1993:220).

The common tenses in many languages are basically three: past, present and future tenses.

Past tense is the one which expresses the action/event that is completed before the time of speaking/writing. When a sentence is constructed to describe a past action, the verb should be in past tense form. On the other hand, present tense explains the action which is happening at the moment of speaking/writing while future tense tells the action which can be accomplished after the time of speech (Microsoft Encarta, 2008).

Aspect in Verbs is another inflectional category of verbs which emphasizes the action/event that is completed in the time of speaking/writing or in progress. There are two aspects in most languages. These are the imperfective, presenting the action as a process of recurrence, and the perfective, presenting the action as an integrated whole, usually from the point of view of its completion (Microsoft Encarta, 2008).

Mood is a property of a verb that tells a reader/listener whether sentences are possible, permissible, necessary, and obligatory or wish. Auxiliaries which include the forms like be, can, will, shall, have, may, must and ought are those which indicate modality syntactically in some languages. There are some other languages which use inflectional forms of verbs to indicate mood (Katamba, 1993:222-3).

Subjects of this study are selected native speakers of the variant of Awwi (Xïmt’äŋa) who live in Addis Ababa. The study intends to examine the inflections of verbs in speech and writing used by the subjects of the study. There are also secondary sources for data gathering which are cross-checked by the informants. Convenient sampling technique is applied to choose native speakers of the variant. This is done because the speakers are available, and they can be representatives of the speech community because they are old enough in the community.

Accordingly, 35 native speakers are selected for elicitation, storytelling, questionnaire and interview. The data gathered from secondary sources should be more reliable so that the informants are needed to cross-check it.

Elicitation, storytelling, questionnaire, interview and certain written materials on verbs of the variant are used to gather data from subjects. In order to answer the stated questions of the study, the native speakers are asked to utter different words and paradigms using Swedish wordlist, and to tell various stories, like tales, riddles and legends in the variant language. Structured interview is also used to collect data from these informants. This interview facilitates objective analysis of the collected data. In addition to these, any written collection of the verbs in the mentioned language is used to

Table 1. Radical types of verbs.

Radical type	Root	Stem	Gloss
Mono-radical	-ŋ-	ŋi	‘be’
Bi-radical	f-s-	fäs-	‘take’
	x-r-	xär-	‘sleep’
	t-r-	tär-	‘come’
	z-j-	zïj-	‘drink’
	f-r	fïr-	‘go’
	x^{w}-r-	x^{w}ïr-	‘eat’
Tri-radical	k-rm-	kirm-	‘begin’
	w-rš-	wirš-	‘clean’
	l-gz-	ligz-	‘grow’
	w-k$^{'w}$-r-	wak$^{'w}$är-	‘ask’
	t’-w-w-	t’iwïw-	‘enter’
Quadri-radical	t-sm-m-	tismäm-	‘agree’
	g-rw-w-	garwïw-	‘dig’
	k’-ť-bs-	k’aťïlz-	‘burn’
	b-s-bs-	bisäbs-	‘decay’

support conclusion at the end of the study.

Finally, presentation and analysis of the data collected was done based on the objectives set at the beginning. Categories of verbs in the variant are first identified and described based on their stems and radicals. Then after, inflections of verbs to different tenses, aspects and moods are discussed using the collected paradigms through elicitation, storytelling, interview questionnaire and document analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis and description of the collected data can be done as follows. After the collection of data from subjects using elicitation, storytelling, questionnaire, interview, and written collections, qualitative analysis is made. The descriptions of verb inflections are purely using relevant morphological items/units like person markers, gender markers, number markers, tense markers, aspect markers, mood markers and others, not any statistical reference in the analysis. Finally, conclusions are given depending on the analyzed data, and recommendations are suggested based on the conclusions and facts in literature review.

Verb Inflections

This section, precisely deals with various descriptions and discussions about the inflectional forms of the verbs in Xïmt’äŋa.

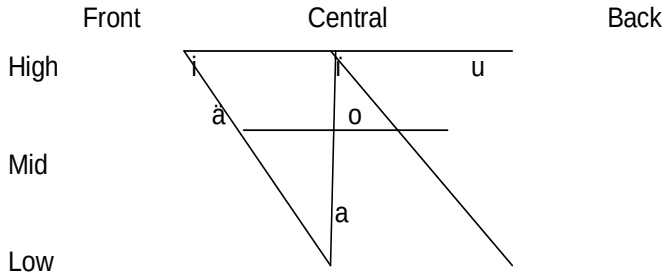

Figure 1. Consonant phonemes in Xïmt’äŋa.

Types of Verbs in Xïmt’äŋa

Verbs in Xïmt’äŋa are classified under different types based on the number of consonantal phonemes and vowel harmonies they contain.

Radicals[iv]

In Xïmt’äŋa, verbs are categorized as mono-, bi-, tri- and quadri-radicals based on the number of consonants found in the roots of the surface structures (Table 1). These forms have one, two, three and four consonants as shown in the Figure 1.

As shown in Figure 1, mono-radical verbs are few and the very common one is /-ŋ-/ which means ‘be’ form of verb to be. Bi-radical and tri-radical verbs are the most dominant ones which have different forms to attach aspectual infixes or vowels to their forms. The first groups of bi-radicals insert the vowel /ä/ while the second groups insert /ï/ after the first consonants to form the respective stems. Tri-radicals insert /i/ after the first consonants and the next consonants (third and fourth) follow each other without any insertion of vowel. The other groups of tri-radical receive vowels /a/ or /ï/ after the first consonants and /ä/ or /ï/ before the last consonants. The last radical types of verbs in Xïmt’äŋa are quadri-radicals. These are a few in number which take /a/ or /i/ after the first and /ï/ or /ä/ after the second consonants based on specific nature of the language variant. From these categories, bi- and tri-radicals are predominantly used in the language. Thus, I consider them in the analysis.

Stem Classes

In Xïmt’äŋa, verbs can also be divided into Type A, B and C, based on the stem patterns which certainly refer to the class of vowel(s) infixed between the first and the last radicals. Basically, gemination is not the predominant feature of the language variant verbs under study. So, the

main focus of this analysis lies on harmony or melody of vowels.

Type-A-verbs

These verbs are the bi-radical ones which are characterized by the insertion of /ä/ or /ï/ vowel between the first and second radicals of the root to form stem. These verbs can be exemplified as follows:

Perfective	**Imperfective**
1. jäŋ xär-u	3. jäŋ xär-a-kus
he sleep-pfct	he sleep-be-ipfct
'He slept.'	'He is sleeping.'
2. jäŋ zïj-u	4. jäŋ zïj-a-kus
he drink-pfct	he drink-be-ipfct
'He drank.'	'He is drinking.'

These verbs have the patterns **$c_1$äc$_2$-** and **$c_1$ïc$_2$-** for both perfective and imperfective aspects. On the other hand, some tri-radicals can be included under Type A verbs due to the fact that they insert the vowel /i/ between the first and the second radical of the roots as shown below:

Perfective	**Imperfective**
1. jäŋ kirm-u	3. jäŋ kirm-a-kus
he begin-pfct	he begin-be-ipfct
'He began.'	'He is beginning.'
2. jäŋ wirš-u	4. jäŋ wirš-a-kus
he clean-pfct	he clean-be-ipfct
'He cleaned.'	'He is cleaning.'

These verbs have **$c_1$ic$_2$c$_3$-** pattern for both perfective and imperfective aspects. Their similarity with bi-radicals lies on inserting one vowel after the first consonant.

Type -B- Verbs

Type B verbs are the verbs which are characterized by taking more than one vowel between the first and the last radicals in tri-radical roots. They insert /a/ and /ä/ or /i/ and /ï/ in the root to form stem which are less common in the language.

Perfective	**Imperfective**
1. jäŋ wak'wär-u	3. jäŋ wak$^{'w}$är-a-kus
he ask-pfct	he ask-be-ipfct
'He asked.'	'He is asking.'
2. jäŋ t'iwïw-u	4. jäŋ t'iwïw-a-kus
he enter-pfct	he enter-be-ipfct
'He entered.'	'He is entering.'

The stem patterns of the verbs under this category are **$c_1$ac$_2$äc$_3$-** and **$c_1$ic$_2$ïc$_3$-** for both perfective and imperfective aspects.

Type C Verbs

In Xïmt'äŋa, Type C verbs are those which have the feature of inserting the vowels /i/ and /ä/ or /a/ and /ï/ after the first and before the last radical in quadri-radical roots. It can be clearer in the following example.

Perfective	**Imperfective**
1. jäŋ tismäm-u	3. jäŋ tismäm-a-kus
he agree-pfct	he agree-be-ipfct
'He agreed.'	'He is agreeing.'
2. jäŋ garwïw-u	4. jäŋ garwïw-a-kus
he dig-pfct	he dig-be-ipfct
'He dig.'	'He is digging.'

In this case, the stem patterns for both aspects can be **$c_1$ic$_2$c$_3$äc$_4$-** and **$c_1$ac$_2$c$_3$ïc$_4$-** based on the specific verb features indicated above.

There are other quadri-radical verb roots which form their stem by inserting the vowels /a/ and /ï/ or /i/ and /ä/ after the first and second radicals. Here are the illustrations.

Perfective	**Imperfective**
1. jäŋ k'at'ïlz-u	3. jäŋ k'at'ïlz-a-kus
he burn-pfct	he burn-be-ipfct
'He burnt.'	'He is decaying.'
2. jäŋ bisäbs-u	jäŋ bisäbs-a-kus
he decay-pfct	he decay-be-ipfct
'He decayed.'	'He is decaying.'

The stem patterns for these verbs are **$c_1$ac$_2$ïc$_3$c$_4$-** and **$c_1$ic$_2$äc$_3$c$_4$-** which exist in both perfective and imperfective aspects. The difference between these and the preceding quadri-radicals is the position of third consonant.

In general, verbs in Xïmt'äŋa can be categorized under the above radical types and stem classes based on the consonantal and vowel phonemes patterned to build words/lexemes. Even if the verbs in the target language are very complicated and fused together, the above categorization highlights the notions of the verbs.

Verb Inflection in Xïmt'äŋa

Verb inflection is the process which attaches the affixations of composite elements to the stems to indicate different categories like person, number, gender, tense, aspect, modality and some syntactic functions (Appleyard, 1984:370). There are suffixes which indicate patterns including the actual forms of the basic auxiliary. Tenses are also marked by the attachment of suffixes.

Basically, there are two main aspect forms in the Awwi: Imperfective and perfective aspects. The imperfective aspect describes an action or event which is uncertain and ambiguously stated in time and space while the perfective indicates an action or event that is certain

(Appleyard, 1984:371).

In Xïmt'äŋa, specifically, verbs can be inflected for person, number, gender, aspect, tense and mood. In the following subsection, I will present and describe these inflectional forms.

Person, number and gender

The markers of person, number and gender in Xïmt'äŋa can be separated from verbs. These are totally suffixes which are attached to the verbs after tense markers. The suffixes can be shown as follows.

Person

1st ps. - kun	2nd pp. - k^{w}u
1st pp. - k^{w}un	3rd pms. - k^{w}u
2nd pms. - k^{w}u	3rd pfs. - ø
2nd pfs. - k^{w}u	3rd pp. - k^{w}u

The person markers in the above list are {-kun} and {-k^{w}un} for 1st person singular and plural respectively. The affix {-k^{w}u} which functions as portmanteau morpheme is common for 2nd and 3rd person singular and plural except for the 3rd person feminine singular shows no any marker {-ø}.

Number

Singular	**Plural**
1st p. -ø	-n
2nd p. -r	-rn
3r p. -ø	-rj

The above list shows that 1st and 3rd person singulars have no suffix to indicate number. The morphemes {-r}, {-n}, {-rn} and {-rj} are those which indicate 2nd person singular, 1st person plural, 2nd person plural and 3r person plural respectively. These suffixes mostly come before tense markers.

Gender

2nd pms.-ø	3rd pms. -ø
2nd pfs. -ø	3rd pfs. -čč

Gender is marked only for 3rd person feminine singular in Xïmt'äŋa. Here, the gender marker is {-čč} while others have no any marker to identify whether the subject of particular sentence is masculine or feminine.

The above three illustrations describe person, number and gender marking suffixes in simple present tense forms of the verbs, wït'j- 'run' and jïbb- 'buy' as follows.

1. jan wït'j-ä-kun
I run-pres-1st ps
'I run.'
2. kït wït'j-r-ä-k^{w}u
you run-s-pres-2nd p
'You run.'
3. jäŋ wït'j-ä-k^{w}u
he run-pres-3rd pms
'He runs.'
4. ŋïr wït'j-ä-čč
she run-pres-3rd pfs
'She runs.'
5. jïn wit'j-n-ä-k^{w}un
we run-pl-pres-1st p
'We run.'
6. kïttïn wït'j-rn-ä-k^{w}u
you (pl) run-pl-pres-2nd p
'You run.'
7. ŋaj wït'j-ŋ-ä-k^{w}u
they run-pl-pres-3rd p
'They run.'

The morphemes {-r}, {-n}, {-rn} and {-ŋ} show 2nd person singular, 1st person plural, 2nd person plural and 3rd person plural respectively while {-ä}, as we shall see later, indicates simple present tense form.

1. jan jïbb-ä-kun
I buy-pres-1st ps
'I buy.'
2. kït jïb-r-ä-k^{w}u
you buy-s-pres-2nd p
'You buy.'
3. jäŋ jïbb-ä-k^{w}u
he buy-pres-3rd pms
'He buys.'
4. ŋïr jibb-ä-čč
she buy -pres-3rd pfs
'She buys.'
5. jïn jïbb-n-ä-k^{w}un
we buy -pl-pres-1st p
'We buy.'
6. kïttïn jïbb-rn-ä-k^{w}u
you(pl) buy -pl-pres-2nd p
'You buy.'
7. ŋäj jibb-ŋ-ä-k^{w}u
they buy -pl-pres-3rd p
'They buy.'

From the given data, we can say that 1st person singular and 3rd person singular indicators are either fused in person markers or deleted[v] from the surface structures.

1. kït jïbb-r-ä-k^{w}u
you(m) buy-s-pres- 2nd p
'You (m) buy.'
2. kit jïbb-r-ä-k^{w}u
you(f) buy -s-pres- 2nd p
'You (f) buy.'
3. jäŋ jïbb-ä-k^{w}u
he buy-pres-3rd ps
'He buys.'
4. ŋïr jïbb-ä-čč
she buy-pres-3rd pfs
'She buys.'

As can be observed from the description, there is no any indicator for 2nd person masculine and feminine because there is no any difference in their surface structures. For 3rd person feminine singular, the morpheme {-čč} clearly shows the gender while in the masculine the indicator may be fused in the person indicator due to the fact that the difference between the two structures lies only on {- čč} and {-k^{w}u}.

Tense markers

Past tense

In Xïmt'äŋa, simple past tense shows the action which is completed before the time of speaking/writing. The morpheme used to indicate past tense in the variant language is {-u}. This morpheme is attached to a stem before the indicator of person for 1st person singular and plural and 3rd person plural, but for 2nd person singular and plural, and 3rd person masculine singular, it is suffixed at the end of the verb. And, *3rd* person feminine singular does not show any suffixation to describe past action. The following lists contain the verb *fäs-* 'take' which strengthens this idea.

1. jan fäs-u-n
I take-pst-1st ps
' I took.'

2. kït fäs –ä[6] -r-u
you take ep-s-pst
'You took.'

3. jäŋ fäs -u
he take-pst
'He took.'

4. ŋïr fäs -ä-čč
she take-ep-3rd pfs
'She took.'

5. jïn fäs-ä-n-u-n
we take-ep-pl-pst-1st p
'We took.'

6. kïttïn fäs-ä-rn-u
you(pl) take-ep-pl-pst
'You took.'

7. ŋaj fäs-u-ŋ
they take -pst-pl
'They took.'

It should be notified from the above data that person indicators are changed when the time of action is shifted. For instance, {-ŋ} is 1st person indicator in past tense and other persons (2nd and 3rd) do not undergo any suffixation for persons in past tense. Another point, here, is that the verbs undergo phonological process known as epenthesis[vi] to indicate stable phonotactic patterns in some surface structures. For example, there is vowel phoneme /ä/ in the above illustration whose function is not specified rather than balancing syllabic structures.

Non-past tenses (Present and Future)

Non-past tenses indicate the action which happens in the time of speaking/writing (simple present tense). They also indicate the action which happens after the time of speaking/writing (simple future).
Non-past tenses (present and future) in Xïmt'äŋa are described by suffixation of morpheme {-ä} on stems. In addition to this suffix, there are number, person or gender markers on verbs to make the stems free forms. We can understand these cases by taking the following structures. The verb stem for the structures is *tär-* 'come'.

1. jan tär-ä-kun
I come-pres-1st ps
'I come.'

2. kït tär-ä-k^{w}u
you come-pres-1st ps
'You come.'

3. jäŋ tär-ä-k^{w}u
he come-pres-3rd pms
'He comes.'

4. ŋïr tär-ä-čč
she come-pres-3rd pfs
'She comes.'

5. jïn tär-n-ä-k^{w}un
we come-pl-pres-1st p
'We come.'

6. kïttïn tär-n-ä-k^{w}u
you(pl) come-pl-pres-2nd p
'You come.'

7. ŋaj tär-ŋ-ä-k^{w}u
they come-pl-pres-3rd p
'They come.'

As exemplified above, the morpheme {-ä} points that the action in the sentences is accomplished at the moment of speaking/writing. We can also get the same morpheme representing future tense. The following illustrations are descriptions of such concept. The stem *t'az-* 'hit' is used in the construction.

jan t'az-ä-kun
I hit-fut-1st ps
'I will hit.'

2. ït t'az-ä-k^{w}u
you hit-fut-2nd ps
'You will hit.'

jäŋ t'az-ä-k^{w} u
he hit-fut-3rd pms
'He will hit.'

4. ŋïr t'az-ä-čč
she hit-fut-3rd pfs
'She will hit.'

5. jïn t'az-n-ä-k^{w}un
we hit-pl-fut-1st p
'We will hit.'

6. kïttïn t'az-rn-ä-k^{w}u
you(pl) hit-pl-fut-2nd p
'You will hit.'

7. ŋaj t'az-ŋ-ä-k^{w}u
they hit-pl-fut-3rd p
'They will hit.'

The aforementioned exemplification strengthens the concept which identifies the morpheme {-ä} as marker of future tenses. Hence, {-ä} expresses uncertainty, willingness and wish in certain construction.

Aspects

As explained in theoretical framework and research methodology section, aspect is the notion which describes an action or event that is whether completed in the time of speaking/writing (perfective) or in progress (Imperfective). With respect to this, there are two aspects of verb inflectional forms in Xïmt'äŋa: imperfective and perfective.

Imperfective aspect

In Xïmt'äŋa, the imperfective aspect is indicated by the suffixation of bound morpheme on the stems. The morpheme {-kus} can be easily identified in the structures

below. It indicates the action which is in progress. The stem of the verb is *bäb-* 'swim'.

1. jan bäb-a-kus
I swim-be-prog
'I am swimming.'

2.kït bäb-r-an-kus
you swim-s-be-prog
'You are swimming.'

3. jäŋ bäb-a-kus
he swim-be-prog
'He is swimming.'

4. ŋïr bäb-an-kus
she swim-be-prog
'She is swimming.'

5. jïn bäb-n-a-kus
we swim-pl-be-prog
'We are swimming.'

6. kïttïn bäb-r-an-kus
you (pl) swim-pl-be-prog
'You are swimming.'

7. ŋaj bäb-ŋ-aŋ-kus
they swim-pl-be-prog
'They are swimming.'

The morpheme {-kus} in the aforementioned structures indicates the action is on process during the time of speaking/writing. Thus, the action is not yet completed.

Perfective aspect

Perfective aspect of verbs in the target language is shown in the inflected form on simple past tense, but it is indicated in independent form (free form) in past perfect tense utterances. The concept of perfective aspect is related to the action which is completed before the time of speaking/writing. Thus, the morpheme {-u} is the one which carries the meaning of this notion. It can be seen in the following structures. The stem of the verb is *xär-*'sleep'.

1. jan xär-u-n
I sleep-pfct/pst-1st ps
'I slept.'
2. kït xär-i-r-u
you sleep-ep-s-pfct/pst
'You slept.'
3. jäŋ xär-u
he sleep-pfct/pst
'He took.'

4. ŋïr xär-ï-čč
she sleep-ep-3rd pfs
'She slept.'
5. jïn xär-n-u-n
we sleep-pl-pfct/pst-1st p
'We slept.'
6. kïttïn xär-ï-rn-u
you (pl) sleep-ep-pl-pfct/pst
'You slept.'

7. ŋaj xär-u-ŋ
they sleep-pfct/pst-pl
'They slept.'

In the aforementioned structures, the morpheme {-u}, which does not appear in imperfective aspect, shows past tense. It indicates the action which is already completed during the moment of speaking/writing. The vowels */i/* in 2nd person singular and /ï/ in 2nd person plural and 3rd person feminine singular are inserted in the process of epenthesis.

Mood

Mood is the property of verb which indicates obligation, necessity, permission, etc. in actions or events using either auxiliaries or inflectional forms in the main verbs. Many languages show the modality of an action by auxiliaries while some languages like Xïmt'äŋa of Awwi, indicate their mood using inflections. The categories of mood under this study are debitive mood and potential mood. These are referred to the names of mood taken from Katamba (1993:222).

Debitive mood

Debitive mood expresses an action that is obligatory in certain condition. Verbs in the language under study show this situation by adding suffixes of different types for different persons on their stems. The morpheme {-ïk'č} indicates debitive mood for 1st person singular while {-t} expresses the same mood for 2nd and 3rd person singulars. 3rd person plural has the suix {-t'} which again indicates debitive mood. On the other hand, *1st* and *2nd* person plurals do not show any suffix for the mood. This notion is elaborated as follows.

1. jan zïj-ïk'č-ä'
I drink-deb-pres
'I must drink.

2. kït zïj-t-ä
you drink-deb-pres
'You must drink.'

3. jäŋ zïj-t-ä
he drink-deb-pres
'He must drink.'

4. ŋïr zïj-t'-ä
she drink-deb-pres
'She must drink.'

5. jïn zïj-n-ä
we drink-pl-pres
'We must drink.'

6. kïttïn zïj-n-ä
you(pl) drnk-pl-pres
'You must drink.'

7. ŋaj zïj-ŋ-t'-ä
they drink-pl-deb-pres
'They must drink.'

The above illustrations indicate debitive mood in Xïmt'äŋa. In the data, *1st* person singular and *3rd* person plural debitive mood indicators are {-ik'č} and {-t'} respectively. These might occur due to some phonological processes while *1st* and *2nd* person plurals do not show any suffix for this purpose which could be deleted through time in the history of the language. Besides, the morpheme {-ä} is the present tense indicator as discussed earlier.

Potential mood

The markers of this mood emphasize the possibility or permission to do certain action. The description below

represents such idea. The stem of the verb is *fïr-* ‘go’.

1. jan fïr-č’č’-ä
I go-pot-pres
‘I can go.’
2. kït fïr-t’-ä
you go-pot-p
‘You can go.
3. jäŋ fïr-t’-ä
he go-pot-pres
‘He can go.
4. ŋïr fïr-t’-ä
I go-pot-pres
‘She can go.’
5. jïn fïr-ä-näwu
we go-press-pot
'We can go'
6. kïttïn fïr-ä-näwu
you (pl) go-pres-pot
‘You can go.’
7. ŋaj fïr-ä-näwu
they go-pres-pot
‘They can go.’

As shown above, the stem of the verbs is /fïr-/. In the process of assimilation[vii], the phoneme /r/ in 1st person singular is changed to /č’/ due to its neighboring phoneme /t’/ and forms gemination. The suffix {-čč} indicates potential mood in 1st person singular while {-t} describes this mood in *2nd* person masculine singular and 3rd person feminine singular, and {-t’} is for 3rd person masculine singular. On the other hand, the morpheme {-näwu} shows different feature which indicates both plural number and potential mood because it is attached to the plural forms of the subjects *we, you (plural)* and *they*.

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study was to investigate and reveal the verb inflection of Xïmt’äŋa-the variant of the Awwi language. To attain this objective, the study surveyed the linguistic and geographical information of the language. Previous studies on the variant language, theoretical frameworks and the methodology were incorporated in the study. Based on the data gathered, verbs are inflected for subject agreement (person, number and gender), tense, aspect and mood in various ways in the language. Person, number and gender in surface structures of the verbs are marked by various bound morphemes/suffixes which are discussed in detail under the discussion.

Xïmt’äŋa, with respect to tenses, has two tense distinctions: past and non-past (present and future). The past tense is marked by the morpheme {-u} while the non-past (present and future) tenses are marked by one and the same morpheme {-ä}. The verb stems in which this morpheme is found commonly describes present and future tenses.

Xïmt’äŋa has also other two grammatical aspects in the case of verbs: perfective and imperfective. Perfective aspects are formed in accordance with the past tenses of the language in which the marker morpheme is {-u}. Mostly, imperfective aspects are expressed by using the bound morpheme {-kus} which indicates the action in progress.

Mood is certainly another inflectional category of the target language. There are two classes of mood which show inflectional forms: debitive and potential mood. Debitive mood focuses on the obligation to do particular action, and potential mood deals with ability, potential and permission to perform an action. These classes are marked by different morphemes for different persons and numbers that are dealt with in discussion section.

Finally, there are some points to be suggested with regard to this variant language of Awwi. It is mentioned in the introduction section that various research works were conducted in the form of comparative studies. Even if the language was studied in relation to other variants, Xïmt’äŋa did not get the chance to be assessed alone in detail concerning morphological aspects. Therefore, attention should be given in the analysis of this variant language considering modern theoretical aspects of morphology. Besides, many people including scholars do not refer to the name of the speakers and this variant language. Hence, the speakers and their language should be named using their proper identities-Xämïr is the name of the society and Xïmt’äŋa is their variant language.

To conclude, it is my view that this study does not treat all the points that need to be done in the morphology of Xïmt’äŋa, but it spots ground for further research in similar direction. Thus, attention is needed to be given to this language which is spoken by thousands of people and bounded by Semitic speakers.

List of abbreviations and symbols

be	- the present forms of verb to be (am, is and are)
c	- consonant
deb	- debitive mood
ep	- epenthesis
f	- feminine
fut	- future tense
ipfct	- imperfective
m	- masculine
p	- plural
pfct	- perfective
pot	- potential mood
pres	- present tense
prog	- progressive action
pst	- past tense
s	- singular
1st ps	- first person singular
1st pp	- first person plural
2nd pms	- second person masculine singular
2nd pfs	- second person feminine singular
2nd pp	- second person plural
3rd pms	- third person masculine singular
3rd pfs	- third person feminine singular
3rd pp	- third person plural
ø	- zero morpheme
{ }	- enclosed morpheme

[ ] - enclosed phonetic transcription
/ / - enclosed phonemic transcription
/ - either, or
- - morpheme separator
( ) - option, meaning, or another way to say
‘ ’ - enclosed translation

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[i][Awwi] is formerly known by the name “Agaw”. (p.1)

[ii][Xïmt’aŋa] is the correct name to refer to “Khmtanga” which is incorrectly named by many people including scholars. (p.2)

[iii][Xïmt’äŋa] the scholar referred to the name as “Khamtanga”. (p.3)

[iv]Radicals are consonant phonemes which are found in the root of verbs. (p.9)
- Mono-radical: the root with one consonant.
- Bi-radical: the root with two consonants.
- Tri-radical: the root with three consonants.
- Quadri-radical: the root with four consonants.

[v]Deletion is the process of removing a sound or segment from the patterns of segments (O’grady et al. 1997:55). (p.15)

[vi]Epenthesis is the process of inserting syllabic or non-syllabic segments within the existing string of segments (O’grady et al. 1997:55). (p.16)

[vii]Assimilation is the process of resembling the future of neighboring phoneme to keep phonotactic patterns (O’gready et al. 1997:53). (P. 21)