

Re-examination of Amharyəst' Features

In their long history, the Betä Israel (self-name of Ethiopian Jews) did not have their own language, which was different from the surrounding communities. Until the beginning of the 19th century, the Betä Israel living in Gondar administrative region spoke a dialect known as Q^waräñña which is very close to Qəmant dialect cluster. Later on, the Betä Israel slowly abandoned Q^waräñña and adopted Amharic. Some Q^waräñña words are still preserved in the liturgy of Betä Israel although most of it is written in Gə'əz (Classical Ethiopic). The Amharic spoken by the Betä Israel and by their neighbors is not different, aside from some Christian religious terms, names, and expressions that the Ethiopian Jews avoided.

After the Betä Israel began immigrating to Israel in the 1980s and later on, Amharic became into contact with Hebrew and this is slowly giving rise to a variety which I termed *Amharyəst'*, a sort of Hebraized Amharic. Hence, the aim of this paper will be presenting the linguistic features of *Amharyəst'* which is heavily used by the immigrant generation and not by their children born in Israel.

The main difference between this variety and that of standard Amharic is in the area of lexicon, followed by phonology. Morphology shows only a slight variation while syntax is not affected at all. Regarding phonology, the differences are phoneme substitution, in particular of those Hebrew sounds which are not found in Amharic. With regard to the lexicon, Hebrew words are used where there is lack of equivalent forms in Amharic, or where the Amharic speakers are not aware of such equivalents.

The other interesting area of lexicon is the use of Hebrew-Amharic interlanguage forms, also known as “sandwich expressions.” In such instances, all the lexical items are from Hebrew while the grammatical affixes are from Amharic. Creative innovations are also another feature of the lexicon, although there are very few. Regarding morphology, *Amharyəst'* is characterized by pattern substitution in certain verbs.