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BAYE YIMAM, Addis Ababa University
    with a Selected Bibliography by BAYE YIMAM
    and ALESSANDRO BAUSI, Universität Hamburg

Personalia

In memoriam Grover Hudson (*1940–2022*)

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In memoriam Grover Hudson (1940–2022)

BAYE YIMAM, Addis Ababa University

And yet here departs in death one more soul of great prominence in Ethiopian Studies …

Grover Hudson was born to Joe Milton Hudson and Izella Hudson on 8 July 1940, in Fort Worth, Texas. He did his schooling in Fort Worth and joined Arlington State College, his alma mater, where he did a degree in English, following which he earned a master's degree in Linguistics and a Certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) at the University of California. Subsequently, he joined the American Peace Corps Volunteer program and served in Ethiopia from September 1963 to June 1965. His career as a linguist started during this period when he was inspired by a complex sociolinguistic situation, where Sidama along with four other related Cushitic languages captivated his attention while teaching English at Ras Desta School, in Yərgaläm, the then capital city of Sidamo Province, now renamed Sidama Regional State, with Hawassa as its capital.

In pursuit of his interest in the complex sociolinguistic situation of Southern Ethiopia, he went back to Ethiopia in 1967 and placed himself at the then Haile Sellassie I University, now Addis Ababa University (AAU), where he taught English and also did extensive fieldwork on the Cushitic languages until 1969. With a rich field experience in Ethiopian languages and cultures, he enrolled at UCLA to do a PhD in Linguistics, which necessitated further fieldwork in Ethiopia, from 1972 to 1973. He completed his studies with a dissertation on *Suppletion in the Representation of Alternations* (1975), a major phonological feature characterizing a sub-branch of Cushitic, now called Highland East Cushitic where Sidama constituted a major strand. Subsequently, he did a general description of the entire sub-branch for a volume, the *Non-Semitic languages of Ethiopia*, edited by Marvin Lionel Bender, and published by the African Studies Center of Michigan State University (MSU) in 1976. The work ushered in a series of publications on comparative Cushitic that eventually led to the rebirth of West Cushitic as an independent branch of Afro-Asiatic, already christened Omotic in 1969 by Harold

Fleming,[1] often called the father of Omotic. The new phylum is still shrouded with controversies but the burgeoning literature on it is frustratingly enlightening to students on both sides of the Atlantic.

Grover joined MSU in 1979. Before that, he taught in several institutions, including Southern Illinois University-Carbondale (1974–1975), Ain Shams University, Cairo (1975–1977), Alexandria University (1976), University of Texas (1977), and San Diego State University (1978–1979). In all of these, his preoccupation was in courses like phonology, historical linguistics, and Amharic, a language in which he had developed native-like fluency through his lived experience in Ethiopia since his days as a Peace Corps volunteer.

At Michigan State University, Grover promoted programs of studies in African languages and area studies with a focus on Ethiopia and the Horn. In these programs, he mentored several PhD students from other universities studying Amharic and Ethiopian culture in regular and summer programs. He attracted both faculty and students from universities with a high percentage of black enrolment and from others like El Colegio de México, which wanted to collaborate with Ethiopian institutions. The programs led to a growing body of publications on Ethiopia and the Horn for users of the MSU and AAU libraries, which serve readers from institutions of other lands.

Because of his knowledge of the Amharic language and the cultural life of the region in general, Grover was selected to serve as a director of the Amharic Courses in a series of Peace Corps training programs. He was also assigned to co-direct the 2003 Summer Institute of the Linguistic Society of America at MSU. Throughout his life, Grover championed progressive ideas in support of the relief and development efforts towards Africa and issues that concern governance systems of faculties in United States Universities. In recognition of such positive impacts, he was elected President of the MSU chapter of the Association of American Professors (AAUP). Grover also played a key role in US-AID projects of institutional capacity building. A case in point in this regard is the installation of a printing press for AAU, an intervention that relieved the government from expensive foreign purchases of textbooks and other academic publications.

Grover served on several national and institutional committees at MSU. He was a member of the executive committee of the Michigan American Association of University Professors (AAUP) from 2004–2006. He was Associate Chair of

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[1]   H. C. Fleming, 'The classification of West Cushitic within Hamito-Semitic', in D. F. McCall, N. R. Bennett, and J. Butler, eds, *Eastern African History*, Boston University Papers on Africa, 3 (New York, NY–Washington, DC–London: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 3–27. See also M. L. Bender, 'The Languages of Ethiopia: A New Lexicostatistic Classification and Some Problems of Diffusion', *Anthropological Linguistics*, 13/5 (1971), 165–288.

the Department (1989–1992), Director of Graduate Studies for linguistics (1997–1999), a member of the University Committee of Faculty Tenure (2003–2005), and a College Advisory Council member.

While on a Fulbright fellowship at AAU in 2000, Grover did an overview of the literature on Ethiopian Semitic in which he raised over-arching issues concerning the Semitic pre-history of Ethiopia and the spread of Semitic. He elaborated on this in a special issue of the *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, which he edited for the occasion of the 14th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies. He did a marvelous service to the Institute by drawing on experiences from editorial works of publications such as the *Journal of Northeast African Studies*, monographs, and books, which he had edited.

Like other pioneers of modern Ethiopian linguistics, Grover had his heart and mind on the description and linguistic classification of the languages of Ethiopia. The field had been inundated with literature about the geographical and historical classification of the Hamitic-Semitic speaking peoples and languages of the Horn region. As a departure from such a wide-scope approach, mass comparison and statistical frequency of lexemes were adopted for a more meaningful classification of the Afro-Asiatic phylum with a particular focus on its Ethiopian exponents. Among the few who advanced such a departure were Grover Hudson and Robert Hetzron. Both revisited the mass comparison paradigm from a micro-linguistic perspective where morpho-lexical elements of tense, aspect, gender, number, and pronominal forms were considered, together with shared cognates of verbs and patterns of conjugations. Based on striking differences and similarities, of shared innovations and retentions, the languages that had been classified only along geographical lines, were reclassified into genetic sub-groupings. For this, Grover's extensive documentation and morpho-phonological descriptions of the Highland East Cushitic languages were indispensable. His subsequent works on the *Highland East Cushitic Dictionary* (1989) and 'Highland East Cushitic Morphology' (2007) have put Ethiopian comparative linguistics on a firm linguistic foundation and the genetic classification thereof on authoritative evidence.

Departing from the geographical and lexicostatistical classification of languages, Hetzron[2] forwarded a new classification of Cushitic based on morpho-lexical and phonological grounds which includes forms for the word 'come', the number 'five', the personal pronouns, and phonological processes such as metathesis attested in several Agäw and Highland East Cushitic languages such as Awingi and Burǧi, for example. On accounts of such formal criteria, Hetzron argued for the exclusion of Beǧa, North Cushitic, from Cushitic proper, the merger of Highland East Cushitic and Central Cushitic, which he dubbed Rift Valley

[2] R. Hetzron, 'The Limits of Cushitic', *Sprache und Geschichte in Afrika*, 2 (1980), 7–26.

Cushitic, and the inclusion of Southern Cushitic into Lowland East Cushitic, thus reducing the five genetic subgroups of Cushitic to just two, Rift Valley and Lowland Cushitic. This reductionist argument was welcomed, not by all, and indeed, not by Grover, who had made extensive descriptions on the Highland East Cushitic sub-grouping as an independent sub-branch, distinct from Central Cushitic, alias Agäw. Taking Hetzron's own formal criteria, consisting of a five-point argument in evidence of the reductionist thesis, Grover showed that the proposal would invite more questions than providing solutions to the classification problem of Cushitic in general, and the delinking and relinking of Beǧa to a higher/deeper sub-stratum within the Afro-Asiatic phylum in particular.

As in Cushitic, Grover has done a lot in Ethiopian Semitic. His principled grammar of Amharic verb stem formation (1985), rooted in the true generalization condition of Joan B. Hooper,[3] is a theoretically motivated attempt at the underlying representation of Amharic as a surface verb-final language contra the verb-initial Semitic languages like Gəʿəz or Arabic, for example. This was an issue he had with Emmon Bach, once his mentor, at a point when the theory of transformational syntax was in its hay day. His essay on the Gurage languages and cultures (1996), his rather controversial reanalysis and classification of South Ethiopian Semitic, and the lexical analysis of Northeast African Semitic languages (2013), have been influential works of high citations among scholars of Ethiopian Semitic studies. This is leaving aside his arguments in support of an African (Ethiopian) origin of Semitic (2000), as against the established oriental view by people like Edward Ullendorf,[4] among others.

Grover is a prolific writer. His publications, which include authored and co-authored books, monographs, book chapters, conference proceedings, journal articles, and reviews, are too many to treat in a short obituary such as this. Suffice it to say, that they all will be major resources for future studies of diachronic as well as synchronic Ethiopian Afro-Asiatic linguistics in general, and to its Cushitic and Semitic sub-branches, whose comparative descriptions and (re)classification have been Grover's lifetime vocation. In lieu of a complete list of his scientific contributions, some of which are difficult to trace, the following have been included here as only samples of his wide-scope purview of Afro-Asiatic linguistics.

In recognition of such contributions to Ethiopian Afro-Asiatic Linguistics and linguistic science in general, Grover was honoured with induction as an Associate Fellow of the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences, a prestigious merit-based national

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[3] J. B. Hooper, *An Introduction to Natural Generative Phonology* (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1976).

[4] E. Ullendorff, *The Semitic Languages of Ethiopia: A Comparative Phonology* (London: Taylor's (Foreign) Press, 1955).

institution. Nevertheless, more important is the memory, love, and respect, of generations of scholars of Ethiopian Studies in whose works Grover will remain a trailblazer.

On a personal note, I had several occasions with Grover on issues rooted in Ethiopian Linguistics and cultures while I was on a Fulbright fellowship at MSU (2003–2004). I have always found him to be gentle, a bit on the quiet side of life, and very generous and thoughtful of others. After battling against cancer, Grover departed in death on 13 June 2022. Although not unexpected, the news was shocking to the Community of Ethiopian Studies. He is survived by his wife, Emeritus Professor Mutsuko Endo Hudson, East Lansing, and his sister Karyn Draper, Azle, Texas, but will be missed and remembered by generations of students, whom he has taught, and mentored over the years.

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