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In memoriam Marvin Lionel Bender (1934–2008)

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Marvin Lionel Bender, a prominent figure in Afroasiatic and Ethiopian linguistics for 50 years and whose works are among the authoritative sources on Omotic and Nilo-Saharan linguistics, died on Tuesday, February 19, 2008 in Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

Born August 18, 1934 in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, he received Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Dartmouth College in mathematics (1956, 1958). After M.A. studies, Bender taught mathematics in Ghana and then in Ethiopia at Haile Sellassie I University, where he became interested in Ethiopian languages and linguistics, and so returned to graduate school at the University of Texas at Austin, where his 1968 dissertation was directed by Emmon Bach. After Ph.D. studies, Bender was immediately recruited to the research team of the Language Survey of Ethiopia, a Ford Foundation project and part of the five-nation Survey of Language Use and Language Teaching in East Africa. He was the only member of the survey team (also Donald Bowen, Robert Cooper, and Charles Ferguson) with experience in Ethiopia and knowledge of Amharic. The survey report, *Language in Ethiopia* (1976, Oxford University Press), included several chapters by Bender, some co-authored with Ethiopian linguists. Words he wrote in the preface suggest the understanding about research conclusions which was to characterize his many books and articles in Ethiopian linguistics: 'an attempt to summarize the state of the art ... and not a new source of orthodoxy'.

His freely expressed conclusions from research, especially concerning Omotic and Nilo-Saharan classification in which his work became foundational, were frequently controversial, and often superceded by findings of his later work. He was among the first to take up the hypothesis of Harold Fleming about the status of Omotic as a separate branch of Afroasiatic, and that of Robert Hetzron about the internal classification of Ethiopian Semitic. Upon completion of the Survey's work in Ethiopia, to enable his editing of its report Bender was appointed at Stanford University, where he valued his continuing relationship with Ferguson and, newly, with Joseph Greenberg. In 1971 he joined the Department of Anthropology at Southern Illinois University where he remained until retirement in 1996.

With Ethiopia as an example his early research explored Ferguson's idea of 'language areas', and Greenberg's method of mass comparison as a basis for genetic language classification in a diverse and under-documented linguistic setting such as Ethiopia. As Greenberg's classification of African

languages had brought order to the broad field of African linguistics, Bender's would similarly serve Omotic and Nilo-Saharan.

He was the first to systematically sort through the many problems of Ethiopian-language nomenclature, which had arisen from decades of research in four European languages and competing use of ethnic-group names, self-names, and Amharic names, and failure to distinguish dialect and language, and he was the first to attempt a comprehensive catalog of the languages and named dialects, including a preliminary genetic classification: *The Languages of Ethiopia* (*Anthropological Linguistics* 13.5, 1971).

Bender began to fulfill the need for descriptions of Nilo-Saharan and Omotic languages. His thorough knowledge of prior work, ability to question informants in Amharic, and the new data he acquired enabled him to provide the first internal classification of Omotic, in his *Omotic: a New Afroasiatic Language Family* (1975), and eventually his *Comparative Morphology of the Omotic Languages* (2000), and *Omotic Lexicon and Phonology* (2003). He obtained grants, including from the US National Science Foundation, to study Nilo-Saharan languages, an extraordinarily diverse family with often poorly accessible members. In order to provide the Ethiopian academic community with an affordable introduction to these largely ignored and often despised peoples and their languages, he self-published, in Addis Abäba, *The Ethiopian Nilo-Saharans* (1975). Bender authored, with speakers of the languages, dictionaries on two, Gaam (1980) and Kunama (1996), and edited six volumes of Nilo-Saharan papers. His latest book on this family was *The Nilo-Saharan Languages: a Comparative Essay* (1996). His Omotic and Nilo-Saharan works are a major contribution to the preservation of endangered languages.

After retiring from Southern Illinois University, he continued to write and publish with energy, despite failing health, including entries in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, and a finished 145-pp. manuscript on 'Cushitic lexicon and phonology'.

List of Publications

1966

1. Notes on lexical correlations in some Ethiopian languages. *JES* 4.1: 5–16.

1968

2. *Amharic verb morphology: a generative approach*. Ph.D. dissertation, Austin: University of Texas. 174 pp.
3. Analysis of a Barya wordlist. *AL* 10.9: 1–24.
4. Remarks on glottochronology of northern Ethiopian Semitic languages. *JES* 6: 1–11.

1969

5. Chance CV correspondences in unrelated languages. *Language* 45: 519–531.

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6. Two problems in Amharic phonetics: the sixth order vowel and the verb suffixes. *JES* 7.2: 33–41.

1970

7. Current status of linguistic research in Ethiopia. *Rural Africana* 11: 90–96.
8. A preliminary investigation of South Arabian. *Proceedings of the third international conference of Ethiopian studies* (Addis Ababa, 1966), vol. 2, 26–37. Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Haile Selassie I University.
9. Problems of transliteration into Amharic. *Journal of the Language Association of Eastern Africa* 1.2: 24–27.

1971

10. The languages of Ethiopia: A new lexicostatistic classification and some problems of diffusion. *AL* 13.5: 165–288.
11. The patterning of verb root consonants in Amharic, *Stanford occasional papers in linguistics* 1, CAROL FARWELL and ELIZABETH TRAUOGOTT, eds., 28–42. Stanford, CA: Committee on Linguistics.
12. with ROBERT L. COOPER. Mutual intelligibility within Sidamo. *Lingua* 27: 32–52.

1972

13. Addenda to guide to Ethiopian language nomenclature. *AL* 14.5: 195–203.
14. Loanwords in Amharic daily newspaper. *AL* 14.8: 317–322.
15. with ROBERT L. COOPER and CHARLES A. FERGUSON. Language in Ethiopia: implications of a survey for sociolinguistic theory and method. *LiS* 1: 215–233. Reprinted 1975.

1973

16. Falasha Jews, their history, their culture. *Kol Shalom* 1.2: 6–7.
17. Linguistic indeterminacy: why you cannot reconstruct Proto-Human, *Language sciences* 26: 7–12.

1974

18. Amharic verbal types from text and lexicon. *Folia orientalia* 15: 23–46.
19. Mutual intelligibility within Sidamo. *Actes du Premier Congrès International de Linguistique Sémitique et Chamito-Sémitique (Paris 1969)*, ANDRE CAQUOT and DAVID COHEN, eds., 159–169. The Hague; Paris: Mouton.
20. Phoneme frequencies in Amharic. *JES* 12.1: 19–24.
21. The role of phonological innovations in the lexicostatistic subgroupings of Ethiopian languages, *Third annual conference on African linguistics*, Erhard Voelz, ed., 39–68, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University.
22. Reply to SASSE. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 124.1: 206–208.

1975

23. *Omotic: A new Afroasiatic language family*. Carbondale: University Museum, Southern Illinois University. viii + 292 pp.
24. *The Ethiopian Nilo-Saharan*. Addis Ababa: Artistic Printers. 118 pp.
25. The beginnings of Ethnohistory in Western Wellega Province: the Mao Problem, *Patterns of language, culture, and society in Sub-Saharan Africa (Proceedings of the sixth African linguistics conference; Ohio State University working papers in linguistics* 19), ROBERT K. HERBERT, ed., 125–141. Columbus, OH: Department of Linguistics, Ohio State University.
26. Toward a lexicostatistic classification of Ethiopian languages. *Hamito-Semitica: proceedings of a colloquium held by the Historical Section of the Linguistics Association*,

- Great Britain* (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1970; *Janua linguarum, Series practica* 200), JAMES BYNON and THEODORA BYNON, eds., 377–388. The Hague: Mouton.
27. with ROBERT L. COOPER and CHARLES A. FERGUSON. Language in Ethiopia: implications of a survey for sociolinguistic theory and method, *Language surveys in developing nations*, S. OHANNESSIAN, C.A. FERGUSON, and E.C. POLOME, eds., 191–208. Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics. Reprint of 1972.
 28. Review of *The copula näw in Ambaric*, by GETATCHEW HAILE (*IV Congresso Internazionale di Studi Ethiopici*, Rome 1972). *Afroasiatic linguistics* 2.10: 188–190.
- 1976**
29. Editor. *The Non-Semitic languages of Ethiopia*. East Lansing: African Studies Center, Michigan State University. xv + 738 pp.
 30. Editor, with J. DONALD BOWEN, ROBERT COOPER, and CHARLES A. FERGUSON. *Language in Ethiopia*. London: Oxford University Press, xxv + 572 p.
 31. Preface. *Language in Ethiopia*, M.L. BENDER, J. DONALD BOWEN, ROBERT COOPER, and CHARLES A. FERGUSON, eds., xxiii–xxiv. London: Oxford University Press.
 32. Genetic classification of languages: genotype and phenotype. *Language Sciences* 43: 4–6.
 33. In defense of linguistic innateness (reply to PENG). *Language sciences* 41: 19–20.
 34. Introduction. *The Non-Semitic languages of Ethiopia*, M. LIONEL BENDER, ed., 1–24. East Lansing: African Studies Center, Michigan State University.
 35. Nilo-Saharan overview. *The Non-Semitic languages of Ethiopia*, M. LIONEL BENDER, ed., 439–83. East Lansing: African Studies Center, Michigan State University.
 36. with ALESSANDRO TRIULZI and ATIEB AHMED DAFALLAH. Some notes on the Ethiopian Bertha and their language. *Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli* 36 (New Series 26): 1–23.
 37. with ALESSANDRO TRIULZI and ATIEB AHMED DAFALLAH. *Berta, The Non-Semitic languages of Ethiopia*, M. LIONEL BENDER, ed., 513–532. East Lansing: African Studies Center, Michigan State University.
 38. with DAVID TURTON. Mursi, *The Non-Semitic languages of Ethiopia*, M. LIONEL BENDER, ed., 533–561. East Lansing: African Studies Center, Michigan State University.
 39. with ROGER COWLEY, HAILU FULASS, GETATCHEW HAILE, and CHARLES A. FERGUSON. The Amharic language, *LiE*, 77–98.
 40. with SYDNEY W. HEAD and ROGER COWLEY. The Ethiopian writing system, *LiE*, 120–129.
 41. with MULUGETA ETEFFA. Galla, *LiE*, 130–148.
 42. with J.D. BOWEN, ROBERT L. COOPER, and CHARLES A. FERGUSON. Introduction, *LiE*, 1–19.
 43. with HAILU FULASS and ROGER COWLEY. Two Ethio-Semitic languages, *LiE*, 199–119.
 44. Review of *Language origins*, ROGER WESCOTT, ed., *AA* 78: 695–696.
 45. Review of *Proceedings of the first United States conference on Ethiopian studies* (Monograph 3, Occasional Papers Series, Committee on Ethiopian Studies), HAROLD MARCUS and JOHN HINNANT, eds., 1975, *LiS* 5.2: 248–249.
 46. Book note of *Agricultural systems in Ethiopia* by E. WESTPHAL, *AA* 78: 645.
 47. Book note of *The atlas of Africa* by R. VAN CHI-BONNARDEL, *AA* 78: 195.
 48. Book note of *The central Ethiopians* by W.A. SHACK, *AA* 78: 195–196.
 49. Book note of *East African societies* by AYLWARD SHORTER, *AA* 78: 196.

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50. Book note of *Nyeri townsmen, Kenya* by CARL A. DUTTO, *AA* 78: 643.
51. Book note of *The Nubian exodus* by HASSAN DAFALLA, *AA* 78: 643.

1977

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55. Review of *Kulubi* by EDMUND MURRAY, *Ethiopianist notes* 1: 59–62.
56. Review of *Rivers of sand* (movie) by JOHN GARDNER, *AA* 79: 196–197.

1978

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58. Consonant co-occurrence restrictions in Afroasiatic verb roots. *Atti del secondo congresso internazionale di linguistica camito-semitica (Firenze 1974)*, PELIO FRONZAROLI, ed., 9–20. Florence: Istituto di Linguistica e di Lingue Orientali, Univ. di Firenze.
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61. Book note of *The Chagga and Meru of Tanzania* by SALLY F. MOORE and PAUL PURITT, *AA* 80: 1000.
62. Book note of *Les Jachères en Afrique tropicale* by SUZANNE JEAN, *AA* 80: 482.
63. Book note of *The Zaghawa from an ecological perspective* by MARIE-JOSE and JOSEPH TUBIANA, *AA* 80: 1000–1001.

1979

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65. Gumuz: a sketch of grammar and lexicon, *AuÜ* 61: 38–69.
66. Book note of *African languages: a genetic and decimalized classification of bibliographic and general reference*. *AA* 81: 722.
67. Book note of *Garçons et filles* by PIERRE VIDAL. *AA* 81: 163–164.

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69. Editor. *Peoples and cultures of the Ethio-Sudan borderlands*. East Lansing, MI: African Studies Center, Michigan State University. x + 214 pp.
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73. with ALESSANDRO TRIULZI and A.A. DAFALLAH. Some notes on the Ethiopian Berta and their language, *Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli* 36: 1–23.
74. Preface. *Peoples and cultures of the Ethio-Sudan borderlands*, M. LIONEL BENDER, ed., 1–3. East Lansing, MI: African Studies Center, Michigan State University.
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76. Research report: Livestock and linguistics in North and East African ethnohistory. *Current Anthropology* 23.3. 316–17.
77. Book note of *Das Dullay: Materialien zu einer ostkuschitischen Sprachgruppe* (Kölner Beiträge zur Afrikanistik 6), by HERMANN AMBORN, GUNTER MINKER and HANS-JÜRGEN SASSE (1980). *Language* 58: 730–731.
78. Book note of *Domination and resistance* by Werner Lange. *AA* 84: 752.
79. Book note of *A Generative grammar of Afar*, by LOREN BLEISE (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981). *AA* 84: 459.

1983

80. Editor. *Nilo-Saharan language studies*. East Lansing, MI: African Studies Center, Michigan State University. xviii + 374 pp.
81. Color term encoding in a special linguistic domain: Sudanese Arabic skin colors. *AL* 25: 19–27.
82. The Eastern Jebel languages, *Current approaches to African linguistics, vol. 1* (Publications in African languages and linguistics 1), IVAN DIHOFF, ed., 49–57. Dordrecht: Foris.
83. Introduction, *Nilo-Saharan language studies*, M. LIONEL BENDER, ed., 1–10. East Lansing, MI: African Studies Center, Michigan State University.
84. Languages of the Wadai-Darfur, *Nilo-Saharan language studies*, M. LIONEL BENDER, ed., 43–79. East Lansing, MI: African Studies Center, Michigan State University.
85. Majang phonology and morphology, *Nilo-Saharan language studies*, M. LIONEL BENDER, ed., 114–147. East Lansing, MI: African Studies Center, Michigan State University.
86. The origin of Amharic. *Journal of the Institute of Language Studies* 1.1: 45–52.
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88. Remnant languages of Ethiopia and the Sudan, *Nilo-Saharan language studies*, M. LIONEL BENDER, ed., 336–354. East Lansing, MI: African Studies Center, Michigan State University.
89. with TESHOME DEMISSE. An argot of Addis Ababa unattached girls. *LiS* 12: 339–347.
90. Discussion and criticism: more on sapientization and speech. *Current Anthropology* 24: 113.

1984

91. Commentary: Distant genetic relationship and the use of basic lexicon. *AA* 86: 410.
92. Review of *Gurage folklore* by WOLF LESLAU and *Ethiopians speak IV, Muher* by WOLF LESLAU. *AA* 86: 496.

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1985

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95. Gumuz, Koman, Mao, and Omotic. *Papers from the 15th African linguistics conference*, RUSSELL SCHUH, ed., *Studies in African linguistics supplement* 9: 19–21.
96. A possible Cushomotic isomorph. *AAP* 6: 149–155.
97. with NEGUSE ABBEBE. The Ethiopian language academy, 1943–1974. *Northeast African studies* 6.3: 1–7.
98. Comment on Kronenfeld: numerical taxonomy: old techniques and new assumptions. *Current Anthropology* 26: 33.
99. Reply to WENDY JAMES' review of *Peoples and cultures of the Ethio-Sudan borderlands*, M.L. BENDER, ed. *Northeast African studies* 7.3: 71–74.
100. Review of *The archaeological and linguistic reconstruction of African history*, C. EHRET and M. POSNANSKY, eds. *Language* 61: 694–698.
101. Review of *Current progress in Afro-Asiatic linguistics: Papers of the third international Hamito-Semitic conference* (Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 28; Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1984), JAMES BYNON, ed. *Journal of African languages and linguistics* 7: 173–175.
102. Book note of *Current approaches to African linguistics II*, ALAN KAYE et al., eds. *Language* 61: 505.
103. Book note of *Linguistic concepts: an introduction to tagmemics* by KENNETH L. PIKE. *Language* 61: 214–215.
104. Book note of *Tigre grammar and texts* by SCHLOMO RAZ (Undena, 1983). *Language* 61: 504.

1986

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106. Ethiopian language policy 1974–1981. *AL* 27.3: 273–279.
107. First steps toward Proto-Omotic, *Proceedings of the 16th African linguistics conference (Ohio State University)*, DAVID ODDEN, ed., 21–35. Dordrecht: Foris.
108. Lexical retention in Ethio-Semitic: checking up on a myth, *The Fergusonian Impact, vol. I*, JOSHUA FISHMAN et al., eds., 291–299. Berlin: Mouton.
109. A note on the copula and genitive in Oromo. *AAP* 8: 127–135.
110. with P.S. GILL. Research report: The genetic code and Zipf's law. *Current Anthropology* 27: 280–283.
111. Book note of *Learning a field language* by ROBBINS BURLING. *Language* 62: 225.
112. Book note of *Studies in the nominal sentence in Egyptian* by JOHN B. CALLENDER. *Language* 62: 224.

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114. Some possible African creoles: a pilot study, *Pidgin and Creole languages: essays in memory of John E. Reinecke*, GLENN GILBERT, ed., 37–60. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

1988

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117. Book note of *Linguists for non-linguists*, by FRANK PARKER. *Language* 64: 188.
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1989

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120. Berta lexicon, *TiNSL*, 271–304.
121. The Eastern Jebel languages, *TiNSL*, 151–179.
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123. Letter on Fleming's editorial on reconstruction, *Mother tongue* 8 (August 1989): 32–33.
124. Nilo-Saharan pronouns/demonstratives, *TiNSL*, 1–34.
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1990

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1991

133. Editor. *Proceedings of the fourth Nilo-Saharan conference, Bayreuth, 1989* (Nilo-Saharan linguistic analyses and documentation 7). Hamburg: Buske, xx + 404 pp.
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138. Letter on long rangers (with reply by HAROLD FLEMING and rejoinder by BENDER), *Mother tongue* 13 (April 1991): 46–48.
139. Review of *Ethiopian Studies: Proceedings of the sixth international conference (Tel Aviv, 1980)*, GIDEON GOLDENBERG, ed. (1986, Boston: Balkema). *Reviews in anthropology* 17: 141–152.
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141. Book note of *Parentés linguistiques (à propos du songhay)*, by ROBERT NICOLAÏ (Paris, 1990). *Journal of Pidgin and Creole languages* 6: 349–350.
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- 1992**
143. Central sudanic segmental and lexical reconstruction. *AAP* 29: 5–61.
144. Letter on Bengtson's *Language* rejects 'Global Etymologies', *Mother tongue* 17 (August 1992): 79.
145. Book note of *Current progress in Chadic linguistics*, ZYGMUNT FRAJZYNGIER, ed. (1989). *Language* 68: 226–227.
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Abbreviations in the List of Publications

<i>AA</i>	<i>American Anthropologist</i>
<i>AAP</i>	<i>Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere</i>
<i>AL</i>	<i>Anthropological Linguistics</i>
<i>AuÜ</i>	<i>Afrika und Übersee</i>
<i>EAE</i> 1–4	<i>Encyclopaedia Aethiopica</i> , vol. 1–4, SIEGBERT UHLIG, ed. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz
<i>JES</i>	<i>Journal of Ethiopian Studies</i>
<i>LiE</i>	<i>Language in Ethiopia</i> , M.L. BENDER et al., eds. London: Oxford
<i>LiS</i>	<i>Language in Society</i>
<i>LSiAL</i>	LINCOM Studies in Afroasiatic Linguistics
<i>TiNSL</i>	<i>Topics in Nilo-Saharan Linguistics</i> (Nilo-Saharan linguistic analyses and documentation 3), M. LIONEL BENDER, ed. Hamburg: Buske.