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Review of

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lotsky* / הלשון המצרית לשונות שמיות ומדע הדקדוק מחקרים לזכר יעקב פולוצקי

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GIDEON GOLDENBERG – ARIEL SHISHA-HALEVY (eds.), *Egyptian, Semitic and General Grammar. Studies in Memory of H.J. Polotsky / יעקב פולוצקי* = Publications of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Section of Humanities, Studies in the Humanities. Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2009. Pp. xix + 501. Price: US \$ 75.00. ISBN: 978-965-208-177-3.

The volume is one more witness to the long-lasting, gratefully and universally acknowledged decisive influence Hans Jakob Polotsky (1905-1991) has exerted on the development (mainly, but not only) of Egyptian, Semitic and general linguistics studies especially within the frame of his activities at the University of Jerusalem since the '30s of the past century, where he founded a real school (also comprising scholars not included among the contributors to the present volume, such as, e.g., Olga Kapeliuk, and several others). Polotsky established there a prestigious and innovative tradition of linguistic studies and approached fundamental questions with original ideas as well as with an extremely rigorous method of first-hand examination of the sources<sup>1</sup>.

The present book comprises 25 studies presented by Egyptologists and Semitists – either pupils, friends or colleagues of Polotsky – at a workshop held in 2001, on the tenth anniversary of Polotsky's death, at the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, finally edited and published, with a considerable delay, yet still welcome, by two among the most outstanding of Polotsky's pupils: Gideon Goldenberg and Ariel Shisha-Halevy, at

<sup>1</sup> Among the previous tributes to Polotsky and reprints of his contributions, the following can be here mentioned: HAIIM BARUCH ROSÉN (ed.), *Studies in Egyptology and Linguistics: In Honour of H.J. Polotsky*, Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1964; HANS JAKOB POLOTSKY, *Collected Papers*, Jerusalem: At The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1971; HANNAH ROSÉN – HAIIM ROSÉN, *On Moods and Tenses of the Latin Verb: 2 Essays Dedicated to Hans Jakob Polotsky on the Occasion of His 75 Birthday*, München: Finck, 1980; DWIGHT W. YOUNG (ed.), *Studies Presented to Hans Jakob Polotsky*, Beacon Hill, MS: Pirtle Polson, 1981; JOHN D. RAY (ed.), *Lingua Sapientissima: a Seminar in Honour of H.J. Polotsky Organised by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge and the Faculty of Oriental Studies in 1984 Comprising the Glanville Lecture for 1984 by H.J. Polotsky*, Cambridge: Cambridge University, Faculty of Oriental Studies, 1987; VERENA LEPPER in cooperation with PETER NAGEL (eds.), "After Polotsky": *New Research and Trends in Egyptian and Coptic Linguistics. Proceedings of the Conference In Memory of 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Hans Jakob Polotsky in Bad Honnef near Bonn, 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> September 2005*, Göttingen: Seminar für Ägyptologie und Koptologie, 2006 = *Lingua Aegyptia* 14 (2006); VERENA LEPPER – LEO DEPUYDT (eds.), *H.J. Polotsky: Scripta Posteriora on Egyptian and Coptic* = *Lingua Aegyptia Studia Monographica* 7, Göttingen: Seminar für Ägyptologie und Koptologie, 2007.

present among the world-wide most estimated scholars in Semitic and Coptic linguistics respectively.

Subjects discussed include Polotsky's life and work, by Edward Ullendorff ("The Young (and Not So Young) Polotsky: Scholar and Teacher", pp. 1–15), who was himself a pupil as well as a friend of Polotsky's, and a devout cultivator of his memory for long (cp. Id., *From Emperor Haile Selassie to H.J. Polotsky. An Ethiopian and Semitic Miscellany* = Äthiopistische Forschungen 42, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995; Hans Jakob Polotsky, *Ausgewählte Briefe. Introduced, edited, and annotated by Edward Ullendorff* = Äthiopistische Forschungen 34, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1992): also on this occasion Ullendorff gives due place to very personal impressions and memories; a more specific evaluation of Polotsky's contribution is presented by Shisha-Halevy and Nicacci (s. below); studies in Egyptian (Orly Goldwasser, "A Comparison between Classifier Languages and Classifier Script: The Case of Ancient Egyptian", pp. 16–39; Wolfgang Schenkel, "Prädikatives und abstrakt-relativisches *šm.n=f*. Beobachtungen an den Verben II. gem. und ult. *n* im Korpus der Sargtexte", pp. 40–60; Helmut Satzinger, "On Some Aspects of *jw* in Middle Egyptian", pp. 61–69; cp. also Alviero Niccacci, "Polotsky's Contribution to the Egyptian Verb-System, with a Comparison to Biblical Hebrew", pp. 401–65) and Coptic linguistics (Wolf-Peter Funk, "Methodological Issues in the (Morpho)Phonological Description of Coptic", pp. 70–91; Ariel Shisha-Halevy, "On Conversion, Clause Ordination and Related Notions. Some Reflections on General and Polotskian Models", pp. 92–105); Semitic verbal morphology (Shlomo Izre'el, "Constructive Constructions. Semitic Verbal Morphology and Beyond", pp. 106–31); questions of Akkadian linguistics (Eran Cohen, "Nexus and Nexus Focusing", pp. 131–48; Nathan Wasserman, "The Modal Particle *tuša* in Old Babylonian", pp. 149–68); Ethio-Semitic linguistics (s. below); Arabic grammatical tradition, historical linguistics, and dialectology (Rafael Talmon, "Two Studies in Arabic Tamyīz", pp. 197–219; Joshua Blau, "Reconstruction of Neo-Arabic Dialectal Features from Middle Arabic Texts", pp. 220–29; Otto Jastrow, "The Arabic Dialects of the Carmel Coast", pp. 230–38; Roni Henkin, "How Interdialectal Is Peripheral Oral Bedouin Poetry?", pp. 239–69; Rami Saari, "Some Remarks on Maltese Prepositions of Italian Origin", pp. 270–76); Biblical and Modern Hebrew linguistics (Ora [Rodrigue] Schwarzwald, "Three Related Analyses in Modern Hebrew Morphology", pp. 277–301; Tamar Zewi, "Content Expressions in Biblical Hebrew", pp. 302–16; Dana Taube, "The Passive Participle in Modern Hebrew", pp. 317–36; Tali Bar, "On Cleft Sentences in Contemporary Hebrew", pp. 337–55); questions of syntax (Marta Rauret Domènech, "'Kopula': Ein 'zur rechten Zeit gestelltes Wort'?", pp. 356–62; Simon Hopkins, "'That Monster of a Man' and the Emotive Genitive", pp. 363–89; Marcel Erdal, "First and Second Person Nominal Subjects", pp. 390–400); and a contribution on general linguistics (Pablo I. Kirtchuk-Halevi, "Language: A Typological, Functional, Cognitive, Biological and Evolutionary Approach", pp. 466–501), also controversial in the editors' own words ("Kirtchuk tends to underestimate the more important arbitrariness of the linguistic sign ... his style may regrettably hide from the reader not a few significant observations", s. p. xix).

The two contributions dedicated to Ethio-Semitic linguistics deserve here a closer examination.

Rainer Voigt's "Südtigrinische Dialekte. Phonologie und Personalpronomina im Dialekt von May-Č'äw (Təgray)", pp. 169–83 – once definitely assessed (notwithstanding the famous Ullendorff's assumption, cp. p. 171) that Tigrinya dialectal variations exist – sketches a short but useful history of the research and proposes a main distinction between Northern dialects (from Aksum and °Adwa to Asmara, on which the literary language is also based) and Southern dialects (Southeastern Təgray, "spirantisierende Dialekte"). He focuses then on two specific features of the latter: a) the spirantization of the velars and corresponding labiovelars ( $k/k$ ,  $k'/k'$ ,  $k^w/k^w$ ,  $k^{w'}/k^{w'}$ ) and its morphonologic consequences; b) the question of the origin of the personal pronoun *nəssu* versus Amh. *ərsu* etc. Voigt – besides several interesting observations, e.g., the hypothesis that Amharic is grown up from a Southern Tigrinya dialect (p. 179) – proposes a derivation from the noun attested in Gə°əz as *kərsə*, Semitic \**kariś* ("belly"), yet within the hypothesis of a multiple derivation from Ethiosemitic nouns (*rə°əs=uu*, *nəfs=uu*, and *kərs=uu*).

Gideon Goldenberg's "From Speech to Writing in Gurage-Land. First Attempts to Write in the Vernacular", pp. 184–96, provides a very fascinating piece which defines the essential coordinates for a study of the early attempts at writing Gurage languages (started in the 1990s), and Kəstanəñña (also known as Aymälläl or Soddo) in particular. Specific subject of analysis are the Kəstanəñña texts collected in the Amharic book by Wäru Täsfa, *Aymälläl. Kəfəl 1. YäGurage (yəSoddo g<sup>w</sup>ärdänna) həzb aččər yätarik mastawäša. Kəfəl 2. Yäkəstane mätaf. Bäaymälläl gurageña (bäkəstaniña) q<sup>w</sup>anq<sup>w</sup>a. KäTäsfa Gäbräyäs zämädä Käbd*, Addis Abäba: Bänəgd Mattämiya Dərəğğət, bəGənbət 1987 °a.mə. [1995 A.D.]. Goldenberg points out to the number of phenomena which occur in the process of writing down the texts, such as the phonological and morphological analysis, and elaborates on the fundamental topics of writing and its influence on the structure of language ("what the introduction of writing, while just providing symbols substituting for speaking, can do to a language"), as usual, within a solid theoretical frame and in a comparative and extremely stimulating perspective.

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