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**Review**

STEFAN WENINGER, *Das Verbalsystem des Altäthiopischen – Eine Untersuchung seiner Verwendung und Funktion unter Berücksichtigung des Interferenzproblems*

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## Reviews

könnte man noch auf *ʾabānawḁyan* ‘Steinmetze’ (S. 68, 14) hinweisen, eine Neubildung nach dem arabischem Muster einer Nisba vom Plural als Berufsbezeichnung (analog *kutubī* ‘Buchhändler’, *ʾibārī* ‘Nadler’). Am Ende des Textes finden sich die notwendigen Indices (Personen, Orte, Bibelstellen).

Kleine Bemerkungen: Auf S. 21, 15-16 werden vier Bezeichnungen für wertvolle Steine erwähnt, von denen COLIN nur eine übersetzt. Mit *ʾalzäy-rägäd* ist arabisch *zabarğad* ‘Chrysolith’ gemeint. Die Vorlage war offenbar falsch oder undeutlich punktiert, so daß *b* mit *y* verwechselt wurde. *ʾalmäba* ist arabisch *mahan* (mit Artikel *al-mahā*) ‘Kristall’.<sup>8</sup> – S. 23, 27: *ʾIyäsus* wurde nicht mit übersetzt. – S. 69, 1: COLIN übersetzt das Verb *ʾapängälä* mit “diktieren”. Das Wort sei “absent des dictionnaires” und die angenommene Bedeutung sei “suggérée par l’arabe et le contexte”. Das Wort kommt von *ἀπαγγέλλειν* und ist von daher eher mit ‘kundtun’ zu übersetzen. Es ist mehrfach bezeugt und findet sich auch in den Wörterbüchern von DILLMANN und LESLAU.<sup>9</sup> – S. 79, Anm. 4: *səḥur* “Monate” wird richtig als Transkription von arab. *šahr* aufgefaßt, doch ist dies, entgegen COLIN, nicht singular. In der Schreibung *šahr* ist es bereits mehrfach bezeugt. – S. 86, 2: Lies *ḥatawḁʾa* statt *ḥatäwḁʾa*.

Stefan Weninger

STEFAN WENINGER, *Das Verbalsystem des Altäthiopischen – Eine Untersuchung seiner Verwendung und Funktion unter Berücksichtigung des Interferenzproblems* = Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur Mainz: Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission 47. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag 2001. 387 pp. Price: Euro 49,-. ISBN: 3-447-04484-5

The book under review is a monograph presented in 1997 for habilitation at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich. This purpose clearly transpires from its dimensions, systematic arrangement, extreme abundance of

<sup>8</sup> Zu diesem Wort, das in den arabischen Lexika unzureichend dokumentiert ist, vgl. MANFRED ULLMANN, *Das Motiv des Spiegels in der arabischen Literatur des Mittelalters* = Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, phil.-hist. Kl., 3. Folge, Nr. 198 (Göttingen 1992), 137-138.

<sup>9</sup> Bei WOLF LESLAU, *Comparative Dictionary of Geʿez* (Wiesbaden 1987), 414 ist die Quellenangabe “T.M.” zu streichen, da sie nach LESLAUS Zitiersystem impliziert, daß das Wort bei DILLMANN fehlt. Dies ist aber nicht der Fall, vgl. CHR. FR. AUGUST DILLMANN, *Lexicon linguae aethiopicæ* (Lipsiae 1865), 1252.

the sources consulted and from the wealth of material in the 1234 examples adduced. The author has scanned an enormous quantity of Gəʿəz texts, from their very beginnings in the Axumite inscriptions and up to such late texts as the Abbreviated Chronicle concluded in the 18th century. It has been a significant step to include in the material, estimated as valid for the description of Gəʿəz, texts written so long after the latter ceased to be spoken. Consequently, the spectrum of forms considered as canonical members of the Gəʿəz verbal system has been widened, with such combinations as *hallo qatilo* (§3.9) or *kona qatala* (§3.10), treated on an equal footing with *qatala*, *yəqattəl* etc. The early Ethiopic material is further compared with its Greek sources, sometimes with a Hebrew form added, while later phenomena are interpreted in terms of Arabic and Amharic parallels. All this resulted in an impressive and instructive work of orientalist scholarship in a field in which no new grammatical study of such extent has been published for decades.

The author himself opens his introduction with the statement that, after the great boom of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, grammatical study of Gəʿəz made little progress in comparison with the achievements in the domain of Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic grammar. He offers two possible explanations of this phenomenon: a) The linguistic study of these languages is a by-product of the religious interest in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, together with certain political motivations for the latter. b) Those linguists who did turn to Ethiopian linguistics preferred the modern languages to Gəʿəz. To these two a third reason may perhaps be added, namely that the last part in A. Dillmann's *Ethiopic Grammar* (first published in 1857) which witnesses of his acute insight in matters of syntax, and the great amount of important syntactic information under the relevant entries in his *Lexicon Linguae Aethiopicae* (1865) were found satisfying enough by linguists for the needs of their research and teaching.

Moreover, interest in Gəʿəz didn't really fade away, as demonstrated by the publication of W. Leslau's *Comparative Dictionary of Gəʿəz* (1987), an important event which should have been mentioned, even if it doesn't conform to the strict definition of "grammatische Erforschung". In addition, the author and the readers will probably be surprised to learn that there were, until not so long ago, universities in which Gəʿəz was taught and studied for many decades on a regular basis and in linguistic perspective, such as the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris since the time of Marcel Cohen or the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In the latter, Gəʿəz, introduced by H.J. Polotsky, had been taught for nearly half a century in the Department of Linguistics as a subject in its own right, rather than an amateurish appendix to comparative Semitic studies, with students reading

texts for years and writing seminar papers and master dissertations. Also the list of articles dealing with Gəʿəz syntax supplied by S. Weninger (p. 5-6) is not complete. The author should have examined more carefully such publications as the *Proceedings of the International Conferences of Ethiopian Studies*, or even the publication hosting this review, to find that the more general term Ethio-Semitic often also hides a discussion of syntactical problems in Gəʿəz. Similarly the *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* issued by the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of the Addis Ababa University should have been scrutinized (despite the fact that it is ignored by the *Bibliographie Linguistique*).

As to the theoretical approach, the author declares having opted for the “Noetic method” which, according to him, has already been successfully applied to several Semitic languages. This method is based on the assumption that verbal categories, rather than being moulded by the language, have an existence of their own, as abstract notions (pp. 24–36). This conception does not seem far from the Universals theory, with that difference that what is supposed to be universal is formulated now in terms of German examples instead of the usual English model. Nevertheless the classification of the forms in the book still follows the usual Semitistic division into *qatala*, *yəqattəl* etc. even though, within the description of each morphological form, the author distinguishes different characteristics of an action. But had he been fully consistent in his intention to adopt the abstract notions inherent to the verbal system as his starting point, he should have given up the mechanical traditional arrangement altogether and started, for instance, with such a notion as the past. In that kind of arrangement in the following example the perfect and the imperfect would have been treated together as different aspects of past actions: **ወአውፅአ ሶቢሃ መንፈስ ገዳመ ። ወነበረ ሐቅለ አርብዓ መዐልተ ወአርብዓ ሌሊተ ወያሜክሮ ሰይጣን** *wa-ʾawṣə-o sobeha manfas gadām-a. wa-nabara haql-a ʾarbəʿā maʿalī-a wa-ʾarbəʿā lelit-a wa-yāmekkər-o sayṭān* (Mark 1:12–13) “And then the spirit took Him out (a single action accomplished at the moment of its occurrence) to the desert. And he sat in the field for forty days and forty nights (prolongued, uninterrupted action in the past), and Satan tempted Him (repeated action in the past)”. This approach could, at least, have been applied in the last chapter dedicated to the “Funktionsanalyse” (pp. 309–336) which is actually reduced to a mere recapitulation of the preceding paragraphs, again arranged according to the traditional model of *qatala*, *yəqattəl* etc.

In the very well researched chapter on the gerund *qatilo* (pp. 217–252) the author summarizes the accepted views of his predecessors on this subordinate verbal form of nominal origin, which apparently has no equivalent in the other Semitic groups. Yet it seems that a parallel, in syntactic terms,

with the Epigraphic South Arabian infinitive might be drawn.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in a work dealing in particular with “interferenzproblem”, this was the right moment to refer to, or at least to hint at the Cushitic influence on Gəʿəz. Yet, there is no mention of Cushitic whatsoever in the whole book and it is absent from the index. True, there is no direct testimony of what was the Cushitic substrate of Gəʿəz, but the existence of gerundial forms in practically all the living local languages with which Ethio-Semitic came in contact and the distinction between main and subordinate verb forms, so characteristic of Cushitic, deserve at least a brief mention. Such an approach would have introduced in this rather traditional study (despite the complicated linguistic apparatus) some of the more recent tendencies in the study of Ethio-Semitic, envisaged in its areal context.

As for the cases of a gerund with the main verb introduced by **ወ** *wa-* ‘and’ (pp. 225–227), they are also found in texts more reliable than the Royal chronicles, e.g.: **ወጸዊሞ መዋዕለ ኦርብዓ ወኦርብዓ ሊያልዩ ወእምድኅረዝ ርኅበ** *wa-ṣawimo mawāʿal-a ʿarbāʿā wa-ʿarbāʿā layāləy-a wa-ʿam-dəḥra-zə rəḥəba* (Matthew 4:2) “And having fasted for forty days and forty nights, and then he became hungry”; **ወቦኢ ውስተ ቤቱ ወገብረ ደፍንተ ናእተ ወሰቲዮሙ** (variants: **ወአስተዮሙ** and **ወሰትዮ**) **ወበልዑ** *wa-boʿu wəsta bet-u wa-gabra dafənt-a nāʿət-a wa-satijomu* (var. *wa-ʿastay-omu* and *wa-satyu*) **ወልብህ** *wa-balʿu* (Genesis 19:3) “And they went into his house and he made unleavened cake and having drunk (variants: and he made them drink; they drank) and they ate”. It may be pointed out that such a **ወ** *wa-* sometimes appears with a main verb accompanied by some other kind of subordinate clause, not necessarily a gerundial one, e.g.: **ወእምዝ ሶበ አጵሎስ ሀሎ ቆርንቶስ ወኅለፈ ጳውሎስ እንተ ሳዕላይ ደወል ወበጽሐ ኤፌሶን** *wa-ʿəmzə soba aplos hallo qorəntos wa-ḥalafa pāwlos ʿənta lā lāy dawal wa- baṣḥa ʿefeson* (Acts 19:1) “And then, when Aplos was in Corinth and Paul went through the upper district and reached Ephesus”. In his *Lexicon* A. Dillmann (s.v. **ወ**) translates the **ወ** *wa-* in this position by: *et statim, tum, ut, igitur*, which amounts, more or less, to the **ኖሁ** *nāhu* ‘behold’ mentioned by the author in this connection.

The graphic presentation is clear and pleasant and the illustrations representing the value of the various tenses along the temporal line are quite useful, but some will miss the Ethiopic script since the Gəʿəz text is written in transcription only. Besides the usual problems of Gəʿəz transcription

<sup>1</sup> See *Proceedings of the 13<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies: Kyoto 12–17 December 1997*, vol. I pp. 492–498 and HÖFNER, MARIA, “Zur Funktion von Infinitiv und Demonstrativen im Altsüdarabischen”. In: SEGERT, S. and A.J.E. BODROGLIGETI, *Ethiopian Studies: Dedicated to Wolf Leslau*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz 1983, pp. 232–235.

concerning the laryngeal and sibilant consonants, the author had to overcome also the problem of transcribing the vowel of the sixth order ə and the gemination. The latter seems to have constituted the major difficulty. The author writes (p. 47) that in the case of these two “wird versucht, grammatisch und etymologisch “richtig” zu transkribieren. Insgesamt ist die hier verwendete Umschrift also mehr Transliteration als Transkription”. While referring to the marking of gemination the inverted commas around *richtig* couldn't be more accurate. It definitely is not a transliteration<sup>2</sup> because the author indicates regularly the gemination in all the forms of the imperfect, though it hasn't much to do with etymology (except for the “intensive” stem) and had been “discovered” only thanks to the study of the traditional pronunciation of the Ethiopian priests. The truth is that correct transcription of Gəʿəz gemination is no mystery. The author would have avoided many strange forms, such as for instance *-kəmmu* for the suffix pronoun, as well as the ending of the perfect, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural instead of *-kkəmu*, or *ʾantəmmu* for the more correct *ʾanttəmu*, if he had simply consulted more systematically W. Leslau's *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez* and above all Eugen Mittwoch's *Die Traditionelle Aussprache des Aethiopischen* (Berlin 1926) which isn't even mentioned in the bibliography.

But, despite these minor remarks, S. Weninger deserves our warmest congratulations and gratitude for having presented us with this erudite and comprehensive work.

Olga Kapeliuk

GÄBRÄ IYYÄSUS KIFLE, ታሪኽ ትውልዲ ልሳን ግእዝ *Tariḵ təwləddi ləssan Gəʿəz* [History of the origin of the Gəʿəz language – in Tigrinya]. Asmara: Asär Press, 2001 (1993 E.C.), 165 pages. Price: Naqfa 35.00.

The author of the book, Abba Gäbrä Iyyäsus Kifle – a monk and, for many years, a teacher in Ethiopian lay schools – studied Gəʿəz inside the traditional educational system from his earliest childhood and during some 20 years. Then he came to Jerusalem where he lived for several years, studying at the Hebrew University in the Departments of Biblical Studies and of Semitic Languages. His perfect mastery of Gəʿəz, Tigrinya and Amharic made him a sure source of information for countless queries from students and researchers in Ethiopian linguistics, including the author of these lines.

<sup>2</sup> Like for instance in E. BERNAND, A.J. DREWES and R. SCHNEIDER, *Recueil des Inscriptions de l'Ethiopie* (Paris 1991) where the gemination is consistently ignored.