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**A grammar of Gaahmg, a Nilo-Saharan language of Sudan**  
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## 11 Prepositions

Preposition is a lexical category including four independent prepositions and one prepositional prefix. Prepositions introduce noun phrases which function as modifiers or adjuncts of the preceding noun or verb. Four independent prepositions can have the same segmental form *ɛ* but differ in tone or grammatical marking on the prepositional phrase. The animate accompaniment preposition *è* ‘with’ has Low tone, the inanimate preposition *ē* ‘with’ has Mid tone, and the general preposition *é, í* (GP) has High tone. The general preposition has free variation in vowel quality regardless of the [ATR] quality of surrounding words. When the general preposition is used to introduce a genitive phrase, the noun following the preposition undergoes a tone change. The preposition marker prefix *ɔ-* is used for introducing phrases with initial pronouns.

Table 55: Prepositions

<i>è</i>	‘with’	Animate accompaniment preposition
<i>ē</i>	‘with’	Inanimate accompaniment preposition
<i>é, í</i>	GP; ‘to, from, in, at, by, of’	General preposition: Goal, source, time, location, instrument, or genitive
<i>ɔ-</i>	‘to, from, in, by’	Pronoun preposition marker

### 11.1 Animate accompaniment preposition

The preposition *è* ‘with’ having Low tone is used for introducing animate accompaniment phrases. In such phrases, the accompaniment marker clitic =*Ē* attaches to the final word of the accompaniment phrase. The accompaniment marker =*Ē* for consonant-final stems is attached to the noun *āɪɔ=ē* ‘fox’ in (1a) and to *kūūɔ=ī* ‘person.name’ in (b).

(1) **Animate accompaniment preposition *è* ‘with’**

(a) *sàlāɔ=ā è āɪɔ=ē ē bèè*  
 hyena = DEF with fox = ACM 3pN said.INF  
 ‘Hyena and Fox said . . .’ (Nyee16)

(b) *jāfāri = n è mōīɔ kūūɔ=ī wāj-jà é wīlòns*  
 Jafari = DEF with old.man person. went GP hunting.GEN  
 name = ACM  
 ‘Jafari and an older man of the Kuud clan went on a hunt.’ (Jafr1)

### 11.2 Inanimate accompaniment preposition

The preposition *è* ‘with’ having Mid tone is used for introducing inanimate accompaniment adjunct phrases. The accompaniment marker clitic is not attached

to such phrases.

(2) **Inanimate accompaniment preposition  $\bar{\epsilon}$  ‘with’**

- (a)  $\bar{\epsilon}$  máà iīŋ  $\bar{\epsilon}$  àn-n mōsòr ɔ̄l  
 3sN prides.INF 3sR 3sN stay-INF horse up  
 ‘. . . taking pride in himself as he sits up on the horse

$\bar{\epsilon}$  páré = n  $\acute{\epsilon}$  mōjñìl = ò d-éès  
 with skin.bag = DEF GP /mòjñìl/devil.GEN = DEF PP-hand.3sPs  
 with an animal-skin bag having demonic power in his hand.’ (Minj14-15)

- (b) ānēndá T̄él  $\bar{\epsilon}$  kúnd = ú  $\bar{\epsilon}$  áđ  $\bar{\epsilon}$  wáēdá,  
 then God 3sPs heart = DEF 3sN becomes with joy  
 ‘Therefore God will be pleased  
 (lit. God’s heart becomes with joy).’ (Womn17)

### 11.3 General preposition

The preposition  $\acute{\epsilon}$ , ‘to, from, in, at, by’ introduces adjunct phrases that indicate goal, time, location, or instrument/source. Goal phrases can be used along with a following locative adverb  $\text{t}\acute{\epsilon}$  ‘there’ as in (3a) or along with a preceding adverbial locative  $\text{dumuu}$  ‘far’ as in (b). The first prepositional phrase  $\acute{\epsilon}$  *nāāndá* ‘in day’ of (b) has the role of time. In (c), the prepositional phrase has the role of location,

(3) **General preposition  $\acute{\epsilon}$ ,  $\acute{\epsilon}$  (GP)**

- (a) gōl fōndì bəgsōn = ñn líjji  $\acute{\epsilon}$  kōrtūum t̄è.  
 just Fandi caught.by-them arrived GP Khartoum here  
 ‘Fandi was captured by them and brought here to Khartoum.’ (Fand6)
- (b) á wāj-jā  $\acute{\epsilon}$  nāāndá mān dūmùùn  $\acute{\epsilon}$  dàal  
 1sN went-COMP GP day certain towards GP (valley name)  
 ‘One day I went to Dal Valley.’ (Jooj1)
- (c) āgg b̄j āgg gōl-g = ɔ̄ nà dáāgg èèn  $\acute{\epsilon}$  nōōgg  
 1pN left 1pP friend-PL = DEF REL.PL two 3sN GP behind  
 ‘We left our other two companions behind.’ (Thng5-6)
- (d)  $\acute{\epsilon}$  d̄j-j āāggá  $\acute{\epsilon}$  mīd-óg f̄r̄ójj wá b̄ = ñ  
 3sN stone-INF 1pA GP stone-PL few not oh = SBO  
 ‘When it pelted us with a lot of stones, . . .’ (Thng20)
- (e) gàar cúó . . . nām-án =  $\bar{\epsilon}$   $\acute{\epsilon}$  káé-gg = à  
 pork sweet /nam/eat-CONT.P=PAS.A GP witchdoctor-PL=DEF  
 ‘Sweet pork . . . was being eaten by witchdoctors.’

in (d), the role of instrument, and in (e), the role of agent.

This preposition is also used in the formation of two conjunctions: *é gārā* ‘when, while (lit. by place.DEF)’, *é kārā* ‘because (lit. by word.DEF)’. Conjunction is another lexical category and discussed in 15.2. In 13.4, it will be shown that the general preposition introduces prepositional phrases used as adjuncts indicating time *é nāānd = á yān* ‘another day (lit. at day another)’.

The general preposition is also used to introduce genitive phrases which indicate possession, or close relation of certain objects or actions. In such phrases, the noun following the preposition undergoes a tone change and is the possessor of the noun preceding the preposition, or is the noun to which the preceding noun is closely related. In (4a), the *nēērēmā = n* ‘devil.GEN=DEF’ is the possessor of *nālg* ‘children’. In (b), the word preceding the genitive phrase is a verb and the genitive phrase functions as an adjunct. As discussed in 6.5, the tone of each genitive noun has Mid-Low or High-Low, regardless of the root tone.

(4) **General preposition *é*, *f*(GP)**

- (a) *ā gār-rā ā nām-dá nālg é nēērēmā = n*  
 SBJV be.able- SBJV eat-SBJV. children GP /nēērēmān/  
 SBJV.3sN 3sN devil.GEN = DEF  
 ‘... so as to eat the nyeerma offspring.’ (Nyee10)
- (b) *ē gōms-óggō mīi = n ē nāā é fōl*  
 3sN found-M.COMP goat = DEF 3sN laying.INCP GP /fōl/hole.GEN  
 ‘He discovered the goat down in the well.’ (Goat10)
- (c) *càdr néé-n é sālāḍ = à è âlḍ è jēgg*  
 tale this- GP /sālāḍ = à/ with /âlḍ/ with /jēg/  
 DEF hyena.GEN = COP fox.GEN thing.PL.GEN  
 ‘This story is about a hyena, fox, and some
- é lēēl-ēēg = à bīigg nà àn léél-éēgg = è*  
 GP /léél-éēg/grass. some REL.PL stay forest-PL = RDM  
 GEN-PL = COP  
 wild forest animals.’ (Nyee1-2)

In (4c), there are three possessors (*sālāḍā* ‘hyena’, *âlḍ* ‘fox’, *jēgg* ‘things’) of a single item (*càdr néén* ‘this tale’) introduced by the general preposition *é* (GP) with High tone and two animate accompaniment prepositions *è* ‘with’ with Low tone. There is no animate accompaniment clitic = *É* attached to the nouns *âlḍ* ‘fox’ and *jēgg* ‘things’ possibly because the general preposition *é* (GP) with genitive use has scope over them, causing them to undergo genitive tone change. The object *lēēlēēggà* ‘grasses’ in the genitive phrase *jēgg é lēēlēēggà* ‘things of grasses’ is

introduced by a general preposition  $\acute{\epsilon}$  (GP) with High tone since it is not a fourth possessor of *càðr néén* ‘this tale’, but of *jégg* ‘things’.

As discussed in 10.2 and 14.5.1, the genitive is also used to encode agents of agented passive clauses as in (5).

- (5) *nāms* *náó-s = ē* *āggāār*  
 food /naw/need-COMP=PAS.A /āgáár/hunter.GEN  
 ‘Food is needed by the hunter.’

#### 11.4 Prepositional prefix for pronouns

The consonant prefix *ǰ-* is used instead of the independent general preposition  $\acute{\epsilon}$  (GP) when marking prepositional phrases beginning with possessive pronouns, prepositional pronouns, locative prepositional pronouns, or inherently possessed body parts—all of which are vowel-initial.<sup>37</sup>

In (6a), the preposition attaches to the possessive pronoun  $\bar{\epsilon}$  ‘his’ of the possessive phrase to indicate ‘in his chest’. In (b), the preposition attaches to the prepositional pronoun *-āggá* ‘us’ to indicate ‘from us’. In (c), the preposition attaches to the locative prepositional pronoun *-één* ‘behind.3sO’ to indicate ‘to behind him’. In (d), the preposition attaches to the possessed body part noun *āññ* to indicate ‘on your back’. In (a,d), the prepositional phrases have the role of location, in (b) the role of source, and in (c) the role of goal.

##### (6) Prepositional prefix *ǰ-*

- (a) *jēn*  $\bar{\epsilon}$  *bìl = ì* *ǰ-ē* *kúnd*  
 person 3sN shot = 3sAM PP-3sP chest  
 ‘A person shot him in his chest.’ (Fand30)
- (b) *jōgg* *ēgg* *óðì* *bà,* *ēgg* *wár* *jègg = ā* *ǰ-āggá* *kāē*  
 people 3pN come oh 3pN take things = DEF PP-1pO all  
 ‘When these people come, they take all (our) things from us.’ (Minj7)
- (c) *āld = á*  $\bar{\epsilon}$  *pārđ-ì* *ǰ-één,* *lāñ*  $\bar{\epsilon}$  *māđāggā*  
 fox = DEF 3sN jump-3sAM PP-behind.3sO until 3sN drank  
 ‘Fox jumped over him (into the well) and drank until . . .’ (Goat12)
- (d) *ā* *rāg-sā* *ǰ-āññ* *ā* *léj-jā* *tú = í*  
 1sN step PP-back.2sPs SBJV go out = SBO  
 ‘If I step on your back so that I get out, . . .’ (Goat14-15)

<sup>37</sup> In the data collected, the prepositional prefix *ǰ-* did not replace the general preposition in genitive use  $\acute{\epsilon}$  ‘of’ such as in ‘of my house’.

### 11.5 Adverbs functioning as prepositions

Some adverbs of direction have the syntactic function of prepositions, introducing a noun phrase. In (7a), the adverb *ḡūmùùn* ‘towards’ introduces the noun phrase *wāālg* ‘water.source in’. Sometimes adverbs of direction introduce other adverbs of direction as in (b), where the first adverb functions as a preposition, and the second functions as a noun phrase. In both example (a) and (b), the prepositional phrase functions as an adjunct, describing the location of the action.

(7) **Adverbs of direction functioning as prepositions**

(a) ē dōs ē wāḡ **ḡūmùùn** wāāl = g  
 3sN started 3sN go towards water.source = in  
 ‘He set out for the well.’ (Goat2)

(b) iigg = ó ē māl = ínō **fān** ṭād  
 milk = DEF 3sN gathered = 3sD on down  
 ‘Milk accumulated for him underneath.’ (Nyee24)

