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**Dissertation abstract**

*Das K'abeena – Deskriptive Grammatik einer hochlandostkuschitischen Sprache*

Dissertation accepted at the Fachbereich 14, Philologie II of the Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, defended on December 22, 2004 to obtain a Dr. phil. degree of Philosophy  
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#### Dissertation abstracts

cultural mechanisms and strategies that enabled them to perform and protect their role as a flexible janus-faced community simultaneously facing land and sea but remaining distinct from both. I thus reveal the inner structure of a community of mediators, tracing the chains and networks of linkages that connected the town's hinterlands to its forelands.

The study refutes perceptions viewing Massawa as "alien" to its environment by historically contextualizing its specificity and deconstructing the development of its culturally outgoing dispositions, but at the same time locally rooted social realities in a period of great political, economic and social change. The study presents a more local/region-based historical perspective in an arena of northeastern African historiography that is still being vigorously debated by scholars almost entirely in nationalist discourses. It also links the Eritrean-Ethiopian region – traditionally perceived as somewhat isolated from its broader environment – with the wider world of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. The study is based on a wide variety of 19<sup>th</sup>-century European sources, Italian colonial archival materials, Arabic language sources, oral data collected in Eritrea, and a newly-discovered collection of legal records from Massawa's Islamic court.

JOACHIM CRASS, *Das K'abeena – Deskriptive Grammatik einer hochlandostkuschitischen Sprache*. Dissertation accepted at the Fachbereich 14, Philologie II of the Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, defended on December 22, 2004 to obtain a Dr. phil. degree of Philosophy.

K'abeena is a Highland-East-Cushitic language spoken by some 35.000 speakers. The settling area of the people is located in and around the town of Wolkite, a town situated some 160 km south west of Addis Ababa on the main road to Jimma. The closest related languages are Alaaba, Kambaata and T'imbaaro. The presented data were collected during four field stays between December 2000 and March 2003. The data are described by using structural and functional approaches.

This language possesses several interesting features of which some are found scarcely in other languages of the world. On the level of phonology, a striking feature is the occurrence of five whispered vowels. These whispered vowels are allophones of the five voiced short vowels *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u*. In two of the 13 flexion classes of nouns, the whispered vowels are the only feature distinguishing case. Another important phonological feature is stress accent. All word classes have an unmarked position of the accent: e.g. one group of nouns and verbal nouns have a word final accent, the other group of nouns and adverbs have the accent on the pre-final syllable of the word.

K<sup>ʔ</sup>abeena is a marked nominative language, i.e. the unmarked case is the accusative (called absolutive by some scholars) and not the nominative, as e.g. in German and other European languages. This feature is typical for languages spoken in the south west of Ethiopia and adjacent areas but is very rare in other parts of the world. Based on the accusative, the nominative is marked mainly by shift of the stress accent to the preceding syllable – in the majority of flexion classes in combination with a shift of the final vowel – or by one of these two strategies. The other five cases are genitive, dative, ablative, instrumental/comitative and locative, the latter two are distinguished only with masculine nouns.

The two main aspects are the perfective and the imperfective marked by the vowels o and a, respectively. The third aspect is the progressive, which is formed analytically by a converb and an auxiliary verb. However, the progressive is related formally to the imperfective by using the same set of subject agreement markers. Other converbs express sequentiality, finality, and negation, respectively.

K<sup>ʔ</sup>abeena is a head final language, i.e. the basic word order is (Subject)–Object–Verb, all modifiers precede their head noun and adverbial clauses precede main clauses. Furthermore, the language uses exclusively suffixes for nominal and verbal inflexion and derivation.

Most of the speakers of K<sup>ʔ</sup>abeena are at least bilingual speaking Amharic and/or other languages, e.g. Chaha, Ezha, Wolane, Muher or Oromo depending on the regional provenance. This bi- or multilingualism led to contact induced change, especially in the lexicon of K<sup>ʔ</sup>abeena.

BIRGIT MATTAUSCH, *Die Kunst der Ambiguität. Indirekte Kommunikation im historischen Äthiopien und ihre Reflexion in den amharischen Aläqa-Gäbrä-Hanna-Geschichten*. Dissertation zur Erlangung des Grades einer Dr. Phil. am Fachbereich Orientalistik, Abteilung für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik der Universität Hamburg.

Dissertation eingereicht beim Fachbereich Orientalistik der Universität Hamburg; Disputation am 11. Januar 2005.

In der Arbeit wird eine Bestandsaufnahme und Analyse unterschiedlicher Aspekte und Erscheinungsformen von Ambiguität im amharischsprachigen Äthiopien des späten 19. Jahrhunderts unternommen. Dies soll zum einen Aufschluß über kulturinterne Ursachen und soziale Funktionen von Ambiguität bringen und zum anderen die Einbettung in einen breiteren kulturhistorischen Zusammenhang ermöglichen, um schließlich eine Neubewertung