Sociolinguistic Survey Report of the Kemant (Qimant) Language of Ethiopia

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Contents

1 Introduction

In multilingual Ethiopia, minority languages are giving way to pressures of socially dominant languages. As a result, some languages are already extinct and others are threatened by extinction at different levels. Therefore, linguists should increasingly be aware of the urgency of this situation and should take steps toward large scale recording of linguistic data, including grammatical, lexical, as well as sociolinguistic data, since especially the latter plays an important role in language shift situations.

Kemant certainly is one of the most "endangered" languages in Ethiopia, already considered "dead" by some linguists. But it was only recently that a linguistic survey team has reported its continued existence (see the S.L.L.E. Linguistic Survey Report 18).

The linguistic literature about this language mainly consists of a brief sketch by David Appleyard (1975).

In this paper, I attempt to present (a) a sociolinguistic profile of the Kemant language, and (b) a brief grammatical description. These will be based on data and impressions from two field trips of 1995. The data were collected from informants at *Teber, Seraba,* and *Aykel* town at *Chilga,* more than 800 kms NW of Addis Ababa and about 60 kms west of *Gonder,* on the way to the Sudan border. (Cf. Map 1.)
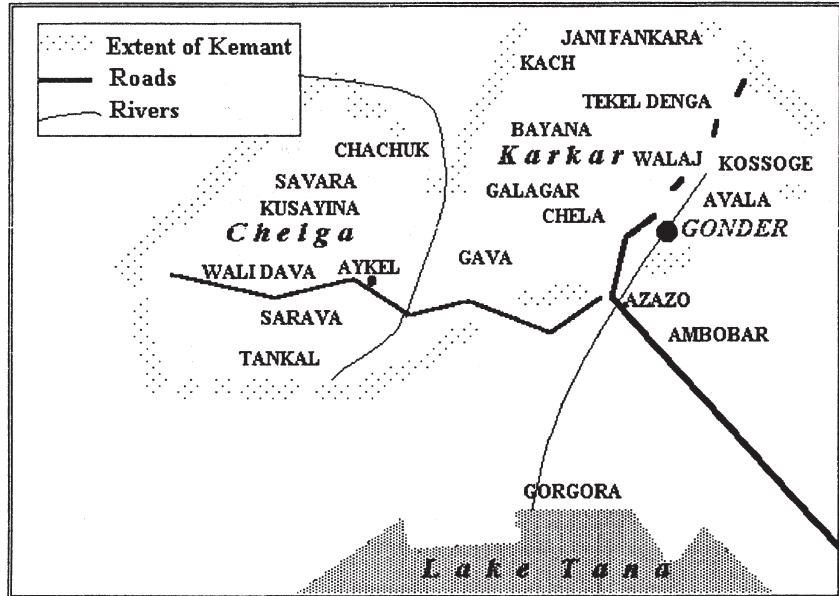
Map 1
Settlements of the *Kemant (Qimant)* in Ethiopia (Sketch based on Gamst 1969:ii)

Since I am interested in *Kemant* in particular and in the *Agew* languages in general, this piece of work can be taken as the first step of my future research on the language shift situation of Kemant, a topic which I hope to study both from a sociolinguistic and a structural linguistics point of view. I hope the present paper, as well as forthcoming papers, will contribute to filling the gap which exists with regard to studies of Agew languages in general and Kemant in particular. I also believe that linguists as well as anthropologists will bene-fit from the study of Kemant, a language on the brink of extinction. This study may turn out to be the last record of data before the language will die out, possibly in the coming few years.

1.1 Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the help which I received during my field work from the following people:

- *Womber Muluneh Mersha,* Head of the Kemant people and the Kemant religion—as a linguistic informant with a treasure of valuable data;

- *Emma Yelfign Mekete,* a motherly woman who helped me both as informant and caretaker;

- *Emma Mantegbosh Tagele* who worked for me as an informant;

- *Ato Desta Tito* who had been my classmate when we were undergraduate students, and who is now a high school teacher at *Aykel*—who helped me as a friend and as an assistant all the time during my stay in around *Ayele* town.

In addition, the following students were very helpful:

- *Ashagre Adane, Fentahun Debebe, Wasihun Menwalhulet, Abuhay Kasa, Worku Mellese,* and *Ashagre Gelagay,* all of them high school students at *Aykel* who helped me as assistants when I conducted the sociolinguistic research. Without their help this would have been a very tiresome enterprise.

2 The People

2.1 Occupation

Except for those who live in towns, the Kemant people by and large are farmers. Those who live in towns are traders, government employees, etc., like the Amharas of the area. Kemants do not have a unique occupation distinct from those of neighboring peoples. They own land, urban or rural, and most of them lead their life as farmers or traders.

The Kemant people are indistinguishable from the neighboring Amharas physically, in their way of living, in their diet, their customs (such as wedding or mourning ceremonies), and in their agricultural activities.

They can mainly be identified by their *'Jins'* (as they call it) which seems to mean 'race', as well as by their language and their religion. There does not seem to be any unique tradition still retained nowadays that would make them different from the neighboring Amharas or the rest of the *Agew* people in the provinces of *Gojjam* and *Wollo*. As a result, there has been a high degree of cultural assimilation between the Amharas and the Kemant.

Gamst (1969) considers the Kemant as people who have long remained culturally distinct from the neighboring groups, and socially semiautonomous because of their Pagan-Hebraic religion. Their religion, according to Gamst's understanding, has acted as a barrier.

This may have been the case at a time when it still was functioning on a large scale. But since the Kemant rites are now practiced by only very few individuals, it has become very unlikely the Kemant people will preserve a distinct religion and culture.

2.2 Population

The total number of Kemants is not exactly known. I am still looking forward to the 1994 census for reliable figures. Gamst (1969) has estimated the number of Kemants as 20,000 to 25,000. However, those figures cannot be considered reliable for the present. The main reasons are that there has been a general growth of the Ethiopian population, and that there may have been shifts of cultural and linguistic allegiance.

For the study of language shift situations, the relationships between language and ethnic identity are crucial. In the case of Kemant, a strong process of Amharization seems to have made a strong impact on the size of the "Kemant" population.

On the one hand, there are people who speak the Kemant language (Kemant-Amharic bilinguals) and therefore identify themselves as "Kemant".

On the other hand, there are those who do not know the language ("Amharic natives" but of Kemant descent) who today identify themselves as "Amharas".

Still others, even though they do not speak Kemant ("Amharic natives" but of Kemant descent) identify themselves as "Kemants". In the last group there are those who do not want to be called Kemants and who have already identified themselves as Amharas for a long time. As far as the language is concerned, the majority of this group know only Amharic. I remember some of this group who speak Kemant very well and when they are asked to which nationality they belong, they answer "Amhara".

2.3 Religion

As we mentioned in the S.L.L.E. Linguistic Report 18, not much research has been done on the Kemant language. So far, the only comprehensive work on Kemant is the anthropological study by Gamst (1969). In the first pages of his book he writes that the Kemant are "Caucasoid people" who practice a religion

"composed of syncretized pagan and Hebraic elements with a few Christian features".

From what I have seen in different villages around Chilga, I can say the following about the Kemant religion as it is practiced today.

The Kemant religion still exists but it seems to be in a very precarious situation. It can be said that so far it has survived, since there are some people who still adhere to it. I personally know five people—three Kemant priests (including the *Womber* and two other persons) plus the brother and wife of the *Womber.* The Kemant priests including the *Womber* have a tradition of covering their heads with a white piece of cloth which gives them the same physical appearance as the priests of the Orthodox church.

I would tentatively guess that the ratio of those who follow the Kemant religion vs. those who are baptized and converted to Orthodox Christianity is about 1% vs. 99%. It is remarkable that even the children of *Aba Womberu* (the leader of the Kemant religion) are all Christians. What Gamst has said about the Kemants' resistance to assimilation because of their religion, therefore can no longer be true. The situation seems to have changed completely. I suspect that the Kemant religion will die out even before the Kemant language.

The followers of the Kemant religion do not have any written materials to which they refer in prayers, sermons or other rites. They pray in the Kemant language and they have distinct places for their prayers. The prayers are led by the *Womber,* and the places are called *Adere Womber (adäre wombär)* 'place of God'.

I visited two of the *Adere Womber* places during my recent field trip, and I saw another one from a distance. The one at *Seraba,* about ten kms away from *Aykel,* has the size of about fifteen to twenty meters radius and is covered with trees and bushes.

The other place is smaller, circular, fenced with heaps of stones, and has two big trees at the center. Its location is about four kms from *Aykel,* near *Teber (täßär),* the place where the *Womber* himself lives.

Another item worth mentioning in the context of the Kemant religion is the *Anzaymerkum (anzaymäkum),* a well of mineral water which seems to be essential to the rites of the Kemant religion. At *Anzaymerkum* there is a small cave where the water springs out, and it is surprising that people should go down the steep and slippery path which leads to this well, to reach the water.

According to the Kemant priests, the source of the mineral water is a cave-like well down at the bottom of a cliff. The water is said to cure internal and external diseases including sterility and blindness. It is said to be used only twice a year: at certain days in October and July. At other times, believers are not allowed to visit *Anzaymerkum,* and it is believed that if anybody does so he or she will be swallowed by a *zendo (zändo)* 'big snake'. According to the Kemant priests, it is not

only the followers of the Kemant religion who make use of these opportunities during these two special days, but also Christian Kemants as well as Amharas from different areas.

This ceremony is always led by the *Womber,* who is assisted by other Kemant priests.

2.4 The Womber

The *Womber* is a highly respected person and is considered the head of all Kemant people. *Womber* is used as a title. The name of the present *Womber* is *Muluneh Mersha;* he is a man from the *Aykel* area. According to *Aba Womberu* (as people call him most of the time), there was another *Womber* near *Kerker (kärkär)* by the name of *Womber Gonit Asress (wombär goṅit' asräss)* who died a few years ago.

The present *Womber, Womber Muluneh Mersha,* has been in his position for the last fifty-seven years, beginning at the age of seven, till today. He is now sixty-five years old, and because of his tall stature he is more conspicuous than any other Kemant person I have ever met.

The office and title *Womber* is given on the basis of a person's ancestral background as well as an election by the people.

2.5 Naming in Kemant

Nowadays, and possibly three or four generations back, the names which Kemants use are Amharic names. The chief example is the name of the *Womber* himself. I have actually traced some names which are not Amharic names from some Kemant people who knew their forefathers.

See for instance, the family tree of the forefathers of *Aba Womberu* and *Ato Nega,* the Chairman of the Kemant association.

Aba Womberu's father's father, etc.,:

mulunäh - märʃa - zäwdu - work'e - fïzadïr - muzo - ʃokiya - mïzgäni - yiziak - aʃemi - gäbtagna - tïnkbägna - lïtihu - gedihu

From the preceding names, the last eleven seem to be typical Kemant names whereas the first four are very common Amharic names.

Aba Womberu's mother's father, etc.,:

ïtagäŋŋehu - täsämma - abboye - hälʃïn

Among the preceding names listed, again it is only the last one which is Kemant. The others are Amharic names.

*Aba Womberu'*s father's mother, etc.,:

täwabätʃtʃ - wondo - tïkku - adgo

All of the preceding names are Amharic.

Aba Womberu's mother's mother, etc.,:

woläla - käbte - yizändir

The last name is a Kemant name, the rest are Amharic.

Ato Nega's father's father, etc.,:

nägga - get'e - lämämu - täsʃaye - aykäl - halihan - muzan - amgäy - gito - kobäb - worew -tʃihusa

In the preceding lists of ancestral names, the first five are Amharic, and then come four Kemant names, followed by two Amharic and finally one Kemant name.

The study of the meanings and etymological relations of Kemant names will be part of my future research.

One other phenomenon in Kemant naming is the sequencing of the names of a child and a father's name: Kemants had the tradition of calling first the father and next the child's name (the reverse is true for almost all other Ethiopian cultures). At present, only some elderly people seem to retain the Kemant tradition, and when sometimes they are heard using it, it is considered a slip of the tongue. I was told that among Kemant people, the *father-first-child-second* way of naming has been common in the old days. Nowadays, however, it has largely been replaced by the *child-first-father-second* order common in Ethiopia.

2.6 Habitation

The Kemant people inhabit mainly *Chilga* and the surrounding area. The well-known places where one can get people who speak the language are *Seraba (säraßa), Teber (täßär), Tember (tämbär), Chenchok (tʃäntʃok')* and, to some extent, *Aykel* town (Cf. Map 1.)

The names of places listed in the previous paragraph are those about which I have direct personal information, but according to *Ato Nega Get'e* (see S.L.L.E. Linguistic Report 18), Kemant people live in many other places, too. Unfortunately, even thought there are Kemant people living in various other towns even including *Gonder* (the capital of the province), none of them speaks the language. And to find a Kemant speaker in Addis—totally unthinkable.

3 Language

Gamst (1969:vii) says the Kemant people speak a dialect of "Agew", a Cushitic language. According to him, all "Agew" speak mutually intelligible dialects of an "Agew language", and as far as their use of other languages is

concerned, he says almost all "Agew" are bilingual in Amharic or Tigrigna. (Cf. Map 2.)

Map 2
Map of Kemant (Qimant) and other Agew languages in Ethiopia and Eritrea
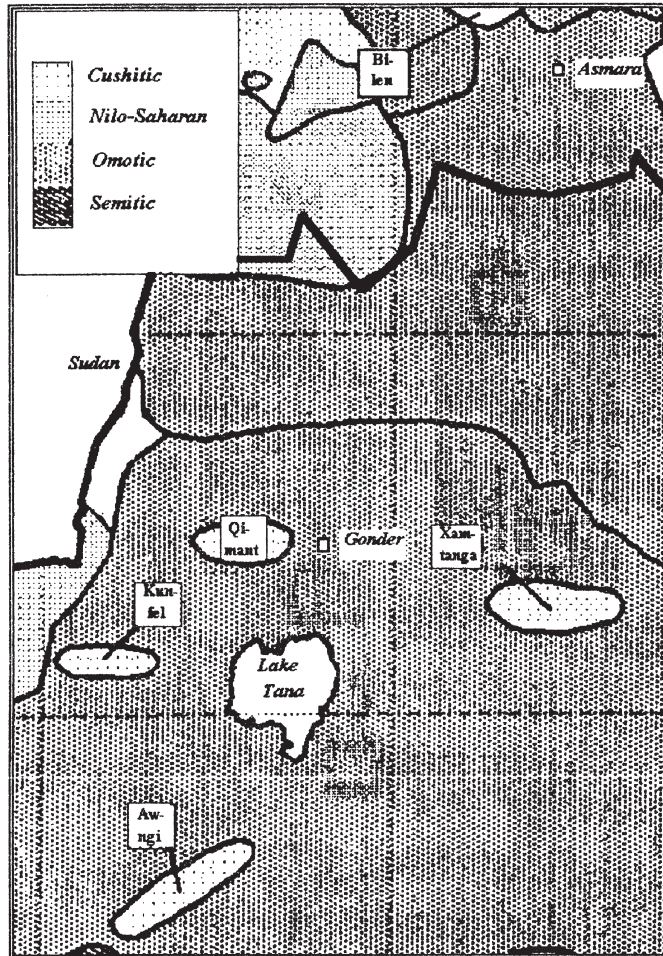
However, as far as the well attested linguistic literature of the Cushitic language family is concerned, Kemant is an independent language of the "Central Cushitic" or "Agäw" family. As an "Agäw" language, Kemant is a sister language of the *Awŋi* of *Gojjam,* the *Xamt'aŋa* of *Wollo,* and the *Bilän* of Eritrea.

A year ago, a linguistic survey team including me has tried to make a mutual intelligibility test and has collected word lists in order to compare the three Agew languages Aw*ŋi, Kemant,* and *Xamt'aŋa.* As a result, we confirmed again that the three languages are not varieties of one language, but independent languages. A word list of Kemant is given in the appendix of this paper. For more information on these relationships, see Bender (1976) and especially Appleyard (1988).

While in *Gojjam* and *Wollo* it is common to see several thousands of monolingual speakers of *Awŋi* and *Xamt'aŋa* respectively who speak neither Amharic nor Tigre, I have so far failed to find even one monolingual speaker of Kemant in all Kemant places which I visited.

The language, as I mentioned above, has already been considered "dead" by some (which is not entirely true). But among the Ethiopian languages considered to be "endangered", Kemant is the one most acutely "threatened by extinction".

On what basis can we say that Kemant is on the brink of extinction? The following are some of the major indications.

- The language is not widely used even among its speakers. Its functions are limited to purposes such as "secret talking" and praying.

- Amharic is widely used among the Kemant people.

- Those who speak the language fluently are elderly people beyond the age of sixty.

- Even these people are more fluent in Amharic than in Kemant.

- While it cannot be said that there are no Kemant speakers below the age of sixty, most of those in their fifties who speak Kemant live in rural areas.

- On the other hand, those who are beyond the age of sixty who live in towns seem to forget the language and mix Kemant and Amharic in their speech.
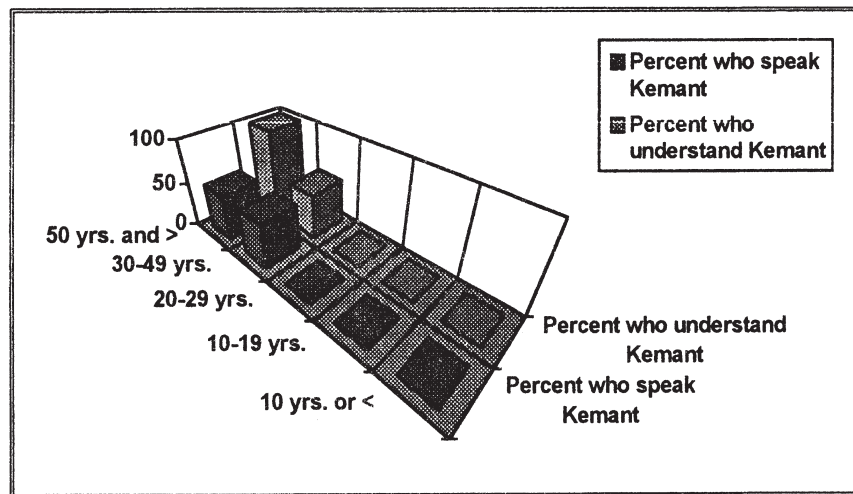
Graph 1
The distribution of Kemant language proficiencies over age groups

- There are no monolingual speakers of Kemant in the places which I visited. The persons of "Kemant" descent whom I interviewed were either Kemant-Amharic bilinguals or Amharic monolinguals.

- The number of "Amharic native" Kemants is considerably greater than the number of bilinguals.

- The young generation of the Kemant people do not know Kemant. Prominent examples for this are the members of the Executive Committee of the Kemant Association, including its Chairman, *Ato Nega Get'u.*

- Every person of Kemant descent, including the bilinguals, have a native speaker's competence in Amharic. As a result, it is not possible to identify a bilingual person whose mother tongue is Kemant from his Amharic speech. If one considers the command of Amharic (in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary) as an indication of linguistic competence, then no distinction can be drawn between Amharic speakers of Amharic descent and Kemant-Amharic "bilinguals".

- Kemant people use Amharic at schools, market places, Christian churches, clinics, working places, courts, and shops. They speak

      Amharic with strangers, administrators, priests, teachers, and government employees.

- With only a few exceptions, the Kemant people use Amharic when counting, insulting or cursing, dreaming, and singing.

Aba Womberu's responses to the questionnaire may be taken as a representative example

- *Aba Womberu* is now sixty-five years old. His first language is Kemant. His Amharic is the Amharic of a native speaker. His parents and grandparents were bilinguals. He has brothers and sisters who are bilinguals. His wife is also a bilingual. He has twelve children whose first language is Amharic. The elder ones understand Kemant very little, whereas the rest neither understand nor speak Kemant. *Aba Womberu* uses both Amharic and Kemant with his brothers, sisters, and his wife. He reads and writes in Amharic. With his parents, he had been using Kemant; but he uses both Amharic and Kemant with his brothers, sisters, and wife—and with his children, only Amharic.

- He uses Amharic when he meets strangers, administrators, or teachers. He uses Amharic when he visits a school, clinic, court, shop, or tea house, or other places in town.

- He prays and dreams in Kemant. He also speaks about secrets in Kemant.

- When he becomes angry, when counting, talking, insulting, praising or cursing, he uses either Amharic or Kemant.

- He uses only Amharic in big meetings, when singing, ploughing, harvesting, or during wedding or mourning ceremonies.

3.1 Reasons for considering Kemant an endangered language

There are many causes for language death or "displacement". Among these causes, the death of all speakers, changes in the ecology of languages and cultural contact are well known (Wurm 1991:2).

Among the causes which I have so far investigated which threaten the continued existence of the Kemant language are the following: geographical location, cultural contact (including linguistic, religious, and social contacts such as intermarriage), modernization (including urbanization), peaceful coexistence with Amharas, and integration into the national identity.

3.2 The future of Kemant

According to Kibrik's assumption (1991:258), linguists can forecast the viability of a language by categorizing its speakers by their age groups: the older generation (50 years and older), the middle generation (30–50 years), young adults (20–30 years), adolescents (10–20 years), and children (up to 10 years).

Kibrik tells us that if there are speakers from every age group, then the language will not die out for another 40–50 years. But if the children and adolescents do not speak the language of their parents, then it is unrealistic to expect the language to survive into the near future without the intervention of extraordinary circumstances.

In line with the preceding assumption then, because there are no speakers from each age group except the first, the extinction of Kemant is conceivable within the next 40–50 years.

In addition, because neither children nor adolescents—nor even the middle generation—speak the language at present, the language in question may die out within the next 10–20 years (or however close Kibrik's "near future" may be—which no one can tell).

4 A Sketch of Kemant Grammar

4.1 Phonology

4.1.1 Consonants (note that IPA [j] is written as [y])

Labial	Dent/Alv.	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
	t		k	q	ʔ
b	d		g		
	t'		k'		
f	s	ʃ	x		h
	z	ʒ	ɣ		
		tʃ			
		dʒ			
		tʃ'			
m	n	ɲ	ŋ		
	l				
	r				
w			y	[= IPA j]	

When the above consonant chart is compared with Appleyard's work (based on Kemant of *Kerker* (a place which is said to be inhabited by Kemants with a different dialect), the following differences can be identified:

- Appleyard does not include *ŋ, ɲ, ʔ,* and *q* in his consonant chart.

- He says the/r/ sound occurs in initial position only in Amharic borrowings. But according to my data */r/* is a full-fledged phoneme which is also found in word medial and word final positions.

kärtama   'clay'
amäräla   'bad'
jitiyer   'aunt'
bïr   'blood'

4.1.2 Vowels

Front	Central	Back
i	*ï*	*u*
e	*ä*	*o*
	a	

4.2 Morphology

4.2.1 Independent Subject Personal Pronouns (ISPP)

		Sg.	Pl.
1.		*an*	*annew*
2.f.		*ïnti*	*ïntändew*
	m.	*ïnti*	
	res.	*nay*	
2.f.		*ni*	*na(y)dew*
	m.	*ni*	

As far as ISPPs are concerned, there are no considerable differences between Appleyard's work and the present analysis.

In his paper, the form of respect, *nay* is not included.

His 3fs *niy* is equivalent to our *ni*.

His 1pl., 2pl., and 3pl. pronouns show slight differences i.e., *andiw, ïntändiw,* and *naydiw* respectively.

4.2.2 Independent Object Personal Pronouns (IOPP)

		Sg.	Pl.
1.		*yit*	*annewïs*
2.f.		*kut*	*ïntändewïs*
	m.	*kut*	
	res.	*nat*	
3.f.		*nit*	*naydewïs*
	m.	*nit*	

4.2.3 Possessive Personal Pronouns (PPP)

	Sg.	Pl.
	yiqu	*anaq*
1.		
2.f.	*tiqu*	*ïntaq*
m.	*tiqu*	
res.	*naq*	
3.f.	*niqu*	*nadewẓiq*
m.	*niʃiqu*	

There seem to be considerable differences between the previous PPPs and the PPPs in Appleyard's study.

In his paper, *yï, ki (ku), ni, niʃ, anä, ïntä,* and *na* are the PPPs for the 1s, 2s, 3ms, 3fs, 1pl., 2pl., and 3pl. respectively.

4.2.4 "Be" - Verbs

an gayl	'I am.'
ïnti gayla	'You (f.) are.'
ïnti gayla	'You (m.) are.'
nay gaʔla	'You (res.) are.'
ni gala	'She is.'
ni gala	'He is.'
annew gaʔlï	'We are.'
ïntändew gaʔiyla	'You (pl.) are.'
naydew gaʔla	'They are.'

As can be seen in the previous data, the "be" forms of 2fs and 2ms, 3fs and 3ms are similar. But this is not always true, as we can see in the following data. (Possibly some suprasegmental features are involved here.) This question will have to be answered on the basis of data from the next field trips.

See also the following forms of the "be" -verb in the past.

an sïmbequ	'I was.'
ïnti sïmbequ	'You (f.) were.'
ïnti sïmbequ	'You (m.) were.'
nay sïmbinäqu	'You (res.) were.'

ni sïmbitï	'She was.'
ni sïmbequ	'He was.'
annew sïmbïnequ	'We were.'
ïntändew sïmbinequ	'You (pl.) were.'
naydew sïmbinäqu	'They were.'

In the above data, 1s, 2fs, 2ms, and 3ms forms are the same. Unlike the previous data, however, the 3fs and 3ms forms are now distinct. The plural marker */-ʔ-/* in the first data now has changed to */-n-/* in the second case.

We shall now proceed to the intransitive and transitive verbs and their conjugation.

an gändʒequ	'I slept.'
ïnti gändʒiqu	'You (f.) slept.'
ïnti gändʒiqu	'You (m.) slept.'
nay gändʒinäqu	You (res) slept.'
ni gändʒiqu	'He slept.'
ni gändʒti	'She slept.'
annew gändʒinäqu	'We slept.'
ïntändew gändʒinäqu	'You (pl.) slept.'
naydew gändʒinäqu	'They slept.'

From the above paradigm it is clear that 2fs and 2ms remain the same. On the other hand, the verbs in the 2res., 1pl., 2pl., and 3 pl. are similar.

an xuyequ	'I ate.'
ïnti xuyequ	'You (f.) ate.'
ïnti xuyequ	You (m.) ate.'
nay xundqu	'You (res.) ate.'
ni xuyequ	'He ate.'
ni xuyti	'She ate.'
annew xunäqu	'We ate.'
ïntändew xuynäqu	'You (pl.) ate.'
naydew xunäqu	'They ate.'

The verbs for the 2fs and 2ms on the one hand, and the 1s and 3ms on the other, are the same in the above conjugation. Unlike the previous forms, 2res. and 3pl. are different, whereas 1pl. and 3pl. forms are the same.

See also the following bitransitive verb forms.

an yiwoqu	'I gave.'
ïntï yiwyequ	'You (m.) gave.'
ïntï yiwyequ	'You (f.) gave.'
nay yiwnïqu	'You (res.) gave.'
ni yiwïqu	'He gave.'
ni yiwït	'She gave.'
annew yiwnïqu	'We gave.'
ïntändew yiwyeñiqu	'You (pl.) gave.'
naydew yiwñïqu	'They gave.'

Here again, verbs of the 2fs and 2ms and verbs of 2res., 1pl., and 3pl. are the same.

4.2.5 Reciprocity

Reciprocity is shown by way of reduplicating the first syllable of the verb and the morpheme */-sä-/,* as illustrated in the following data.

tayequ	'He hit.'
annew tasätasnäqu	'We hit each-other.'
nadew tasätasnäqu	'You (pl.) hit each-other.'
ïntändew tasätasinäqu	'They hit each-other.'

4.2.6. Conditional

The morpheme */-dï/* seems to be the Kemant equivalent for the English 'if' or the Amharic */kä-/.*

xuyiqu	'he ate'
an xʷadï	'if I ate'
ïntï xʷedï	'if you (f.) ate'
ïntï xʷedï	'if you (m.) ate'

ni xʷädï	'if he ate'
ni xunädï	'if she ate'
annew xunädï	'if we ate'
ïntändew xuynädï	'if you (pl.) ate'
ïnaydew xunadï	'if they ate'

4.2.7 Interrogative

The interrogative is indicated by *wïya* like the Amharic *woy* (a word in discourse) and the morpheme */-m,* except in the second person.

ni taxïm wiya	'Did he come?'
ni tïyä wiya	'Did she come?'
ïnti goziya	'Did you plough?'
ni gozäxïm	'Did he plough?'
ni goziyem	'Did she plough?'
nadew gozäxum	'Did they plough?'

4.2.8 Negation

In Kemant, */-la/, /-ḽi/, /-ïl/, /-el/,* and */-illa/* mark negation as illustrated in the following data.

    ni ʋnïžis xuy-la
    he lunch eat-neg.(3ms)
    'He didn't eat his lunch.'

    ni ʋnïžis xʷa-la
    he lunch eat-neg.(3ms)
    'He will not eat his lunch.'

    an moŋn axïy-il
    I foolish am-neg.(1s.)
    'I am not foolish.'

    annew moŋnen axi-ḽi
    we foolish are-neg.(1pl.)
    'We are not foolish.'

an fay-ïl
I   go-neg.(1s.)
'I didn't go.'

nadew bägäs   xaʃent-ïlla
they   the.sheep   steal-neg.(3pl.)
'They didn't steal the sheep.'

nadew bägäs   wayt-ïlla
they   the.sheep   buy-neg.(3pl.)
'They will not buy the sheep.'

4.2.9 Passive

Passive is marked morphologically by the morpheme */-s-/.*

ni ʃaysïqu	'He is caught.'
an ʃewsequ	'I am arrested.'
annew xäräfsäqu	'We are asked.'
xaʃenï gäräfsäqu	'The thief is punished.'
gong gïgïsïqu	'A well is dug.'
ni t'ämäk'sïti	'I am baptized.'
biri ardäysïqu	'The ox is slaughtered.'

4.2.10 Causative

The causative marker is the morpheme */-ʃi-/.*

yir käʃinʃi wanäqu	'The man caused to call.'
wätadera ʃewʃiqu	'The soldier caused to arrest.'
yir kuʃiqu	'The man caused to kill.'
xuri gäräfʃiqu	'The boy caused to punish.'

4.2.11 Infinitive

The morpheme */-na/* marks the infinitive.

đintäqu	'swim'
đintïna	'to swim'

xuyequ	'eat'
xuna	'to eat'
dʒaxäw	'drink'
dʒaxna	'to drink'
kuqu	'kill'
kuna	'to kill'
kiɬiŋäxu	'dance'
kiɬiŋna	'to dance'
gozäqu	'plough'
gozna	'to plough'

In addition, see the following sentences.

> *annew gozna fälägnäqu*
> we to.plough want
> 'We want to plough.'

> *ïntändew gändʒina fälägekun*
> you(pl.) to.sleep want
> 'You want to sleep.'

> *naydew axus dintïna fälägäkun*
> they water to.swim want
> 'They want to swim.'

4.2.12. Gerundive

The morpheme */-t-/* marks gerundive, as illustrated in the following data.

an xaʃento	'I, having stolen'
ïnti xaʃenti	'you (f.), having stolen'
ïnti xaʃenti	'you (m.), having stolen'
ni xaʃento	'he, having stolen'
ni xaʃente	'she, having stolen'
ïntändew xaʃentino	'you (pl.), having stolen'
naydew xaʃentino	'they, having stolen'

4.2.13 Jussive

Jussive for the 1st and 3rd person singular and plural nouns has the following forms.

an kiⱡiŋiw	'Let me dance.'
ni kiⱡiŋdo	'Let him dance.'
ni kiⱡiŋto	'Let her dance.'
annew kiⱡiŋno	'Let us dance.'
naydew kiⱡiŋdno	'Let them dance.'

4.2.14 Imperative

Imperative for the 2nd person singular and plural is as follows:

laxu	'You (m.) come!'
laxu	'You (f.) come!'
laxʷa	'You (pl.) come!'
fäy	'You (m.) go!'
fäy	'You (f.) go!'
fiya	'You (pl.) go!'
gändʒi	'You (m.) sleep!'
gändʒi	'You (f.) sleep!'
gändʒa	'You (pl.) sleep!'
xuy	'You (m.) eat!'
xuy	'You (f.) eat!'
xʷa	'You (pl.) eat!'

4.2.15 Number

There are different ways of pluralizing singular nouns.

- by adding */-kän/*

argï　　'bed'　　*argikän*　　'beds'

- by eliding the final vowel and then adding */-ïk/*

bäyla	'mule'	*bäylïk*	'mules'
färza	'horse'	*färzïk*	'horses'
đirwa	'hen'	*đirwïk*	'hens'

- by eliding the last syllable and then adding */-k/*

ʃalïya	'knife'	*ʃalïk*	'knives'
damiya	'cat'	*damik*	'cats'

- by adding */-kï/*

käw	'village'	*käwki*	'villages'
gïzïn	'dog'	*gïzïŋki*	'dogs'
nïŋ	'house'	*nïŋki*	'houses'

- by adding */-ti/*

yir	'man'	*yirti*	'men'

- by deletion of the last vowel

fintïra	'goat'	*fintïr*	'goats'

- by reduplication (in the case of Adjectives)

lägäza	'tall'
lägäzäqu lägäzäqu	'tall (pl.)'
atʃʼir	'short'
atʃʼirän atʃʼirän	'short (pl.)'
ʃemän	'black'
ʃemäna ʃemäna	'black (pl.)'

- by gemination

xura	'child'	*xurra*	'children'

- by changing r to l and subsequent addition of */-ɨi/*

bira　　'ox'　　*bilɨi*　　　'oxen'

See the following sentences in addition:

xura fuw	'The child cried.'
xurra funäqu	'The children cried.'
gïzïn zäläläqu	'The dog jumped.'
gïzïŋki zälälnäqu	'The dogs jumped.'
damiya wïxïrtïitäy	'The cat played.'
damik wïxïrtïnïqu	'The cat played.'

Whenever a quantifier is added, some Nouns drop their plural marker morphemes.

an kan täkäläqu	'I planted a tree.'
an kan ni na täkäläqu	'I planted two trees.'
ni niŋ säräqu	'He built a house.'
ni niŋ nïna säräqu	'He built two houses.'

4.2.16 Tense

So far, I have identified the following four different tenses.

4.2.16.1 Past

an tïqu	'I came.'
ïnti tïqu	'You (m.) came.'
ïnta tïqu	'You (f.) came.'
ni tïqu	'He came.'
ni tït	'She came.'
annew tïnequ	'We came.'
ïntändew tïnäqu	'You (pl.) came.'
naydew tïnäqu	'They came.'

4.2.16.2 Past perfect

an twanäqu	'I have come.'
ïnti tiyanequ	'You (m.) have come.'
ïnti tiyanequ	'You (f.) have come.'
ni twanäqu	' He has come.'
ni tiyanät	'She has come.'
annew tïnïwanäqu	'We have come.'
ïntändew tïnïqu	'You (pl.) have come.'
naydew tïnäqu	'They have come.'

4.2.16.3 Present progressive

an tesaß	'I am coming.'
ïnti tätäsaß	'You (m.) are coming.'
ïnti tätäsaß	'You (f.) are coming.'
ni tïyäsaß	'He is coming.'
ni tïtäsaß	'She is coming.'
annew tïnäsaß	'We are coming.'
naydew tïnäsaß	'They are coming.'

4.2.16.4 Future

an tïyequ	'I will come.'
ïnti tätäqu	'You (f.) will come.'
ïnti tätäqu	'You (m.) will come.'
ni tïyequ	'He will come.'
ni tïyequ	'She will come.'
annew tïnäqu	'We will come.'
ïntändew tätäkun	'You (pl.) will come.'
naydew tïyekun	'They will come.'

4.2.17 Object

The morpheme */-ïs/* is an object marker by being suffixed to an object NP.

annew nadew-ïs   kaʃiñïqu
we   them-obj.   called
'We called them.'

nadew annew-ïs kaʃiñïqu
they   us-obj.   called
'They called us.'

4.2.18 Nominalization (abstract)

The morpheme */-näy/* is a nominalizer which changes Nouns into their abstract counterparts.

xura	'child'
yi xurnäy	'my childhood/being a child/child "-ness"'
ti xurnäy	'your (m.) childness'
ti xurnäy	'your (f.) childness'
ni xurnäy	'his childness'
nïʃ xurnäy	'her childness'
anä xurnäy	'our kindness'
ïnt xurnäy	'your kindness'
na xurnäy	'their kindness'

4.3 Syntax

4.3.1 Word Order

Kemant has an S-O-V word order.

an nit   xäläqu
I   him   saw
'I saw him.'

ni yit xaläqu
he me saw
'He saw me.'

4.3.2 Noun Phrase

Kemant NPs have the following structures.

ʃexi nïŋ	'mud house'	Adj. + N
kani dïdil	'wooden bridge'	
lägäzax kana	'big tree'	
ʃaxi kïmbï	'iron stick'	

yin yir	'that man'	Dem. + N
ïn yir	'this man'	
yïndäw ïyyän	'those men'	
ïndäw ïyyän	'these men'	

yini   lägäza yir   Dem. + Adj. + N
that   tall   man
'that tall man'

yini   wäfram   bira
that   fat   ox
'that fat ox'

yini   dʒikäka   mïwït
that   heavy   load
'that heavy load'

yini lägäza   wäfram yir   Dem. + Adj. + Adj. + N
that tall   fat   man
'that tall fat man'

yini ʃämäni   wäfram biri
that black   fat   ox
'that fat black ox'

yini ʃayax ätʃ'ir   fintïra
that white short   goat
'that short white goat'

yini andʒin   xalaq yir   Dem. + CP + N
that yesterday whom I   saw man
'that man whom I saw yesterday'

yini andʒin   ayäyil wayitaq säyiŋ
that yesterday market which   I bought cloth
'that cloth which I bought yesterday'

niŋa xurra   Quantifier + N
'two   boys'

niŋa nïŋki
'two   houses'

kasey   bäyla   N-poss + N
of Kasa mule
'Kasa's mule'

kasey   firaw bäyla   N-poss + Adj. + N
of Kasa big   mule
'Kasa's big mule'

4.3.3 Verb Phrase

The VP can have the following structures.

ni-mïzis xuyequ   NP + V
his-lunch ate
'ate his lunch'

ni-wnät ʃagʷanäqu   NP + V
his-wife insulted
'insulted his wife

gondär   fïya   NP + V
to Gonder   went
'went to Gonder'

ni-abä-ʃ   dïfiyax PP + V
his-father-with   went
'went with his father'

mät'af yi-ʃ   ǐiya   N + PP + V
book   me for   gave
'gave book for me'

argï-l   ïkusïmäqu   PP + V
bed-on   sat
'sat on bed'

andʒin   gondär   mäkina-z   fiya   Adv. + N + PP + V
yesterday Gonder   car-by   went
'went to Gonder by car yesterday'

t'ärmuzän   niŋa   t'ädʒ läyti   N + Q + N + V
bottle   two   tej   gave
'gave me two bottles of tej'

goßäz   axïyequ   Adj. + be-V
clever   become
'become clever'

goßäz   gala   Adj. + be-V
clever   is
'is clever'

kinʃenta gala   N + be-V
teacher   is
'is a teacher'

ni-nïŋ-ïn   wanäqu   NP + V
his-house-art.   present
'present at his house'

goßäz   mäsäläqu   Adj. + N
clever   seems
'seems clever'

yi-nïŋ-ïs   kïzäqu   NP + V
poss.-house-obj. sold
'sold my house'

As far as the above VP and NP constructions are concerned, Kemant is a head final or right-headed language.

5 Conclusion

The study of a language on the brink of extinction like Kemant has its problems. The first major problem is the inavailability of linguistic informants. This is a major problem, because one has to go to the villages where the language is spoken for all elicitation purposes and for every detail in the data collection

Since I am working on the Kemant Grammar and the Kemant Language Shift situation, it would be helpful to be able to collect a large corpus of text, or to analyze the data on the spot by staying in the midst of the speakers for a relatively long period of time.

In this paper, different areas of linguistics are touched, but none of them is presented exhaustively yet. It cannot be claimed that both the sociolinguistic and the grammatical descriptions are complete. There are two reasons why this research has not been completed yet. First, the responses to sociolinguistic questionnaires are numerous, and their analysis is a time consuming process. Second, the linguistic data collected is limited, because the field work was mainly devoted to the collection of sociolinguistic responses.

However, I believe that this paper will give a bird's eye view of the Kemant language and its speakers. It is also hoped that detailed grammatical and sociolinguistic studies will be produced in the near future.

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