

## Pronouns in Argobba

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**Abstract:** This study focuses on the morphosyntactic properties pronouns in Argobba, an endangered Ethio-Semitic language. The data for this study is collected from Shonke, where the language is used widely and actively by elders and the young generation. The study found that the subject, interrogative and demonstrative pronouns are primitive whereas the possessive, object and reciprocal pronouns are derived. It is also argued that the derived pronouns are lexicalized in the present day Argobba. Reflexive meaning is expressed by the base *dimah* ‘head’ and *hims* ‘soul’ suffixing possessive pronouns. Likewise, reciprocity is expressed by reduplicating *dimah* and *hims* with the connector morpheme *li*.

**Keywords:** pronouns, Argobba, Ethio-Semitic language, morphosyntactic properties

### 1. Introduction

Argobba is one of the seriously endangered Ethio-Semitic languages. It belongs to the South Ethio-Semitic subfamily together with Amharic, Harari and Gurage languages.

In different works, we find Argobba with different levels of endangerment. Batibo (2005:147), for instance, treats it as an extinct or nearly extinct language together with Ge’ez, Gafat, etc. On the word of Gabriel (1992:309), Argobba is in the process of extinction. Correspondingly, Leslau (1997:xv), considers it as a dying language (if not dead in some regions). In recent works, however, it is attested that Argobba is not an extinct language but a seriously endangered one (Getahun, 2009; Wetter, 2010).

On the other side of the fence, for some scholars Argobba is a dialect of Amharic. Bender and Fulas (1978:5), for instance, write, “Amharic does have one quite divergent dialect: Argobba. This is probably best considered as a ‘Muslim dialect.’” Correspondingly, Zelealem (1994:13) says, “I suggest that Argobba and Amharic are dialects of one another,

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not independent languages.” (Leslau, 1997:131) also brings to a close by saying “*The mutual intelligibility combined with many common features between Amharic and Argobba leads me to the conclusion that Argobba is an Amharic dialect*”.

However, counter to the assumptions forwarded by the above mentioned scholars, other researchers bear out that Argobba is an independent language. Waldron (1984:50) claims that although Argobba is closely related to Amharic, it is a distinct language. Likewise Wetter (2006, 2010), Getahun (2009, 2010) among others assert that Argobba is an independent language.

The main objective of this research is to describe the morphosyntactic properties of Argobba pronouns. The data for this study is from Shonke and Telha where there are fluent Argobba speakers. They call their language Argobba *afičči* ‘Argobba’s mouth’.

Pronouns in Argobba come out in two forms: independent and dependent pronouns. The independent pronouns are free lexical elements which take different syntactic positions carrying out different grammatical functions in a sentence. The dependent ones are attached to verbs and nouns. Those which attach to verbs are subject and object agreement pronoun affixes whereas those which attach to nouns are possessive pronoun suffixes which signify the possessor of the thing designated by the noun that the pronoun suffix is attached to.

This study comprises eight sections. In section 2, 3 and 4, subject, object and possessive pronouns are discussed respectively. In section 5, interrogative pronouns are addressed. Section 6 deals with reflexive and reciprocal pronouns. Section 7 focuses on demonstrative pronouns. Finally, section 8 sums up the discussion.

#### **2. Subject pronouns**

In Argobba, the following are independent personal pronouns which are associated with subject.

(1)	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
1	an	inna
2 m	ank	
f	antʃ	ankum
3 m	iwwat	
f	iyyat	illəm

The subject pronouns take a subject position in a sentence structure as shown in (2) below.

(2)	a. <b>an</b>	nare	intə	kəmise	met't' -eħu
	I	today	from	Kemissie	come.PF -1Ss
					‘I came from Kemissie today.’

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- b. **iyyat**    bə- məsgid    ama    xəyd -ətʃtʃ  
               she    to- mosque    to        go.PF -3Fs  
               ‘She went to a mosque.’
- c. **illəm**    hara                    ʃərrəh -əy  
               they    sheep                buy.PF -3PLs  
               ‘They bought a sheep.’

Based on the data collected from Aliyu Amba and Ankober, Leslau (1997:20), identifies the following subject pronoun forms.

(3)	1	äy(y) <sup>①</sup>
	sg. 2 m	ank
	f	anč
	3 m	kəssu
	f	kəssa
	pl. 1	əнна
	2	ənnakum (ənnankum)
	3	kəssäm

As can be observed from (3), the 1sg, 3sg and 3pl personal pronouns have completely different forms from the ones in (1). That is, the 1sg is *an* in Shonke and Telha but *əy(y)* in Aliyu Amba and Ankober. Likewise the third person pronoun forms *iwwat* ‘he’, *iyyat* ‘she’ and *illəm* ‘they’ in Shonke and Telha are *kissu*, *kissa* and *kissəm* respectively in Leslau’s data from Ankober and Aliyu Amba. Notice that the pronoun forms *kissu* ‘he’ and *kissa*, in Leslau’s data, are similar to the Amharic *issu* ‘he’ and *issa* ‘she’. This clearly shows that Leslau’s data is strongly affected by Amharic, the dominant language in the areas.

We also find the following list of subject pronouns in the *SLE Linguistic Report 22*, 1994, pp16.

(4)	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
	1	inna
	2m	ankum
	f	antʃ
	3m	illäβ
	f	ijjat

It is noted in the report that the Argobba informants in Shewa Robit, where the data was collected, had come from Shonke. In this case, one may anticipate that the subject pronouns will be similar, if not identical, to the ones in (1) from Shonke. However, as is

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<sup>①</sup> In Leslau (1997), the vowels /ä/ and /ə/ are used for mid central vowel and high central vowel respectively.

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observed from (4), there are some remarkable differences. For instance, the 3m and 3f subject pronouns, which are *iwwat* and *ijyat* respectively in (1), appear as *iwwat* and *ijjat* respectively in the *SLLE Linguistic Report*. As the data for this study asserts, these pronouns are possessive pronouns not subject pronouns. As to the 3pl pronoun form *iläβ* in (4), the Argobba informants for this study completely rejected it. It seems that the word is wrongly transcribed.

With regard to the grammatical features of the independent subject pronouns, it is worth mentioning that the pronouns could be dropped in a sentence without affecting the basic meaning. As we can see in the immediately following discussion, the subject agreement affixes on the respective verbs identify the subject pronouns. The subject independent pronouns are phonetically realized to give emphasis to the subject. Compare the structures in (5a) and (5b) below.

- (5) a. *iyat<sub>1</sub> nare bə-kemise ama xəyd -ətʃtʃ<sub>1</sub>*  
       she today to- Kemissie to go.PF -3Fs  
       ‘She went to Kemissie.’
- b. *nare bə- kemise ama xəyd -ətʃtʃ*  
       today to- Kemissie to go.PF -3Fs  
       ‘She went to Kemissie.’

In (5), the example in (5a) but not in (5b) could also have the meaning ‘it is SHE, not anybody else, who went to Kemissie today.’

In Argobba, besides the above mentioned independent subject pronouns, there are a set of subject agreement pronoun affixes which are attached to verbal stems. The subject agreement affixes can be a prefix or a suffix depending on the aspects of the verbal stems. Consider the following examples for perfective, gerundive and imperfective verbal stems derived from the consonantal root *s - b - r* ‘break’.

(6)	<b>Perfective Stem</b>	
	1	<i>səbbər -eḥu</i>
sg.	2m	<i>səbbər -ex</i>
	f	<i>səbbər -ef</i>
	3m	<i>səbbər -ø/-a</i> <sup>①</sup>
	f	<i>səbbər -ətʃtʃ</i>
pl.	1	<i>səbbər -əna</i>
	2	<i>səbbər -eḥum</i>
	3	<i>səbbər -əy</i>

<sup>①</sup> In the Argobba variety spoken in Shonke and Telha, the 3ms subject agreement in the perfective verb form is *-ø*; whereas in the Argobba variety spoken in Gacheni, Aliyu Amba and surrounding areas, the pronoun agreement is *-a*.

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(7)		<b>Gerundive Stem</b>
	1	səbɪrr -e
sg.	2m	səbɪrr -əx <sup>①</sup>
	f	səbɪrr -əf
	3m	səbɪrr -o
	f	səbɪrr -a
pl.	1	səbɪrr -ənnə
	2	səbɪrr -əñum
	3	səbɪrr -əm
(8)		<b>Imperfective Stem</b>
	1	səbr -ill -əñu
Sg.	2m	(tɨ)- səbr -ill -ex
	f	(ti-) səbr -ill -if
	3m	(yɨ) səbr -əl -ø
	f	(tɨ) səbr -ill -ətɪf
Pl.	1	innɨ səbr -inna
	2	(tɨ) səbr -u- ill -uñum
	3	(yɨ) səbr -u -ill -əy

As is observed from the examples in (6) and (7), the subject pronouns are suffixes in perfective and gerundive verbs. In the imperfective stem (8), with the exception of 1s, there are prefixes which are attached to the verbal stem, and suffixes attached to the auxiliary. As can be observed from the examples in (8) again, for 3ms pronoun, there is no phonetically realized suffix agreement pronoun following the auxiliary. In the contrary, there is no auxiliary for 1pl pronoun.

In Argobba, like in other sister languages such as Amharic, the subject agreement pronouns are obligatory. What makes Argobba different from Amharic, for instance, is the prefix agreement pronouns in the imperfective verb forms are optional. Furthermore, in the imperfective stem, the subject is commonly identified from the subject pronoun suffix attached to the auxiliary. For instance, *səbr-ill-ətɪf* ‘She breaks / will break’ is more acceptable than *tɨ-səbr-ill-ətɪf*.

Before closing this subsection, let us make one final remark about the subject pronoun affixes with the gerundive verb forms. The verb forms can go with the past auxiliary *imbər* ‘was/were’. In this case, both the verb stem and the auxiliary carry suffix pronoun agreements as exemplified in (9).

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<sup>①</sup> The 2s subject pronoun suffixes in the gerundive stem are -əx and -əf which are -ex and -ef respectively in the perfective stem.

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(9)	1	səbɪrr -e	imbər -eħu
sg.	2m	səbɪrr -əx	imbər -ex
	f	səbɪrr -əf	imbər -ef
	3m	səbɪrr -o	imbər -ø
	f	səbɪrr -a	imbər -ətʃf
pl.	1	səbɪrr -ənnə	imbər -ena
	2	səbɪrr -əħum	imbər -eħum
	3	səbɪrr -əm	imbər -əy

Notice that the pronoun suffixes attached to the auxiliary are identical to the ones attached to the perfective verb stem.

### **3. Possessive pronouns**

Based on the data collected from Shonke and Telha, the following are the possessive personal pronouns in the language.

(10)	sg.	1	yyo
		2m	ax
		f	aʃ
		3m	iwwat
		f	yyat
	pl.	1	inna
		2	axum
		3	illəm

When we closely look at the pronouns in (10), with the exception of the 1sg and the second person possessive pronouns, the rest are similar to the subject pronoun forms shown in (1). The 1sg and the second pronouns have completely different forms from their subject pronoun counterparts. However, the 1pl and the third person pronouns are interrelated. Let us compare the two pronoun forms side by side as follows.

(11)	inna ‘we’	inna ‘our’
	iwwat ‘he’	iwwat ‘his’
	yyat ‘she’	yyat ‘her’
	illəm ‘they’	illəm ‘their’

As can be learnt from these examples, the phonetic similarity between the subject and the possessive pronouns shows that they have close relationship.

With the exception of the second person, the rest of the possessive pronouns uniformly begin with the vowel /i/. This uniformity along with their similarity in form with the subject pronoun forms doubtlessly inspires one to be inquisitive to closely examine the internal structures of the pronouns. Following Getahun (2009), the meeting of the mid

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central vowel /ə/ and the high central vowel /ɨ/ results in the high front vowel /i/ in the language. This supposition can be attested in the following examples.

- (12) a. /lə- ih -u/            [lihu]        ‘for his brother’  
           for- brother -his  
       b. ə- ih -u/            [ihu]        ‘his brother’s’  
           of- brother -his

In light of this, it may seem plausible to argue that the possessive pronouns are derived from their corresponding independent subject pronouns and the genitive morpheme ə- ‘of’. Hence the possessive pronouns *inna*, *iwwat*, *illəm* and *iyyat* are derived in the following manner.

$$(13) \quad \left( \begin{array}{c} \text{ə-} \end{array} \right) + \left( \begin{array}{c} \text{inna} \\ \text{iwwat} \\ \text{iyyat} \\ \text{illəm} \end{array} \right) \Rightarrow \left( \begin{array}{c} \text{inna} \\ \text{iwwat} \\ \text{iyyat} \\ \text{illəm} \end{array} \right)$$

It seems that the derivation rule in (13) can be applied to the derivation of the second person possessive pronouns *ax* ‘your (m)’, *af* ‘your (f)’ and *axum* ‘your (pl.)’ using phonological processes such as deletion and spirantization.

As the language does not allow a sequence of two vowels, the genitive ə- will be deleted; because the initial sound of the subject pronouns *ank* ‘you(m)’, *antf* ‘you(f)’ and *ankum* ‘you(pl)’ is /a/. Next, *n*-deletion and spirantization will take place.

The arguments raised so far lead us to claim that possessive pronouns in Argobba are not primitive but derived. It should, however, be noted that synchronically the pronouns are lexicalized items.

In Leslau (1997), there is no possessive pronoun at the lexical level. According to him, possession is expressed by *yə-* + *noun/ pronoun* structure. For instance, the possessive form *yank* ‘your’ is constituted by *yə-* ‘of’ and *ank* ‘you’. As both *yə-* and *ank* can co-occur with other constituents forming different phrase structures, it is possible to argue that *yank* ‘your’ is not at a lexical but at a phrasal level. This supposition is substantiated by the genitive NP structures in the language. That is, the *yə-* + *noun* structure is used to express different genitive meanings such as locative, temporal, source etc. as exemplified in (14) below.

- (14) a. *yə- gat[tjəni*        *səw*  
           of- Gacheni        person  
           ‘the man from Gacheni’  
       b. *yə- huma/nare*        *zinaw*  
           of- today            rain

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‘the rain of today’  
 c. *yə- siray*                      *dabbo*  
 of- weat                      bread  
 ‘the bread made of wheat’

Another issue that confirms the proposed idea is that the structures observed in (Leslau, 1997) are exactly the same as the ones in Amharic. In Amharic, the genitive prefix *yə-* co-occurs with pronouns and nouns to express possessive and other genitive meanings. Hence, it is plausible to argue that the structure to express possession in Leslau (1997) is due to the influence of Amharic.

Another source of data for possessive pronoun is the *SLLE Report 22*, 1994, pp16. In the Report, however, the data is confused and wrongly transcribed. For instance, the pronoun form *iwwat*, which is treated as the 3m subject pronoun is also considered as the 2m possessive pronoun. Similarly we also find *ijjat* considered ambiguously to denote 3fs subject and possessive pronoun. The 3ms possessive pronoun is wrongly transcribed as *iwat*. The data for this study, therefore, asserts that the data in the report is not reliable to stand for the pronouns in the language.

More to the point, there are dependent pronouns which are suffixed to nouns. The following are the possessive suffix pronouns with the noun *ih* ‘brother’.

- |          |    |                 |
|----------|----|-----------------|
| (15) sg. | 1  | <i>ih -iyye</i> |
|          | 2m | <i>ih -x</i>    |
|          | f  | <i>ih -f</i>    |
|          | 3m | <i>ih -u</i>    |
|          | f  | <i>ih -a</i>    |
| pl.      | 1  | <i>ih -no</i>   |
|          | 2  | <i>ih -ħum</i>  |
|          | 3  | <i>ih -əm</i>   |

Unlike the independent pronouns, these pronoun suffixes are attached to possessed nouns. The independent possessive pronouns specify the following head noun in an NP structure. Compare the structures in (16) for the meaning ‘Her brother came.’

- |         |              |                                |              |
|---------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| (16) a. | <i>iyya</i>  | <i>ih -tʃ tʃi</i> <sup>①</sup> | <i>mət't</i> |
|         | her          | brother -DEF                   | come.PF      |
| b.      | <i>ih -a</i> | <i>mət't</i>                   |              |
|         | brother -her | come.PF                        |              |

In (16a), *iyya* ‘her’ specifies *ih* ‘brother’ occurring preceding it. In (16b), the possessive

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<sup>①</sup> In Argobba, unlike its sister language Amharic, a nominal head specified by a possessive pronoun obligatorily bears a definite article suffix.



suffix /-a/ is attached to *ih* for the same meaning.

#### 4. Object pronouns

In Argobba, the following are independent object pronouns.

(17)	sg.	1	iyyon
		2m	axon
		f	aʃon
		3m	iwwaton
		f	iyyatton
	pl.	1	innan
		2	axumin
		3	illəmin

When we closely look at the internal structure of the object pronouns in (17), we learn that with the exception of 1pl the rest end with *-on* /*-in*<sup>①</sup>. Since the object case marker is *-n* in the language (Getahun, 2009), one may presume that it surfaces as *-on* with singular object pronouns and as *-in* with the plural ones. With regard to the base, exclusive of the third person, it seems that the bases for the object pronouns suffixes are their corresponding possessive pronouns. Hence, for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> persons, the object pronouns are derived as *possessive pronoun* + *-on/-in*. For the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, the base is the subject pronoun and the object pronouns are derived as *subject pronoun* + *-on/-in*.

The non-third object pronouns are, therefore, derived by *possessive pronoun* + *-on/-in*. The third person object pronouns, on the other hand, are derived from the corresponding subject pronoun form and the object marker *-on/-in*. The derivation of the object pronouns can be summarized as in (18).

(18) Possessive Base	Object Case Suffix	Object Pronoun Form
iyyo	-on	iyyon
ax	-on	axon
aʃ	-on	aʃon
inna	-in	innan
axum	-in	axumin
Subject Base	Object Case Suffix	Object Pronoun Form
iwwat	-on	iwwaton
iyyat	-on	iyyatton
illəm	-in	illəmin

Although the derivation of the object pronouns is like what we have argued so far, in the

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<sup>①</sup> The first person plural object pronoun is /innan/ because the base stem ends with the vowel /a/.

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present day Argobba, they are strongly lexicalized.

As Argobba is an SOV language, the above mentioned object pronouns can be used as a complement of a transitive verb. Consider the structures in (19) below.

- (19) a. k'əmərə      *ǎwwaton*      səddəw -ətʃtʃ -əy  
          Kemera      him                    insult.PF -3FSs -3MSo  
          ‘Kemera insulted him.’
- b. musa            *ǎyyaton*            idd -əya -əl -ø  
          Musa            her                    love.IMPF-3FSO -AUX-3MSs  
          ‘Musa loves her.’
- c. fātuma          *ǎlləmin*            məxxər -ətʃtʃ -eyem  
          Fatuma          them                  advise.PF -3FSs -3PLo  
          ‘She advised them.’

In Argobba, there are also dependent object pronouns which are suffixed to a verb following the subject pronoun suffix. Consider the following examples.

- (20) a. fātuma<sub>1</sub>          k'əmərə -n<sub>2</sub>          gərrəf -ətʃtʃ<sub>1</sub> -əya<sub>2</sub>  
          Fatuma          Kemera -ACC      whip.PF -3FSs -3FSO  
          ‘Fatuma whipped Kemera.’
- b. fātuma<sub>1</sub>          lə- k'əmərə -n<sub>2</sub>      giziʔ          haw -ətʃtʃ<sub>1</sub> -əya<sub>2</sub>  
          Fatuma          to- Kemera      money      give.PF -3FSs -3FSO  
          ‘Fatuma gave money to Kemera.’

The object pronoun suffixes vary depending on different aspects. Getahun (2009:113) summarizes the different forms as follows.

(21)		<u>Perfective</u>	<u>Imperfective</u>	<u>Gerundive</u>
sg.	1	-əŋŋ	-əŋŋ	-əyye
	2m	-əx	-əx	-əkk
	f	-əʃ	-əʃ	-ətʃtʃ
3m		-əy	-əbb	-əyy
	f	-əya	-əbba	-əyya
pl.	1	-əna	-əna	-ənna
	2	-əhum	-əhum	-əkkum
	3	-əyem	-əbbem	-əyyem

Let us consider the following examples with perfective, imperfective and gerundive verb forms derived from the root *n-k-s* ‘bite’.

- (22) a. wəʃa -tʃ tʃi          musa -n          nəkkəs -ø -əy  
          dog -DEF.M          Musa -ACC      bite.PF -3MSs -3MSo  
          ‘The dog bit Musa.’

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- b. wefa -tj tji            musa -n            yi- nəks -əbb -əl -ø  
     dog -DEF.M            Musa -ACC           IMPF- bite -3Mso -AUX -3MSs  
     ‘The dog will bit Musa.’
- c. wefa -tj tji            musa -n            nəkiss -o -əyy -əl -ø  
     dog -DEF.M            Musa -ACC           bite.GER -3MSs -3Mso -AUX -3MSs  
     ‘The dog has bitten Musa.’

### 5. Interrogative pronouns

The following are interrogative pronouns in the language.

- (23) imbəla            ‘what’  
     tet                    ‘where’  
     mijje                ‘how many/much’  
     amett                ‘how’  
     man                 ‘who’  
     mətʃtʃe            ‘when’  
     limbəla <sup>①</sup>            ‘why’

The interrogative pronouns take different positions such as subject, object and adverbial positions in a sentence. The structures in (24) clearly show the case in point.

- (24) a. **man**            bet                    ʃerrəh -ø?  
     who                house                buy.PF -3MSs  
     ‘who bought a house?’
- b. musa                **imbəla**            ʃerrəh -ø?  
     Musa                what                 buy.PF -3MSs  
     ‘what did Musa buy?’
- c. musa                **mətʃtʃe**            bet                    ʃerrəh -ø?  
     Musa                when                house                buy.PF -3MSs  
     ‘When did Musa buy a house?’
- d. musa                **tet**                    xəyd -ø?  
     Musa                where                go.PF -3MSs  
     ‘Where did Musa go?’

### 6. Reflexive and reciprocal pronouns

Reflexive and reciprocal expressions are conveyed by using *dimah* ‘head’ and *hims* ‘soul’ as a base in the language. The reflexive meaning is expressed by *dimah* ‘head’ and *hims* ‘soul’ attaching possessive suffix pronouns. The reflexive forms surface in the

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<sup>①</sup> It is possible to argue that limbəla ‘why’ is a derivative of the preposition lə- ‘for’ and the interrogative pronoun imbəla ‘what’.

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following paradigms.

(25) <i>dimah -iyye / hims -iyye</i>	‘myself’
<i>dimah -ix / hims -ix</i>	‘yourself (m)’
<i>dimah -if / hims -if</i>	‘yourself (f)’
<i>dimah -u / hims -u</i>	‘himself’
<i>dimah -a / hims -a</i>	‘herself’
<i>dimah -ino / hims -ino</i>	‘ourselves’
<i>dimah -ihum / hims -ihum</i>	‘yourselves’
<i>dimah -əm / hims -əm</i>	‘themselves’

The pronouns can serve as complements or objects of a transitive verb and a preposition. In their function as an object, the forms obligatorily require the accusative morpheme *-n*, but not in their use as a complement to a preposition as shown in (26).

(26) a. <i>musa</i>	<i>hims -u -n</i>	<i>gəddəl -ø</i>	
Musa	soul -POSS.3MS -ACC	kill.PF -3MSs	
‘Musa committed suicide.’			
b. <i>musa</i>	<i>lə- hims -u</i>	<i>səro</i>	<i>ferrəh -ø</i>
Musa	for- soul -POSS.3MS	clothes	buy.PF -3MSs
‘Musa bought a dress for himself.’			

Coming back to the reciprocal forms, the reciprocal pronouns are derived by reduplicating *dimah* ‘head’ and *hims* ‘soul’ with the linking element *li-* between the reduplicated elements. Consider the following examples.

(27) a. <i>wɛʃa-tʃtʃ</i>	<i>hims li- hims -əm</i>	<i>innakkəs -əy</i>
dog-PL	soul for- soul -POSS.3PL	RECP.bite.PF -3PLs
‘The dogs bit each other.’		
b. <i>səw-atʃtʃ</i>	<i>dimah li- dimah -əm</i>	<i>iggəddəl -əy</i>
person-PL	head for- head -POSS.1PL	RECP.kill.PF -3PLs
‘The men killed each other.’		

Make a note that in (27), plural possessive pronoun suffixes are attached to the reduplicated pronoun. Notice that the verbs are also marked for the reciprocity.

**7. Demonstrative pronouns**

In the Argobba variety spoken in Shonke and Telha, besides proximal and distal distinction, the demonstratives are marked for number as shown in (28).

(28) <i>ni</i>	‘this’
<i>ʔo</i>	‘that’
<i>innen</i>	‘these’
<i>inno</i>	‘those’

### *Getahun Amare*

From the Argobba variety spoken in Ankober and Aliyu Amba, Leslau (1997:23-25) identifies the following demonstrative pronouns. <sup>①</sup>

(29) Near	Sg.	m.	hud
		f.	huy
Far	Sg.	m.	[o:]d
		f.	[o:]y
Near	Pl.		hulläm
Far	Pl.		(w)[o:]lläm

In Argobba, unlike its sister languages such as Amharic, when the demonstratives specify singular nominal heads, the heads obligatorily bear definite article suffixes. Consider the examples in (30).

- (30) a. ni        bet -itftji  
          this     house -DEF.M  
          ‘this house’
- b. \*ni        bet  
          this     house
- c. ?o        niŋtj -iti  
          that     woman -DEF.F  
          ‘that woman’
- d. \*?o        niŋtja  
          that     woman

As can be learned from the example in (30), a demonstrative and a definite suffix co-occur in the language.

### **8. Conclusion**

This paper described the morphosyntactic structure of pronouns in Argobba, one of the seriously endangered Ethio-Semitic languages. The data for this study is from the Shonke variety spoken in Shonke and Telha areas in Amhara Regional State. Some different pronoun forms are found in *SLLE Report 22* (1994) and Leslau (1997). It seems that the data in the *SLLE Report 22* (1994) is somewhat awkward and wrongly transcribed. Then again, the data in Leslau (1997) is from the variety spoken in Aliyu Amba and Ankober, which is highly affected by Amharic.

With regard to personal pronouns, this study found that the subject pronouns are primitive whereas possessive and object pronouns are derived but are lexicalized. It is argued that the possessive pronouns are derived from the genitive morpheme ə- 'of' and the

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<sup>①</sup> Nonetheless, the forms are not in use in the present day Argobba.

### *Pronouns in Argobba*

subject pronouns. The derivation of object pronouns is by the accusative case morpheme and the subject or the possessive personal pronoun bases. The accusative case morpheme *-on/-in* is attached to subject and possessive pronouns to derive the third and the non-third person object pronouns respectively.

In this study, both independent and dependent subject, possessive and object pronouns are identified. The dependent subject pronouns are prefixes and suffixes whereas the dependent pronouns for possessive and object are consistently suffixes.

It is also found that reflexive meaning is expressed by the base *dimah* 'head' and *hims* 'soul' and a possessive suffix. Reciprocity is derived by reduplicating *dimah* 'head' and *hims* 'soul', with the linking morpheme *li-*. Interrogative and demonstrative pronouns are identified at a lexical level.

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