Amharic Relatives and Possessives: Definiteness, Agreement, and the Linker

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Ouhalla's (2004) valuable discussion of relativized and possessed noun phrases in Amharic leaves a number of questions open. Foremost among these is the placement of the linker element *yä-*. Starting from an analysis of relative clauses and possessors as predicates of their ''heads,'' this article develops a syntax of complex noun phrases in Amharic that explains the raison d'être and placement of *yä-*, and also accommodates facts about definiteness marking and agreement in the Amharic complex noun phrase that have hitherto largely escaped attention or analysis. The analysis emphasizes the role of Predicate Inversion and head movement in syntax, and it confirms and extends the minimalist Agree- and phase-based approach to syntactic relationships.

Keywords: Agree, relative clause, possessor, Predicate Inversion, linker, phase, head movement, definiteness, gender agreement, Amharic

1 Introduction

Ouhalla (2004) presents an interesting perspective on the syntax of Semitic relativized and possessed noun phrases. The central ingredients of his analysis are that relative clauses originate in the same DP-internal specifier positions where possessors are also base-generated and that relative clauses vary parametrically with respect to whether they are introduced by a C head, as in English or Hebrew, or by a D head, as Ouhalla argues is the case in Arabic and Amharic, the foci of his article. Arabic and Amharic differ in that, in the latter, the relative clause's TP raises to Spec,DP, thus delivering a word order in which the D head of the relative clause surfaces in final position.

Ouhalla's analysis of Amharic (1a) (his (19), from Mullen 1986:386) can thus be summed up as in (1b) (see Ouhalla 2004:296).[1]

(1) a. lïjj-u   yä-gäddälä-w   ïbaab
      child-DEF.M YÄ-killed-DEF.M snake
      'the snake the boy killed'

    b. $[_{DP}$ D $[_{NumP}[_{DP}[_{TP}$ lïjj-u yä-gäddälä$]_i$ $[_{D'}$ D = -w $t_i]]$ $[_{Num'}$ Num $[_{NP}$ ïbaab$]]]]$

    What is particularly valuable in Ouhalla's analysis of the syntax of the Amharic complex noun phrase is its assimilation of the *yä-* in relativized noun phrases (1a) and the *yä-* in possessed noun phrases (2).[2]

(2) a. yä-lïjj-u   bet
      YÄ-child-DEF.M house
      'the boy's house'

    b. yä-tïllïk'-u   lïjj   däbtär
      YÄ-big-DEF.M child notebook
      'the big boy's notebook'

Ouhalla treats both as a genitival Case particle, and he takes the need for a Case particle on Amharic relative clauses to be a corollary of his DP analysis of Amharic relatives (as depicted in (1b)). Its DP status does not in itself guarantee, however, that the relative is subject to the Case Filter, recast in Chomsky 1986 as the Visibility Condition on argument chains: the relative clause (whether CP or DP) is a predicate of the head noun's projection, not an argument—hence, regardless of its categorial status, uninterested in and therefore ineligible for structural Case assignment.[3] Moreover, an approach to *yä-* as a Case particle would need to explain why *yä-* appears in different positions in relativized and possessed noun phrases: while in the possessed

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[1] My orthography for the Amharic examples differs slightly from Ouhalla's, to bring it in line with the orthographic conventions used in other work (e.g., Demeke 2003).

[2] The fact that *yä-* shows up in relativized and possessed noun phrases led Fulass (1972) to analyze the latter in terms of the former; that is, he claimed that possessed noun phrases involve a structure featuring a reduced relative clause, with (2a) underlyingly represented as something like 'the house the boy owns'. A derivation of possessed noun phrases built on a reduced relative clause structure leads to major difficulties, however, in ensuring that the marker *yä-* as well as the definiteness particle will show up on the possessor: since in relativized noun phrases these markers are hosted by the finite verb of the relative clause, a mechanism would need to be introduced to ''transfer'' them, in possessed noun phrases, from the abstract verb of the relative clause to the subject of the relative clause. (Fulass (1972) formulates such a mechanism in terms of then-current transformational machinery, but it would be difficult to update that mechanism to make it compatible with current theoretical assumptions.) Ouhalla's analysis faces much the same problem, in precisely the opposite direction, since it assimilates relative clauses to possessors. The analysis to be unfolded here does not need any special mechanisms to ensure that the linker and the definiteness particle have the appropriate hosts.

[3] The fact that predicate nominals and predicative adjectives do, in many languages of the world, surface with some sort of case morphology does not show that predicates are (let alone must be) *assigned structural* Case. The well-known Latin and Icelandic examples of ''case agreement'' (whereby the predicate and its subject agree in case) do not instantiate Case assignment at all. Also, the dedicated lexical case particles occurring on predicate nominals in Slavic (instrumental) and Hungarian (dative) can arguably be analyzed as spell-outs of the functional head of the nominal small clause (*X* in the structures to be provided below); they are similar in all relevant respects to prepositions relating predicates to their subjects (such as English *for* in *I take you for a fool* and *as* in *I regard him as a fool*), for which Aarts (1992), Bowers (1993), and Starke (1995), among others, have motivated an analysis that treats them as lexicalizations of the functional head of a small clause (see Den Dikken 2006 for fuller discussion).

noun phrases in (2) *yä-* precedes the entire DP that it is supposed to Case-mark (the possessor), in the relativized noun phrase in (1a) *yä-* surfaces inside the relative clause, prefixed to its finite verb. Ouhalla's analysis is not amenable to a narrow-syntax analysis of these *yä*-placement facts along the lines of the account outlined here, for reasons spelled out below. Relegating the account of *yä*-placement to the PF component (as Ouhalla (2004:295–296) suggests in passing) would make it difficult to refer to the morphosyntactic information that seems to regulate the different positioning of *yä-* in (1a) and (2).

In this article, I will disentangle the complex empirical generalizations underlying the surface syntactic patterns of *yä*-placement, definiteness marking, and ϕ-feature agreement in Amharic relativized and possessed noun phrases (many of which have not been uncovered in full detail in the literature; see, e.g., Fulass 1972, Halefom 1994:chap. 3, Kapeliuk 1994, Yimam 1996, Demeke 2001). I will also provide a narrow-syntax account of the structure and derivation of the Amharic complex noun phrase from the point of view of the minimalist theory of locality and Agree, contributing to our understanding of the syntax of the noun phrase and to minimalist syntactic theory.

2 The Marker *yä-*: A Linker

Amharic possessors and relative clauses are obligatorily marked with the prefix *yä-*, as we have seen. I agree with Ouhalla (2004) in generating possessors and relative clauses in the same structural position, but I diverge from Ouhalla's approach in two important respects. Rather than placing possessors and relative clauses in specifier positions underlyingly (as modifiers), as does Ouhalla, I base-generate them as predicates, to the right of their subject (the "head" NP) and raise them to an A-specifier position, via Predicate Inversion, as in (3a). The obligatory occurrence of the morpheme *yä-* is a reflex of this Predicate Inversion process: *yä-* functions as a *linker* of the possessor or relative clause and its "head," serving the same purpose as English *of* in phrases like *the land of the free and the home of the brave* or *that oven of an office* (see (3b) for a spell-out of the analysis of the latter).

(3) a. $[_{DP} D [_{FP}[_{Pred} YP]_j [_{F'} X_i + F [_{XP=SC}[_{Subj} (\ldots) NP] [_{X'} t_i t_j]]]]]$

b. $[_{DP} that [_{FP}[_{Pred} oven]_j [_{F'} X_i + F = of [_{XP=SC}[_{Subj} an office] [_{X'} t_i t_j]]]]]$

On this analysis, Amharic *yä-* originates neither as a subconstituent of nor, as in Ouhalla's analysis, as a Case marker on the possessor or relative clause. Let me spell my underlying assumptions out in a little more detail before we proceed.

In Den Dikken 1995a, 2006 (see also Den Dikken and Singhapreecha 2004, with specific reference to nominal contexts), I argue at length that linkers are introduced in the syntactic structure as a by-product of the application of Predicate Inversion—a movement operation by which a predicate raises across its subject into a higher A-position, as depicted in (3a).[4] Such movement

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[4] Both possessors and relative clauses are represented underlyingly as predicates. On possessors as (parts of) predicates, see especially Den Dikken 1995b:chap. 3. There, the possessor is structurally projected as the complement of a

apparently violates the Minimal Link Condition. To render it legitimate, the functional head of the small clause within which the underlying predication relation is established (here labeled *X*) must be raised to an immediately small-clause-external functional head, labeled *F* in (3).[5] Movement of X to F renders Spec,XP (the small-clause subject position) and Spec,FP (the landing site of the raised predicate) equidistant, making movement grammatical. But before movement can happen, F, the attracting head, must first be able to establish an Agree relationship with the small-clause predicate. The small clause, XP, is propositional, and by that criterion it qualifies as a *phase* (in the sense of Chomsky 2000, 2001). The subject of the small clause is on the edge of XP; but its predicate originates in the complement domain of the phase head X and is hence invisible to outside probes. Here again, X-to-F movement comes to the rescue: as I argue in detail in Den Dikken 2006:chap. 4 (see also section 5 below), movement of the functional head of the small clause up to F *extends* the phasehood of the small-clause XP up to FP, the projection of the landing site of the functional head of the small clause. Once X has raised to F, FP becomes the extended phase, and probing by F and movement to Spec,FP transpire entirely within the confines of the extended phase FP. With X-to-F movement making Spec,XP and Spec,FP equidistant and extending phasehood from XP to FP, Predicate Inversion can proceed legitimately; without X-to-F movement, by contrast, raising the small-clause predicate to an XP-external A-position would be illicit. The obligatoriness of X-to-F raising thus being ensured theoretically, we can capitalize on its application to derive the emergence of semantically meaningless copular elements (linkers) in Predicate Inversion constructions, by treating these linkers as lexicalizations of the head F in (3).

In Amharic, the phonological form of the linker in complex noun phrases is *yä-*. Amharic applies Predicate Inversion to both noun-phrase-internal possessors and relative clauses (as illustrated in (4)).

(4) $[_{DP}$ D $[_{FP}[_{Pred}$ YP=POSSESSOR/RELATIVE CLAUSE$]_j$ $[_{F'}$ X$_i$+F=yä- $[_{XP=SC}[_{Subj}$ (…) NP] $[_{X'}$ t$_i$ t$_j$]]]]]]

As a result of the application of Predicate Inversion, the linker *yä-* shows up in Amharic DPs

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(dative) preposition, with PP serving as the predicate of the possessum, but to keep the structures in this article simple, I abstract away from the PP structure (not thereby meaning to discard it). On relative clauses as predicates of DP-internal small clauses, see Den Dikken and Singhapreecha 2004, where this approach is supported by various types of crosslinguistic evidence.

[5] The labels *X* and *F* are not significant in the present context. In Den Dikken 2006, I call X a RELATOR, a general ingredient of subject-predicate relationships in syntax, and F a LINKER, a facilitator of Predicate Inversion; but I emphasize that X and F are not designated lexical categories.

featuring a full-nominal[6] possessor or relative clause.[7] By overtly raising into Spec,FP, Amharic possessors and relative clauses end up in left-peripheral specifier positions by Spell-Out. The product of (4) is thus similar to Ouhalla's (1b); however, the present analysis does not base-generate the relative clause or possessor in a specifier position but raises it there instead.

In applying Predicate Inversion to its possessors and relative clauses, and in doing so obligatorily, Amharic behaves like, for instance, Mandarin Chinese (as discussed in detail in Den Dikken

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[6] *Pronominal* possessors are marked inflectionally on the possessed noun, as suffixes (which for third person possessors are in fact identical with the definiteness particle: -*u*/*w* is DEF.M or 'his'), and do not trigger the linker (arguably because they do not invert with the possessum in the course of the syntactic derivation). Kapeliuk (1994:91ff.) notes that full-nominal possessors (and possessors only; see also Yimam 1996:80–81) may exploit this pronominal strategy as an alternative to the *yä*-marking option, the possessor itself being ''bare'' (i.e., *yä*-less) and cross-referenced on the possessum with the aid of a pronominal suffix (*yä-kasa mïsa* 'YÄ-Kasa lunch' ~ *kasa mïsa-w* 'Kasa lunch-3SG.M'; both 'Kasa's lunch'). This strategy is likely similar to Dutch *Kasa z'n lunch* 'Kasa his lunch', where the pronoun occupies the possessor position and the full noun phrase is construed with it (perhaps as in contrastive left-dislocation constructions such as Dutch *Kasa die ken ik niet* 'Kasa D-PRON know I not'; see Grohmann 2003:chap. 6 for a concrete proposal assimilating contrastive left-dislocation and possessive-pronominal-doubling constructions). The pronominal-marking strategy for forming Amharic possessed noun phrases is irrelevant for my concerns here.

[7] The surface distribution of the linker *yä-* ''spills over'' into domains that may not self-evidently involve Predicate Inversion. Let me briefly discuss these cases here. One case (briefly touched upon by Ouhalla as well) involves the occurrence of *yä-* on the subject of factive complement clauses (as in (ia); Manahlot 1977). I take this *yä*-context to reduce to the possessed-noun-phrase type: arguably, *yä-kasa-n bet mä-gzat* is a nominalized clause (here I agree with Ouhalla 2004:297; see also Demeke 2003:chap. 3), with *mä-* 'CM (= clause marker)' as a nominalizing particle, and (contra Ouhalla) with *kasa* as the possessor, bearing *yä-* and the accusative case particle -*n* (assigned/checked by the matrix verb *sämma* 'hear') on a par with standard possessors (cf. possessive *yä-lïjj-u-n bet* 'the boy's house (direct object)', where -*n* 'ACC' likewise shows up on the possessor). Problematic for Ouhalla's account of (ia), which takes *yä-* here to assign Case to the nominalized clause, is the fact that in the counterpart to (ia) given in (ib), where the verb's complement is headed by the noun *wäre* 'news', the marker *yä-* shows up not on the subject (*kasa*) but on the finite verb of the noun-complement clause, as in relativized noun phrases. (In Mandarin Chinese, noun-complement and relative clauses both feature the same linker as well; see Den Dikken and Singhapreecha 2004.)

(i) a. yä-kasa-n   bet   mä-gzat   sämma-hu
        YÄ-Kasa-ACC house CM-buy heard-1SG.SUBJ
        'I heard that Kasa bought a house.'/'I heard of Kasa's buying a house.'
    b. kasa   bet   yä-mä-gzat-u-n   wäre   sämma-hu
        Kasa house YÄ-CM-buy-his-ACC news heard-1SG.SUBJ
        'I heard the news that Kasa bought a house.'

Less readily assimilable to relativized or possessed noun phrases is the use of *yä-* in clauses in the complement of the raising verb *mäsl* 'seem, appear' (as in (ii), from Demeke 2001). The analysis of these cases (which I cannot go into here in detail) should probably take its cue from the analysis of *seem* constructions developed in Rooryck 2000:chap. 1, featuring phrasal movement operations akin (though, as they stand, not identical) to the ones exploited in the text analysis of the Amharic relative clause.

(ii) saba worq-u-n   yä-säT-äčč-ïw   yï-mäsl-all
        Saba gold-DEF.M-ACC YÄ-sold-3FS.SUBJ-3MS.OBJ 3MS.SUBJ-seem-AUX
        'It seems that Saba sold the gold.'

Finally, Fulass (1972:512) notes *yä-kätämä säw* 'YÄ-city person; i.e., city dweller' (presumably similar to Dutch *een man van de stad* 'a man of the city; i.e., a city dweller' or English *a man of the world*); Kapeliuk (1994:94–95) mentions cases in which *yä-* appears in combinations of an adjective and a noun (in either word order, *yä-*A N or *yä-*N A; e.g., 'YÄ-tame animals'), and finds it difficult to pinpoint a difference between these and their *yä*-less counterparts; and there is also the possibility of linking two antonymous adjectives with the aid of *yä-*, the first adjective being used nominally (as in *yä-deha habtam* 'YÄ-poor rich'; see Kapeliuk 1994:95). The syntax of the first of these three cases can presumably be assimilated to that of possessed DPs; the syntax and semantics of the latter two remain largely mysterious. (A reviewer points out that there seems to be a strong similarity in the distribution of Amharic *yä-*, *ga*/*no*-conversion in Japanese, and genitive case in Turkic. Indeed, both Japanese *no* and Turkic genitive case are excellent candidates for a linker analysis; see Den Dikken and Singhapreecha 2004 for relevant discussion.)

and Singhapreecha 2004 and references cited there; see that article for discussion of nominal linker cases from a variety of other languages as well), where possessors and relative clauses are connected to their ''heads'' via the linker element *de*, as illustrated in (5).

(5) a. [$_{DP}$ D [$_{FP}$[$_{Pred}$ wo]$_j$ [$_{F'}$ X$_i$ + F = de [$_{XP = SC}$[$_{Subj}$ shu] [$_{X'}$ t$_i$ t$_j$]]]]]   (Mandarin
                 I   DE   book   Chinese)
      'my book'

    b. [$_{DP}$ D [$_{FP}$[$_{Pred}$ wo mai]$_j$ [$_{F'}$ X$_i$ + F = de [$_{XP = SC}$[$_{Subj}$ shu] [$_{X'}$ t$_i$ t$_j$]]]]]
                 I   buy   DE   book
      'the book that I bought'

The Lebanese Arabic *iDaafa* construction (discussed by Ouhalla (2004); see his (12) for illustration) is plausibly a linker construction as well.[8] With the *iDaafa* construction analyzed as involving the linker, we thus preserve the integrated approach to Amharic and Arabic advocated by Ouhalla.

3 The Placement of Definiteness Marking and the Linker

Like the definiteness marking for the relativized noun phrase (the *-w* on *yä-gäddälä-w* in (1a)), the morpheme *yä-* is systematically attached to the finite verb of the relative clause. This is straightforwardly true for (1a), as well as for the subject relative in (6a), where there is just one verb in the relative clause and it is finite. But relative clauses with compound tenses show that the generalization must indeed make reference specifically to the *finite* verb of the relative clause. Thus, in (6b) it is the past tense auxiliary *näbbär* that plays host to *yä-* as well as definiteness marking.

(6) a. anbäsa yä-gäddäl-ä-w   lïjj
       lion   YÄ-killed-3SM.SUBJ-DEF.M child
       'the boy who killed a lion'

    b. wädko yä-näbbär-ä-w   bet
       fallen   YÄ-PAST-3SM.SUBJ-DEF.M house
       'the house that had fallen down'
       (Mullen 1986:371)

     The empirical generalization that it is always the finite verb of the relative clause that hosts *yä-* and definiteness could conceivably be made to follow from a phonological account treating

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[8] There is an alternation, in Lebanese Arabic relative clause constructions, between *iDaafa* (ia) and the double-definite construction in (ib), with *l-* 'the' on *baTT-a* 'duck-FEM' and *illi* 'the' (plus number and gender inflection; see Aoun and Choueiri 1997, Ouhalla 2004:289) preceding the relative clause. The feminine suffix *-it* on 'duck' in *iDaafa* (ia) is different from the regular feminine suffix *-a* on 'duck' in (ib). I analyze *-it* as an *agreeing* LINKER of the type also found in Kurdish or Bafut (see Den Dikken and Singhapreecha 2004 for discussion).

    (i) a. baTT-*it*   illi ʔakalnaa-ha   (Lebanese Arabic)
          duck-ID.FEM the we-ate-it
          'the duck we ate'
      b. l-baTT-a   illi ʔakalnaa-ha
          the-duck-FEM the we-ate-it
          'the duck we ate'

yä- as a second-position clitic counting from the end of YP. Since Amharic is robustly SOV, the finite verb is always the last element of the relative clause; procliticizing *yä*- to the last element of the relative clause would derive the empirical generalization about *yä*-'s surface distribution in relative clauses. But as Halpern (1995:sec. 2.7.1) points out in his survey of cliticization patterns and the relevant literature, there appear to be no (undisputed) instances of systematic procliticization to the last word or constituent of a syntactic phrase in the world's languages. Moreover, an account in terms of *yä*-procliticization to the last element of YP would in any event make the wrong predictions for possessed noun phrases (recall (2)), where *yä*- exhibits no ''second position counting from the right'' effect.

I therefore reject a phonological analysis of the placement of *yä*-. I will instead make the empirical generalization about the surface distribution of *yä*- and definiteness marking follow from the syntactic analysis by saying that the host of *yä*- and definiteness is the *syntactic head* of YP in the structure in (7) (see (3)):[9] *yä*- head-moves from F to D and left-adjoins to the syntactic head of YP. Left-adjunction of *yä*- to whatever has raised up to D is in keeping with what Kayne's (1994) antisymmetry proposal would lead one to expect.

(7) $[_{DP}$ D(-u/w) $[_{FP}[_{YP=RC}$ Y . . . $]_j$ $[_{F'}$ $\underline{X_i+F(=yä\text{-})}$ $[_{XP=SC}[_{Subj}$ (. . .) NP] $[_{X'}$ t_i $t_j]]]]]$

In relativized noun phrases, the inverted predicate (YP) in Spec,FP in the structure in (7) is the relative clause (CP), as depicted in (8a). The syntactic head of the relative clause is the C head, so it will be C that raises up to the D head of the relativized noun phrase, and it will be C that will end up hosting the linker *yä*- and definiteness marking there. This then derives the empirical generalization that it is always the finite verb of the relative clause that hosts *yä*- and definiteness if we can ensure that the syntactic head C that raises up to D always has the finite verb of the relative clause in it. This in turn follows if the finite verb of the relative clause always raises to C via overt-syntactic head movement, as shown in (8b).

(8) a. $[_{DP}$ D $[_{FP}[_{CP}$ RELATIVE CLAUSE$]_j$ $[_{F'}$ $X_i+F=yä\text{-}$ $[_{XP=SC}[_{Subj}$ (…) NP] $[_{X'}$ t_i $t_j]]]]]$

b. $[_{DP}[_{D}[_{C}[X_i+F=yä\text{-}]_k$ $[_{C}$ $V_{fin}]_l]$ $[_{D}$ DEF]] $[_{FP}[_{CP}$ t_l $[_{IP}$ …]]$]_j$ $[_{F'}$ t_k $[_{XP=SC}$ (…) NP $[_{X'}$ t_i $t_j]]]]]$

To illustrate the sequence of events for the specific example in (6b), let me flesh out its derivation in (9).[10]

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[9] For expository convenience, the structure in (7), as well as the structures provided elsewhere in this section, assumes that the morphological definiteness marker (-*u/w* for masculine nouns) is base-generated in D. We will see in section 4, however, that there is reason to believe that the definiteness marker is actually an inflectional suffix attached to its host already in the numeration, and checking features in D.

[10] The structure in (9b) is still an intermediate derivational stage: it is followed by movement of the remnant relative clause (or perhaps only the TP portion thereof) to Spec,DP of the relativized noun phrase (see (i), which depicts the

(9) a. $[_{DP}[_D$ __ __ -w] $[_{FP}[_{CP}$ Op$_o$ C $[_{TP}$ t$_o$ <u>näbbär-ä</u> wädko]]$_j$ $[_{F'}$ <u>X$_i$+yä-</u> $[_{XP=SC}[_{Subj}$ bet] $[_{X'}$ t$_i$ t$_j$]]]]]]
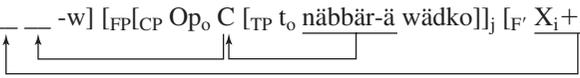
b. $[_{DP}[_D[X_i+yä-]_l$ näbbär-ä$_k$ -w] $[_{FP}[_{CP}$ Op$_o$ t$_k{'}$ $[_{TP}$ t$_o$ t$_k$ wädko]]$_j$ $[_{F'}$ t$_l$ $[_{XP=SC}[_{Subj}$ bet] $[_{X'}$ t$_i$ t$_j$]]]]]]

On this view, there is a stage in the derivation of relative clauses in Amharic (an SOV language) that produces a VSO order (pervasive in Semitic): the step that moves the finite verb of the relative clause to C. By raising overtly to the C of the relative clause and onward to the D head of the complex noun phrase, the finite verb of the relative clause comes to host both the definiteness marking for the complex noun phrase and the linker *yä-*, which raises up to the outer D and left-adjoins to the finite verb, in keeping with antisymmetry.

Let me briefly compare the facts of relativized noun phrases just discussed with those of possessed noun phrases. In the latter, the syntactic head of the possessor in Spec,FP is trivially the possessor noun in simple cases such as (2a) (repeated here), whose derivation is illustrated in (10a). But in possessed noun phrases such as (2b) whose possessor is itself modified by an adjective, the syntactic head is the adjective. Being the closest available goal from the point of view of the probe D of the possessor, the adjective head-moves to the D head of the possessor, and from there onward to the outer D head, as shown in (10b).[11]

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relative clause–fronting derivation, for concreteness), which maneuvers the main verb, *wädko* 'fallen', into a position preceding the D complex *yä-näbbär-ä-w*.

(i) $[_{DP}[_{RC}$ Op t$_k$ wädko]$_j$ $[_D[yä-+X_i]_l$ [näbbär-ä]$_k$ -w] $[_{FP}$ t$_j{'}$ $[_{F'}$ t$_l$ $[_{XP=SC}[_{Subj}$ bet] $[_{X'}$ t$_i$ t$_j$]]]]]]

This remnant movement step resembles a key ingredient of Kayne's (1994:94) analysis of Amharic relatives. According to Demeke (2003), similar remnant movement also takes place in interrogative CPs (where the remnant TP raises into Spec,CP). There seems to be a precedent for this movement step elsewhere in the grammar of Amharic, therefore—though I hasten to add that it remains unclear to me what is triggering the requisite clausal remnant movements to Spec,DP (in relativized noun phrases) and Spec,CP (in interrogatives). Ouhalla's analysis of Amharic relativized noun phrases does not need to invoke clausal remnant movement, which may be deemed an advantage of that approach (though this is difficult to evaluate in the absence of an Ouhalla-style analysis of Amharic interrogative CPs, for which Demeke independently motivates clausal fronting); but as I will point out in the remainder of this section, Ouhalla's analysis does not provide a principled account for the placement of the definiteness marker and the element *yä-*.

[11] For simplicity, I represent attributive premodification in terms of left-adjunction; the text account is compatible with a variety of assumptions in this domain. Note that if the adjectival modifier of the possessor is itself degree-modified (by *bät'am* 'very'), head movement of the adjective is impossible (since the degree modifier blocks this); see (ia–c). In such cases, Amharic has recourse to a last resort strategy: the merger of an essentially meaningless ''dummy'' demonstrative in the outer D head that can serve as the host for *yä-*; see (id). (According to Kapeliuk (1994:36), the demonstrative often alternates with the definite article in Amharic.)

(i) a. *yä-tïllïk'-u bät'am lïjj däbtär
     YÄ-big-DEF.M very child notebook
   b. ??yä-bät'am tïllïk'-u lïjj däbtär
     YÄ-very big-DEF.M child notebook
   c. *yä-bät'am-u tïllïk' lïjj däbtär
     YÄ-very-DEF.M big child notebook
   d. yä-zzia bät'am tïllïk' lïjj däbtär
     YÄ-DEM very big child notebook
     'the/that very big boy's notebook'

(2) a. yä-lïjj-u   bet
       YÄ-child-DEF.M house
       'the boy's house'

   b. yä-tïllïk'-u   lïjj   däbtär
       YÄ-big-DEF.M child notebook
       'the big boy's notebook'

(10) a. [DP D [FP[DP D(-u) [NP lïjj]]]j [F′ Xi+F=yä- [XP=SC[Subj bet] [X′ ti tj]]]]]

   b. [DP D [FP[DP D(-u) [NP[AP tïllïk'] [NP lïjj]]]j [F′ Xi+F=yä- [XP=SC[Subj däbtär] [X′ ti tj]]]]]

The analysis of the syntax of definiteness marking and the marker *yä-* in Amharic possessed and relativized noun phrases presented in the preceding paragraphs takes care of the placement of definiteness and *yä-* in the core syntax, treating it as the consequence of syntactic (head-) movement operations that ultimately target the D head of the complex noun phrase. In this regard (and also, of course, in the underlying perspective on the syntax of possessed and relativized noun phrases that it embodies), this analysis differs significantly from Ouhalla's. For Ouhalla, the outer D head of Amharic possessed and relativized noun phrases plays no role in deriving the word order facts: in Ouhalla's (2004:296) structures in (11a–b), for relativized (1a) and possessed (2a), respectively, this D head is null; the overt definiteness marker originates as the head of the possessor or relative clause (the latter analyzed as a DP by Ouhalla, for the specific case of Amharic).

(11) a. [DP D[NumP([DP)[TP lïjj-u yä-gäddälä] -w] [Num [NP ïbaab]]]]

   b. [DP D[NumP([DP)[NumP yä-lïjj] -u] [Num [NP bet]]]]

Though at first Ouhalla considers a movement approach to the placement of the circled DPs and the TP/NumP in their specifiers, his final analysis base-generates all constituents in the positions they occupy in (11). There is no point in the derivation, therefore, at which any syntactic (head) movement of a subpart of the relative clause or possessor could ''pick up'' the definiteness marker originating in the head of the circled DPs in (11): any movement to this D head from the constituent in Spec,CP (the relative TP in (11a), and the possessor's NumP in (11b)) would be downgrading movement, into a non-c-commanding position. To ensure the correct surface word order for examples such as (2b), in which the definiteness marker is not borne by the rightmost element of the possessor NumP, Ouhalla briefly considers the possibility of postsyntactic movement in the PF component, but he never makes this precise. The same applies to his later discussion of the marker *yä-*, which systematically attaches to the same host as the definiteness marker (albeit on the opposite side): he suggests (with specific reference to relative clauses, but the point carries over, mutatis mutandis, to possessed noun phrases as well) that ''[t]he reason *yä-* appears as a prefix on the verb rather than as a phrasal clitic associated with the whole relative clause is simply

due to its property as a prefix'' (Ouhalla 2004:297), and he leaves the discussion there. Unlike in the case of the definiteness marker, Ouhalla does not identify which syntactic position *yä-* occupies; he calls *yä-* a ''genitive Case marker'' but does not say where it resides in the tree. In light of Ouhalla's proposal that *yä-* Case-licenses the circled DPs in (11), it seems safe to conclude that on his assumptions, *yä-* should originate as a marker attached, in one way or another, to these DPs. Assuming so, it will be plain that no bona fide syntactic manipulation of (11) could derive the generalization emanating from the foregoing discussion that *yä-* (just like definiteness marking) attaches to the *syntactic head* of the possessor or relative clause.

By contrast, the analysis of Amharic complex noun phrases proposed here reduces this generalization to the mechanics of syntactic movement in the derivation of these constructs. In addition, this analysis offers a more unified account of the distribution of the marker *yä-*, analyzing it not as a Case marker (for reasons highlighted in section 1) but as a linker signaling the application of Predicate Inversion in the complex noun phrase.

In the rest of this article, I will highlight some further details of the analysis of Amharic possessed and relativized noun phrases that will confirm several ingredients of the structures presented thus far. In section 4, we will find support for the idea, reflected in (10), that the definiteness marker on the possessor belongs strictly to the possessor itself. We will also discover that the outer D head of possessed noun phrases can itself have a morphophonological exponent as well. But in contrast to what Ouhalla argues (and what was tacitly assumed up to now), we will see that definiteness markers are not spell-outs of D; instead, they are inflectional morphemes directly originating on their hosts. In section 5, I extend the discussion to gender agreement and show that the gender facts confirm an analysis of relativized noun phrases based on a small-clause phase plus Predicate Inversion and phase extension. Staying with gender agreement in relativized noun phrases for a little longer, in section 6 I briefly discuss ''head agreement,'' which turns out to follow from my analysis of relative clauses. Finally, in section 7 I offer some conclusions.

4 Definiteness, Agree, and Raising to D

In the discussion so far, I have rendered Amharic possessed noun phrases in English with the aid of a ''Saxon genitive''; thus, (2a) was translated as 'the boy's house'. But these translations are not particularly revealing when it comes to determining what the definiteness marker belongs to. The ''Saxon genitive'' is troublesome precisely in this regard. Does the *the* of *the boy's house* belong just to the possessor or to the possessed noun phrase as a whole? There is no straightforward way of telling. On the one hand, sophisticated tests such as the distribution of possessed noun phrases as associates of expletive *there* (going back to Jackendoff 1968) suggest that the (in)definiteness of the prenominal possessor ''propagates'' to the possessed noun phrase as a whole (*There is someone's head visible in the background*); but on the other, Woisetschlaeger (1983) and, more recently, Julien (2005) present cogent evidence (in Julien's case of a morphological nature, having to do with definiteness marking in the Scandinavian noun phrase) showing that Germanic possessed noun phrases with prenominal possessors are invariably outwardly definite, regardless of the definiteness of the possessor.

More transparent when it comes to definiteness are the renditions in (12a), with postnominal possessors. These make it clear that, in isolation, the scope of the definiteness marker in *yä-lïjj-u bet* actually is strictly confined to the possessor. The possessor in (12a) *must* be interpreted as definite: the readings in (12aiii) and (12aiv) are unavailable. And definiteness marking in (12a) does not ''propagate'' to the possessed noun phrase (unlike what happens in Semitic ''construct state'' constructions, where definiteness marking on the possessor automatically propagates to the entire complex noun phrase[12]): the interpretation in (12aii) is normally impossible as well. An interpretation of (12a) as '*the* house of the boy' is available only in special syntactic contexts (whence the !!, which aims to highlight the limited availability of this interpretation of (12a)), such as the one in (12b), where the use of the demonstrative *yïh* 'this' as the subject of a copular sentence forces the possessed noun phrase to be read as definite.[13]

(12) a. yä-lïjj-*u*   bet   (= (2a))
       YÄ-child-DEF.M house
        i. √'a house of the boy'
       ii. !!'the house of the boy' (possible only in a special context—e.g., in (12b))
      iii. *'a house of a boy'
       iv. *'the house of a boy'
    b. yïh yä-lïjj-*u*   bet   näw
       this YÄ-child-DEF.M house be
       'This is the house of the boy.'

In light of these observations, it is now interesting to note that the presence or absence of the definiteness particle on an attributive modifier of the possessed noun (inserted between the possessor and the possessum) makes a semantic difference. Thus, the two examples in (13a) and (13b) are not semantically equivalent.[14]

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[12] This is clear evidence, therefore, that Amharic possessed noun phrases with *yä-* are not to be assimilated to Semitic construct state constructions (see also Kapeliuk 1994:90–108 for an inventory of differences between the two). On the other hand, the fact that ''outward'' definiteness (i.e., the definiteness of the possessed noun phrase as a whole) is not morphologically marked in simple possessed noun phrases such as (2a–b) makes the Amharic possessed noun phrase resemble the construct state. See the discussion of (13) below, however, on situations in which ''outward'' definiteness *is* morphologically marked.

[13] I will not attempt here to analyze this effect of 'this is *x*' on the definiteness interpretation of *x*. It is tempting to view it as a definiteness agreement effect within the small clause constituted by *yïh* and the possessed noun phrase, but such a putative definiteness agreement effect could by no means be universal (cf. English *This is a house*). Note that Halefom (1994) does not discuss the effect of syntactic context on the outward definiteness of possessed noun phrases; his example of a possessed noun phrase with a definite-marked possessor, *yä-wättaddär-u mist* 'YÄ-soldier-DEF.M wife' (p. 82), is presented in isolation as meaning either 'the wife of the soldier' (monogamy) or 'a wife of the soldier' (polygamy, legal in Ethiopia).

[14] The word order in (13), where the possessor precedes the attributive AP, is the natural word order for noun phrases in which a possessor and an attributive modifier cooccur, according to my informant (Girma Demeke). Both Mullen (1986) and Halefom (1994) mention cases in which the possessor *follows* the attributive AP, with only the latter carrying definiteness marking (see (ia), from Mullen 1986:309). Though Mullen renders (ia) as 'the boy's big notebook', Girma Demeke (pers. comm.) reports that for him, (ia) means something like 'the big children's notebook', with 'children's notebook' functioning as a compound like *a ladies' hat*; he reports the same intuition for Halefom's similar example.

(13) a. yä-lïjj-*u*   tïllïk' bet
     YÄ-child-DEF.M big   house
      i. √'a big house of the boy'
     ii. !!'the big house of the boy'
   iii. *'a big house of a boy'
   iv. *'the big house of a boy'

    b. yä-lïjj-*u*   tïllïk'-*u*   bet
     YÄ-child-DEF.M big-DEF.M house
      i. *'a big house of the boy'
     ii. √'the big house of the boy'
   iii. *'a big house of a boy'
   iv. *'the big house of a boy'

While (13a) is in principle compatible with the two interpretations in (13ai) and (13aii) (but is strongly biased toward (13ai), like (2a) = (12a)), (13b) supports only the *the . . . the . . .* interpretation in (13aii).[15] This constellation of facts suggests that the definiteness marker on the possessor belongs strictly to the possessor (I agree with Ouhalla on this point), while the definiteness marker on the attributive adjective in (13b) belongs to the complex possessed noun phrase as a whole. Translated into structural terms, this means that the definiteness marker on the possessor checks features against the local D head of the possessor, not against the outer D head of the complex possessed noun phrase, which is itself unspecified for definiteness—unless external factors demand a [+ def] specification.

    One such factor is represented by (12b); another, more interesting one by (13b), where the possessum is modified by an attributive adjective that is itself morphologically marked for definiteness (*tïllïk'-u*). Definiteness marking on adjectives is uninterpretable, hence must be checked. The definiteness marking on the possessor cannot entertain a checking relationship with

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By contrast, double-definite (ib) indeed supports the reading 'the boy's big notebook'. Demeke (2001:212) says that (ib) represents a ''marked order.'' To account for this pattern and its marked status, I take it to derive from (ib′) (cf. (13b)) via Ā-fronting of the definite-marked AP into Spec,DP. Such fronting is legitimate only for definite-marked modifiers (see (ia′); contrast (13a)): only a D marked [+ def] can attract a modifier into its specifier.

(i) a. tïllïk'-u yä-lïjj   däbtär
     big-DEF.M YÄ-child notebook
     'the big [children's notebook]'
  a′. *tïllïk' yä-lïjj-u   däbtär
     big YÄ-child-DEF.M notebook
   b. tïllïk'-u yä-lïjj-u   däbtär
     big-DEF.M YÄ-child-DEF.M notebook
     'the boy's big notebook' (marked)
  b′. yä-lïjj-u   tïllïk'-u däbtär
     YÄ-child-DEF.M big-DEF.M notebook
     'the boy's big notebook'

[15] Consequently, (i) (with definiteness ''spread'' and an indefinite article, *and*, for N$_2$) is ungrammatical.

(i) *yä-lïjj-u   ⟨and⟩ tïllïk'-*u* ⟨and⟩ bet
   YÄ-child-DEF.M one/a big-DEF.M one/a house

that of the adjective: the two are not in a c-command relationship, so Agree fails. Hence, in order that the uninterpretable definiteness specification on the attributive adjective can be checked and eliminated, the *outer* D head is forced to be specified for definiteness.

(14) $[_{DP}$ D$_{[+def]}$ $[_{FP}[_{DP}$ D(-u) $[_{NP}$ lïjj]]$_j$ $[_{F'}$ X$_i$+F=yä- $[_{XP=SC}[_{NP}[_{AP}$ tïllïk'-u] $[_{NP}$ bet]]$[_{X'}$ t$_i$ t$_j$]]]]]]

[+def]
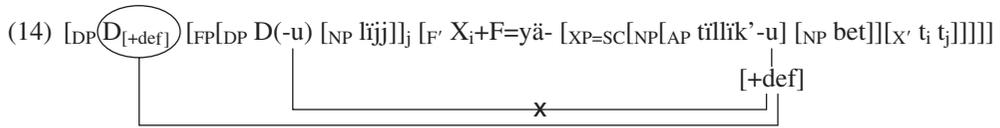
By being specified for definiteness, the outer D of course provides the entire possessed noun phrase with a definite interpretation—which explains why reading (13bii) is the only available interpretation for (13b).

Notice that the facts in (13) tell us that, although I had hitherto tacitly assumed that they were, the morphological definiteness markers of Amharic are *not* in fact the heads of their own phrase markers; that is, they are not clitics or affixes originating in D that then attract something up to them that ends up hosting them. If the latter were the case, the ''definiteness spread'' phenomenon seen in (13b) would be very difficult to understand. The problem is that, in (13b), the adjective hosting the definiteness marking belonging to the outer D head cannot have raised up to the outer D head itself: the outer D in fact ends up being occupied by the head of the *possessor*, which we know because it is the possessor that hosts *yä-*, the linker that docks to the left of whatever lexical head has made its way up to the outer D head.[16] The *-u* on *tïllïk'* in (13b) hence cannot be the spell-out of a D; instead, it must be analyzed as an inflectional morpheme originating directly on the adjective, being merged with its host in the lexicon and checking its features against an *abstract* D head specified for the feature [def]. The facts in (13), viewed from the perspective on linker constructions defended in this article, thus disconfirm an analysis of morphological markers of definiteness in Amharic as clitics (as, e.g., in Halpern 1995:sec. 5.2.3.1; that the definiteness marker is not a clitic is further confirmed by observations made in Kapeliuk 1994:33).

5 Gender Agreement in Possessed and Relativized DPs

I would now like to broaden the empirical scope of the discussion to include a detailed analysis of the interesting array of gender facts exhibited by relativized noun phrases in Amharic.[17] We will see that these facts strongly support the phase-based Predicate Inversion analysis of relativized noun phrases.

The definiteness marker on the finite verb of the Amharic relative clause generally shows third person singular masculine (3SM) gender, as illustrated in (15). In this example, the head of

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[16] That the possessor rather than the head of the attributive AP belonging to the possessum raises to D must be the case for locality reasons: the possessor is closer to D than the attributive modifier of the possessum.

[17] In Amharic, gender is marked on the definiteness marker; number is not (instead, number is marked with a discrete morpheme, *-očč*). The discussion of ϕ-feature agreement in Amharic complex noun phrases is thus limited to gender. On gender and number marking in Amharic relativized noun phrases, see also Kapeliuk 1994 and references cited there.

the relativized noun phrase is undeniably feminine: *lïjjit* 'girl' is an unmistakably feminine noun (derived by affixation of the feminine suffix *-it* to the noun *lïjj* 'child'); and the head of the relative clause controls 3SF subject agreement (*-ächč*) inside the relative clause. But in spite of this, the definiteness marker on the finite verb of the relative clause, which marks the definiteness of the entire complex noun phrase, must be 3SM *-ïw*; the feminine form *-ïwa* is ungrammatical.

(15) anbäsa-wa-n   yä-gäddäl-ächč-{ïw/*ïwa}   lïjj-it
     lion-DEF.F-ACC YÄ-killed-3SF.SUBJ-{DEF.3SM/DEF.3SF} child-F
     'the girl who killed the lioness'

The fact that the definiteness marker of the relativized noun phrase cannot show feminine agreement in examples of the type in (15) follows directly from the analysis of relativized noun phrases proposed here, schematized in (16).

(16) $[_{DP}$ D $[_{FP}[_{CP}$ RELATIVE CLAUSE$]_j$ $[_{F'}$ X$_i$+F=yä- $[_{XP=SC}[_{Subj}$ (. . .) NP$]$ $[_{X'}$ t$_i$ t$_j]]]]]$

$(= (8a))$

This structure immediately guarantees that the outer D head cannot enter an Agree relationship with any of the φ-features of the finite verb of the relative clause. The relative clause, a CP, is a phase. The uninterpretable φ-features of the finite verb of the relative clause are checked within this phase, against the matching φ-features of the (null) subject, and are marked for deletion at that point. At the very latest upon FP's merger with D, the next phase head, the finite verb's uninterpretable φ-features will be stripped away and irretrievably lost.[18] The fact, then, that the finite verb itself is marked for 3SF subject agreement is entirely inconsequential when it comes to determining the gender form of the definiteness marker in the outer D head: D cannot undergo Agree with any of the checked and deleted φ-features of the finite verb of the relative clause.

The outer D head cannot gender-agree with the head noun of the relativized noun phrase either. The relative clause starts out life as the predicate of a DP-internal small clause (XP in (16)), with the projection of the head of the relativized noun phrase as its subject, on the edge of the XP phase. But in Amharic, the relative clause obligatorily inverts with its subject in the course of the derivation, facilitated by movement of X to F, as depicted in (16). As I argue in detail in Den Dikken 2006:chap. 4 (on the basis of the agreement and extraction properties of several instantiations of Predicate Inversion), X-to-F movement extends the phasehood of XP up to FP. So because X has raised to F, FP now becomes a derived phase, with the head of the relativized noun phrase (in Spec,XP) ''trapped'' inside the domain of the phase head (X+F=*yä-*), causing the head to be invisible to D qua outside probe. By the time D (the next phase head) is merged, the domain of the FP phase will be spelled out and completely opaque; no Agree relationships can be established between D and anything in the domain of FP.

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[18] The text discussion takes DP to be a phase. I assume here that the oft-noted parallelism between DPs and CPs extends to phasehood: since CP is a phase (Chomsky 2000, 2001), DP is a phase as well. This is entirely reasonable in light of the fact that DPs are complete functional complexes; furthermore, it fits in with the opacity of DPs with occupied specifiers. The analysis of the Amharic facts discussed in this article lends concrete empirical support to the status of DP as a phase.

The only constituent of FP in (16) that the outer D head could in principle establish an Agree relationship with is the relative CP on FP's edge. If CP has a gender feature at all (which is doubtful), it certainly will not be feminine. So the net result is that there is nothing that the outer D head in the structure of (15) could derive a feminine gender feature from under any kind of Agree relationship. The ungrammaticality of 3SF -ïwa in (15) thus follows. The grammatical 3SM definiteness marker -ïw is either a reflex of an Agree relationship between D and the relative CP (if CP has a gender feature, it could only be masculine; Amharic has no neuter gender) or, probably more likely, a case of default agreement.

Now recall from the discussion of definiteness marking in possessed noun phrases that when the possessum is adorned with a definite-marked adjectival modifier, as in (13b), the complex possessed noun phrase becomes outwardly definite as a result of the Agree relationship established between the outer D head and the uninterpretable definiteness feature of the definiteness marker on AP. This Agree relationship enables the definiteness marker of the relativized noun phrase to engage in gender agreement with the adjective as well. And since the adjective in turn agrees in gender with the head of the complex noun phrase, a derived gender-agreement relationship then results between the head noun and the definiteness marker of the relativized noun phrase as a whole (borne by the finite verb of the relative clause). This explains the fact, illustrated in (17), that under the influence of a definite-marked adjective that gender-agrees with the head, the definiteness marker on the finite verb of the relative clause may come to gender-agree with the head, by piggybacking on other relationships—especially under Ā-fronting of AP to Spec,DP (17b) (recall footnote 14), contingent on an Agree relationship between D and A.[19]

(17) a. anbäsa-wa-n   yä-gäddäl-äčč-{ïw/?ïwa}   wäfram-{*u/wa}   lïjj-it
        lion-DEF.F-ACC YÄ-killed-3SF.SUBJ-{DEF.3SM/DEF.3SF} fat-{DEF.3SM/DEF.3SF} child-F
     b. wäfram-{*u/wa}   anbäsa-wa-n   yä-gäddäl-äčč-{ïw/ïwa}   lïjj-it
        fat-{DEF.3SM/DEF.3SF} lion-DEF.F-ACC YÄ-killed-3SF.SUBJ-{DEF.3SM/DEF.3SF} child-F
        Both: 'the fat girl who killed the lioness'

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[19] Kapeliuk (1994:71) reports that ''[w]hen the feminine definite article is used with the relative verb, the construction is sometimes accompanied by an expressive nuance marking smallness, or the feeling of fondness or slight scorn towards the object or the person designated by the feminine noun.'' I have not found this ''expressive'' effect in current Amharic myself.

Notice that even in the presence of a gender-agreeing attributive modifier, the 3SM form of the definiteness marker on the finite verb of the relative clause remains a grammatical option—at least in the dialect spoken by my informant, Girma Demeke. Exactly how to take care of this alternation between 3SF and 3SM must remain an open question here. This may be a dialect feature, perhaps on a par with the attachment of a default (3SM) gender form of the definiteness marker to an explicitly feminine noun, as in (ib), which seems to be a dialect feature as well. According to Girma Demeke (pers. comm.), such lack of gender agreement is particularly common in the Wollo dialect.

(i) a. lïjj-it-wa
       child-F-DEF.3SF
       'the girl'
    b. lïjj-it-u
       child-F-DEF.3SM
       'the girl'

Though the details of default agreement in Amharic remain to be studied further (see esp. footnote 19), what is clear is that gender agreement on an attributive modifier of the head of a relativized noun phrase facilitates gender agreement in the definiteness marker on the finite verb of the relative clause, as expected on the Agree-based analysis. What is also clear is that the gender specification of the definiteness marker on an attributive modifier of the head noun should never make the definiteness marker on a *possessor* ''switch'' to agreement with the head noun: the definiteness marker on the possessor has already had its gender feature valued and checked within the possessor's own DP prior to raising to the outer D head. This is a correct result: as we see in (18), there is no vacillation between ''inner'' and ''outer'' agreement in possessed noun phrases under the influence of the presence of a definiteness marker on the possessum's modifier.

(18) a. i. yä-lïjj-u   tïllïk'-u   bäre
         YÄ-child-DEF.M big-DEF.M ox
         'the big ox of the boy'
     ii. yä-lïjj-it-wa   tïllïk'-u   bäre
         YÄ-child-F-DEF.F big-DEF.M ox
         'the big ox of the girl'
   b. i. yä-lïjj-u   tïllïk'-wa lam
         YÄ-child-DEF.M big-DEF.F cow
         'the big cow of the boy'
     ii. yä-lïjj-it-wa   tïllïk'-wa lam
         YÄ-child-F-DEF.F big-DEF.F cow
         'the big cow of the girl'

6 ''Head Agreement'' in Compound-Tense Relatives

Finally, I would like to address an interesting gender-agreement effect presented by compound-tense object relatives featuring the past tense auxiliary *näbbär* (see (19)): though the participial main verb agrees with the subject of the relative, the subject marker on *näbbär* agrees with the head of the relative clause (as noted by Fulass (1972:500ff.)).

(19) lïjj-u   gädl-o-wat   yä-näbbär-{*äčč*/*ä}-ïw   lam
     child-DEF.M killed-3SM.SUBJ-3SF.OBJ YÄ-PAST-{3SF.SUBJ/3SM.SUBJ}-DEF.3SM cow
     'the cow that the boy had killed'

This can be likened to what we find in relative clauses in some varieties of American English (see (20b); Kimball and Aissen 1971), which Kayne (1989) analyzes as agreement between Agr$_S$, covertly raised to C, and *who* in Spec,CP.

(20) a. the people who Clark/he thinks are in the garden
     b. the people who Clark/*he *think* are in the garden

For Amharic relative clauses, I argued in section 3 that the finite verb of the relative clause raises

overtly to C (see (8b), repeated in a slightly simplified form in (21a)). With this in mind, an extension of Kayne's (1989) account of (20b) to ''head agreement'' in Amharic (19) is straightforward once we postulate a null operator in Amharic relatives (following the standard analysis of relative clauses). The result is depicted in (21b).

(21) a. $[_{DP}[_D[_C \text{yä-}_k [_C V_{fin}]_j] [_D \text{DEF}]] [_{FP}[_{CP} t_j [_{TP} \ldots]]_i [_{F'} t_k [_{SC} \text{NP } t_i]]]]$ (cf. (8b))

　　 b. $[_{DP}[_D[_C \text{yä-}_k [_C V_{fin}]_j] [_D \text{DEF}]] [_{FP}[_{CP} \text{Op } [_{C'} t_j [_{TP} \ldots]]]_i [_{F'} t_k [_{SC} \text{NP } t_i]]]]$

                                    └──────┘
                                      Agree

Agreement between the finite verb of the relative clause and the head of the relativized noun phrase is possible only if that finite verb is not otherwise engaged—that is, if it does not (have to) inflect for subject agreement. Kayne argues that this is the case for English finite verbs with full-nominal subjects; but English pronominal subjects *have to* agree with the finite verb (see also Den Dikken 2001), as a result of which no agreement relationship between the finite verb of the relative clause and the head can be established in (20b) if the subject is pronominal. For Amharic, too, the fact that ''head agreement'' is possible only if the finite verb is not otherwise engaged in subject agreement makes precisely the desired cut: the auxiliary *näbbär* does not normally agree with its subject (see (22)); hence, it is free to entertain an agreement relationship with the relative operator in Spec,CP, resulting in ''head agreement.'' But a finite *main* verb in simple-tense constructions *must* agree with the subject, hence cannot agree with the relative operator in Spec,CP (see (23b)).[20]

(22) lïjj-u   lam-wa   gädl-o-*wat*   näbbär-{*ä/*äčč}
       child-DEF.M cow-DEF.F killed-3SM.SUBJ-3SF.OBJ PAST-{3SM.SUBJ/3SF.SUBJ}
       'The boy had killed the cow.'

(23) a. *lïjj-u   yä-gäddäl-ä-*w*   lam
           child-DEF.M YÄ-killed-3SM.SUBJ-DEF.3SM cow

      b. *lïjj-u   yä-gäddäl-äčč-*ïw*   lam
           child-DEF.M YÄ-killed-3SF.SUBJ-DEF.3SM cow

      c. lïjj-u   yä-gäddäl-Ø-*at*   lam
           child-DEF.M YÄ-killed-3SM.SUBJ-3SF.OBJ cow
           'the cow that the boy killed'

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[20] Notice, however, that not only (23b) is ungrammatical: (23a) is, too. Since gender marking cannot be ''siphoned off'' to the subject marker in simple-tense relative clause constructions (on pain of a radical agreement clash with the subject of the relative clause), and since the definiteness marker on the relative clause cannot gender-agree with the ''head'' of the relative clause (for reasons discussed in the previous text paragraph), (23a) completely fails to formally mark the gender of the ''head.'' In order to formally express the head's gender in the relative clause (which is apparently an absolute requirement), object marking on the verb cross-references the relativized object, as in (23c).

7 Concluding Remarks

In these pages, I have argued for an analysis of Amharic complex noun phrases in terms of inversion of a DP-internal predicate (possessor, relative clause) with its subject (the ''head'' of the complex noun phrase), giving rise to the emergence of a linker, realized in Amharic as *yä-*. The linker *yä-* is systematically attached to the syntactic head of the raised predicate, as a result of overt-syntactic movement of the raised predicate's head to the D head of the complex noun phrase, with *yä-* subsequently left-adjoining to the raised head. For relativized noun phrases, with the finite verb of the relative clause raising to C inside the relative clause and C raising onward to D, this derives the empirical generalization that *yä-* is always attached to the finite verb of the relative clause and confirms that Amharic has overt V-to-C raising, in line with its Semitic roots. I have also argued that the definiteness marker of Amharic is an inflectional suffix checking features against D under Agree; this Agree relationship provides an account for the intricate gender agreement facts in Amharic relativized noun phrases. Finally, I have shown that an otherwise nonagreeing finite verb of the relative clause agrees in ϕ-features with the head of the relativized noun phrase as a result of agreement with a null relative operator inside the relative clause. Along the way, several ingredients of current phase-based locality theory, and the idea that phasehood is extended upward under head movement, have received support.

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