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Remarks on an Encyclopaedic Article on Təgre

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Bibliographical abbreviations used in this volume

- AE* *Annales d'Éthiopie*, Paris 1955ff.
- ÄthFor* Äthiopistische Forschungen, 1–35, ed. by E. HAMMERSCHMIDT, 36–40, ed. by S. UHLIG (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner (1–34), 1977–1992; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz (35–40), 1994–1995).
- AethFor* Aethiopistische Forschungen, 41–73, ed. by S. UHLIG (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998–2011); 74–75, ed. by A. BAUSI and S. UHLIG (*ibid.*, 2011f.); 76ff. ed. by A. BAUSI (*ibid.*, 2012ff.).
- AION* *Annali dell'Università degli studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'*, Napoli: Università di Napoli 'L'Orientale' (former Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli), 1929ff.
- BSOAS* *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London, 1917ff.).
- CSCO* Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1903ff.
- EAE* S. UHLIG, ed., *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, I: A–C; II: D–Ha; III: He–N; in cooperation with A. BAUSI, eds, IV: O–X (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010); A. BAUSI in cooperation with S. UHLIG, eds, V: Y–Z, *Supplementa, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014).
- EMML* Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa.
- JAH* *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge 1960ff.
- JES* *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa 1963ff.
- OrChr* *Oriens Christianus*, Leipzig–Roma–Wiesbaden 1901ff.
- PdP* *La Parola del Passato. Rivista di studi classici*, Napoli 1946ff.
- PICES 8* TADDESE BEYENE, ed., *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, University of Addis Ababa (26–30 November) 1984*, I–II (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies–Frankfurt am Main: Frobenius Institut, Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität, 1988–1989).
- PICES 10* C. LEPAGE and É. DELAGE, eds, *Études éthiopiennes: Actes de la X^e Conférence internationale des études éthiopiennes, Paris, 24–28 août 1988* (Paris: Société française pour les études éthiopiennes, 1994).
- PO* *Patrologia Orientalis*, 1903ff.
- RIÉ* É. BERNAND, A.J. DREWES, and R. SCHNEIDER, *Recueil des inscriptions de l'Éthiopie des périodes pré-axoumite et axoumite*, I: *Les documents*, II: *Les planches* (Paris: (Académie des inscriptions et belle-lettres) Diffusion de Boccard, 1991).
- RRALm* *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, Roma, 1892ff.
- RSE* *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, Roma, 1941–1981, Roma–Napoli, 1983ff.
- SAe* *Scriptores Aethiopici*.

Remarks on an Encyclopaedic Article on Təgre

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Articles describing individual Semitic languages in a collective volume devoted to the Semitic language group can be of varying quality. Very often not enough regard is given to the encyclopaedic character of these volumes, leading to the inclusion of articles whose inclusion is more a matter of chance. The circumstance that our contribution is only dealing with one specific article ignoring the rest of the volume is caused by this article's unusually poor character, which compels certain criticisms to be aired. We are dealing with the contribution concerning Təgre in the volume *The Semitic Languages* (2011) by Didier Morin, a scholar of repute in the field of Cushitic studies, who has built his reputation with numerous works on ʿAfar, Saho, Somali and Beḡa. Due to his work on Beḡa he has also come into contact with Təgre and has published two contributions on various Təgre dialects (Morin 1996; 2010). In the encyclopaedia article here under review, where he deals with Təgre (2011), he relies mainly on his two previously mentioned publications. However this is not the reason for our criticism, rather we believe that on the one hand imprecise statements about the language are made and on the other hand that the description of Təgre is inadequate.

1. Location (pp. 1142–1143)

Sometimes one gets the impression that the author is not familiar with certain aspects of the Təgre language and people. To start with the statements made to describe the location of the Təgre speaking areas, the author identifies the areas where Təgre is spoken as 'the Sudan-Eritrean grazing lowlands and the **ፎረ ፡ መንሰፅ** *Rora Mansa*^c, the Mansa plateau'. It should be noted that the Mansa^c plateau refers to a very small part of the Mansa^c speaking area. It is in no way equivalent to the Eritrean plateau as the author suggests when he says 'the Eritrean plateau (or Mansa) dialect'. It is not equivalent to the northern plateau of Eritrea where many of the Təgre speaking people live. In the author's description of 'Tigre's traditional linguistic area', places such as **ፎረ ፡ ሐባብ** (*Rora Habāb*), **ፎረ ፡ ማርያ** (*Rora Mārya*) and **ዐድ ፡ ቴክሌስ** (*ʿAd-Tekles*), where Təgre is exclusively spoken, are not included. Locating Arkiko (**ሕርጊጊ**, Hərgigo) as Təgre's southern limit in the east is also not correct. Təgre is spoken up to the village of Zula about sixty kilometres south of Massawa alongside Saho (see Littmann 1907, 155; Shack 1974, 67–69). The statement 'Until recently, Tigre was spoken in Ginda^c' is not correct. Təgre is still spoken in **ጊንዳፅ** (Ginda^c) as the primary language together with Təgrəñña

and Saho. It is spoken beyond Ginda^c all the way up to the eastern edges of the capital Asmāra including villages such as ድርፎ (Dərfo) and ግልፅ (Gələ^c). With regard to the status of the Təgre language, the statement ‘Tigre has remained the language of the mainly agro-pastoralist group, in comparison with Tigrinya the national language of the independent Eritrea’ does not reflect the realities of the country’s current language policy and practice and its impact on the development of the language in the past two decades. Today, Təgre is a fully developed language of literature, media, arts, and education. In the same way, like Təgrəñña, Təgre is used as a medium of instruction in elementary education, used in official government-run radio and TV broadcasts, newspapers and websites. Reference books, dictionaries, important books, novels, films, dramas and songs are produced in Təgre or are being translated into Təgre. To correct one more misunderstanding, although Təgrəñña is the most important language in Eritrea, it is not ‘the national language’ of Eritrea. Eritrea does not have one ‘national language’. All nine Eritrean languages have officially equal status.

3. Dialects (pp. 1143–1144)

Didier Morin’s classification of Təgre dialects into four dialects is not backed up by linguistic evidence. Furthermore, we cannot agree that the dialect of Samhar can be grouped under the so called Beni-Amir (Beni-^cĀmər) dialect. The *Eritrea Dialect Survey* that the author quotes in the article here under review, clearly shows how the Beni-^cĀmər dialect and the Samhar dialect are the two most divergent dialects of the Təgre language, maintaining the lowest affinity towards each other (Ministry of Education 1997, 37–40; Saleh Mahmud Idris 2005, 45–73). Morin’s statement of the lower status of the lowland dialects in comparison to the ‘written dialect of Keren’ is not a sociolinguistic fact that all Təgre speakers agree on (*ibid.*). The influence of Beḡa, Arabic and Təgrəñña on the Təgre language and the degree of variation within the language is overestimated and not supported by convincing data. He argues that the Təgre language ‘includes very different varieties ranging from those influenced by Beja and/or Arabic, and Tigrinya hybrids’ (p. 1142). The following examples are provided in order to support his argument of higher Beḡa influence on Təgre.

maqaddan i-k^woy tu ‘jealousy is not good’.

His interpretation of this sentence reads, ‘The adjective *k^woy* from the Beḡa verb *k^wat(im)* ‘to be good’ replaces the *sanni* (*sanni ikon*) but follows Tigre syntax with the presence of the copula *tu*’. This interpretation, unfortunately, is based on a doubtful etymology. Indeed there is a verb *kwatiimaa* ‘be happy, lucky’ (Wedekind, Wedekind and Abuzeinab Musa 2007) and the

adjective *kwatiib*, f. *kwatiit* ‘fine, happy’. However it is unclear how the form *kwoy* could be derived from it.² Instead we would like to propose to connect *ikwoy* (i.e. not with the segmentation *i-kwoy* ‘not good’) with Təgre **አኩይ** (*ʾəkkuɣ*), ‘bad’. This adjective is derived from the Təgre verb **አኩ** *aka*, ‘be bad, be evil, deteriorate’) and is related to the Semitic root \sqrt{ky} (see Dillmann 1865, 788; Leslau 1991, 17).

The other example,

tün-ḥilil ʾadig hoy rebeta ‘Have you seen a donkey in this dry river-bed?’

is either a hypothetical sentence or was uttered by a Beḡa speaker who attempted to speak Təgre unsuccessfully. From the personal experience as a native Təgre speaker of the Sāḥəl region and as a person who lived with Bet-[°]Awad and Labad/t, this sentence does not represent any stable Təgre variety in the Sāḥəl region. Again the verb **ረአ** (*raʾa*), ‘to see’ is not an Arabic loanword in Təgre. It is a native Təgre verb which has a common root ($\sqrt{rʾy}$) in Semitic languages in general and in Ethio-Eritrean Semitic languages in particular (see Leslau 1991, 459). The Təgre dialect of Beni-[°]Āmər is the one with the highest rate of contact with Beḡa. Therefore, the highest Beḡa influence on Təgre must be seen in the Beni-[°]Āmər dialect of Təgre. Published works on this dialect, such as Beaton and Paul (1954), Beaton (1947), and Nakano and Tsuge (1982), however, do not support the high influence of the Beḡa language on Təgre. Beḡa words or hybrid constructions such as the one mentioned above by Morin are hardly found in these publications.

Didier Morin did not provide any linguistic data to substantiate his claim that Təgre varieties are Təgrəñña hybrids. Again published works by Werner Munzinger, Moritz von Beurmann from Massawa, Enno Littmann, Wolf Leslau, Frank Palmer, Shlomo Raz, etc. on the dialect of Mansa[°], David Elias on the dialect of Ginda[°] do not show heavy Təgrəñña influence on the Təgre language that can be described as ‘hybrid’. Before we pass to another section, we would like to bring to the readers’ attention that the correct names of the Mārya sub-tribes are **ማርያ : ቀየሕ** (Mārya Qayah) and **ማርያ : ጸላም** (Mārya Ṣallām) and not Mārya Qayih and Mārya Ṣallim as they are written in Morin’s article. This mistake is also found in other publications such as Shack’s *The Central Ethiopians* from 1974.

3.1.1. Vowels (pp. 1144–1145)

The one paragraph of less than twenty lines is not only too short for a description of the vowel system of a language in such an encyclopaedic vol-

² Another possible source could be Hausa *kyāu* ‘goodness’, *dā kyāu* ‘all right’ (personal communication with Joe McIntyre).

ume, but it also contains some mistakes. The short central vowel /ə/ has been omitted from the vowel inventory of the language. Though its phonemic identity is left open for discussion by Raz (1983), none of the scholars who dealt with Təgre grammar, including Shlomo Raz himself, has completely ignored the presence of /ə/ as a Təgre vowel (but see Leslau 1945, 165; Elias 2005, 55; *Grammatica* 1919, 5). Its phonemic identity can be seen in minimal pairs such as:

ኪስ (*kis*), ‘sack’ : **ክስ** (*kəs*), ‘one type of Təgre dance, accusation’,
ክበት (*kabbat*), ‘receive’, 2nd pers. masc. sg. imper. : **ከበት** (*kabbət*), ‘let somebody receive’, 2nd pers. masc. sg. imper.,
ገበህ (*gabbah*), ‘one with big forehead’ : **ገበህ** (*gabbəb*), ‘he hits with forehead’,
ቀዳድ (*qaddād*), ‘rough’, act. part. : **ቀድድ** (*qaddəd*), ‘he cuts or tears’ : **ቅዳድ** (*qəddād*), ‘cut off’.

While the statement about the relevance of vowel quantity (between *a* : *ā*) is correct, the examples are wrong. First, **በዐል** (*ba^əal*) does not mean ‘husband’, but ‘master, owner’ (see Raz 1983, 6). Secondly, despite Raz’s mention of the example, there is no contrast between *ba^əal* (‘owner’) and *ba^āal* (‘feast, holiday’). The word *ba^āal* with the meaning of ‘feast’ is a loanword from Təgrəñña which has no phonemic contrast in terms of vowel quantity. Many sets of minimal pairs can be listed, such as:

ከል (*hal*), ‘maternal aunt’ : **ከል** (*hāl*), ‘maternal uncle’,
አተ (*ata*), ‘he entered’ : **አተ** (*āta*), ‘he entered something’,
ቀር (*qar*), ‘horn’ : **ቅር** (*qār*), ‘valley’,
ስጦር (*səttar*), ‘pieces’ : **ስጦር** (*səttār*), ‘a piece’.

The word **ሰአየት** (*sa^əayat*) ‘hope’ is used in all Təgre dialects including Beni-^əĀmər, not only in Mansa^ə. The other word for ‘hope’ is not *sa^əayōt*, as given by Didier Morin, but **ሰአየብ** (*sa^əayob*). It is also used in other Təgre dialects as a poetic word. In the suffix *-b* we have a Beḡa morpheme which marks the feminine accusative of non-lexical nouns; this is clear evidence of Beḡa influence.

The pl. imperative form of the verb ‘to see’ is given wrongly as *ra^əay* (Mansa^ə) and its Beni-^əĀmər counterpart as *ra^əāiy* (?). These words represent the 2nd pers. fem. sg. imperative form *ra^əay*. The plural imperative, at least for the Mansa^ə dialect, is **ረአው** (*ra^əaw*, masc.) and **ረአየ** (*ra^əaya*, fem.). The demonstrative **ሎህን** (*lohan/lōhan*, gender fem. characterization is missing) in Mansa^ə and Beni-^əĀmər respectively are translated as ‘these’ instead of ‘those’ (pl. fem.). The demonstrative for ‘these’ is **እለን** (*əllan*, pl. fem.).

3.2.2. Verb (pp. 1147–1148)

Although verbs form the central and most intricate part of the grammar of a Semitic language, only a meagre twenty lines are dedicated to this theme: This scant presentation is not very informative.

The author wants to say that a verbal form can be constructed from the simple basic stem or from derived stems. But the notion ‘derived stems’ for type B, characterised by the lengthening of the second radical (e.g. **ፈደበ** (*faddaba*), ‘to be brave, strong’, **ሀለ** (*halla*), ‘to be, exist’, **ገረመ** (*garrama*), ‘to be beautiful’) is not correct since there are no examples of B stems derived from the simple basic stem (A). The derivation **ከበረ** (*kabbara*), ‘to give news’ from **ከበረ** (*kabra*) ‘to be honoured’ is most emphatically incorrect³—*kabbara* is a loan from Arabic *ḥabbara* (‘id.’) and has nothing to do with the root \sqrt{kbr} , which is also attested in Arabic. The examples of derived B-stems given in Littmann and Höfner (1962) and Raz (1983, 53), e.g. *dag-gama* (‘to tell’) from *dagma* (‘to repeat’), are wrong. But the C-stem can often be derived from the simple basic stem, e.g. **ከፍለ** (*kafla*), ‘to pay, to divide’—**ካፈለ** (*kāfala*), ‘to divide repeatedly, to distribute’.

‘The verb can be simple, derived or in composition with an auxiliary (*kōna*, *halla*)’—while it is obvious that an auxiliary verb is used in periphrastic conjugations, this has nothing to do with the type of verbal stem being used.

The auxiliary verb *kōna* which is mentioned explicitly only occurs in the literary language in the fossilised form **ኣኮን** (*i-kon*), ‘is not, no’. However in the dialect of the islands in the Dahlak Archipelago this auxiliary is still functioning (see Simeone-Senelle 2010, 141).

Apart from the present tense auxiliary **ሀለ** (*halla*), which has a dialectal and literary variant **ሀላ** (*həlla*), the auxiliary **ላለ** (*‘ala*) which serves to signal past tense deserves a mention. The use of *halla/həlla* vis-à-vis *‘ala* in Təgre corresponds to *allo* vis-a-vis *nābārā* in Təgrəñña.

The statement that *halla* is used in constructions comparable to the English present continuous only applies if it is made clear that the main verb must be in the imperfect.

Although the example **ረኣሼ ፡ ሐመኒ ፡ ሀለ** (*raʼašše ḥammanni halla*), ‘I have a headache’ is correct, a reference is needed to state that the verbal form *ḥamm-anni* is an imperfect 3rd pers. masc. sg. without overt marking of this person (= subject to *raʼašše*, ‘my head’) with an object suffix of the 1st pers. sg. and by no means a perfect. We do not believe the author is au fait with this situation because he does not mention the elision of the prefixed personal elements in the paradigms he offers further down (see below). The

³ See the same mistake already in Raz 1983, 53.

only correct translation in a survey article is ‘My head hurts me’ which exemplifies the grammatical construction in Təgre.

When illustrating the derived verbal forms the author mentions correctly ሰብረ (*sabra*), ‘to break’ – C ሳበረ (*sābara*; for ‘*sābara*’ although this misprint already appears in Morin 2010, 154) ‘to break in pieces’ – D ሰበበረ (*sabābara*), ‘to break thoroughly’. Another example is: ቀጥለ (*qatla*), ‘to kill’ – ቃጥለ (*qātala*), ‘to kill several people, to slaughter’ – ቀቃጥለ (*qatātala*), ‘to kill off and on’ (Littmann and Höfner 1962).

When introducing the ‘four inflexions’ perfect, imperfect, jussive and imperative in the space of two lines, the verb መዘነ (*mazzana*), ‘to weigh’, wrongly given as a basic B-stem (it is a T₂ stem *mazzana* (‘to be weighed’)), is used. The jussive is presented without any further commentary as ‘*tamazno*’, a verb we will have occasion to return to.

3.2.3. Nouns and adjectives (pp. 1148–1149)

‘All Tigre dialects have nouns and adjectives’—a statement that does not only cover Təgre but all Semitic languages. It would be a sensation if it did not have nouns or adjectives.

When it is said that ‘the feminine is marked with suffixes *-(i)t, -at*, particularly when sex is semantically expressed’, surely what is meant is: when gender is morphologically expressed.

The alleged suffix *-(i)t* is illustrated with the example ፍሊይ (*fəluj*), ‘bull-calf’ – ፍሊት (*fəlit*), ‘female-calf’. But in the latter case there is no ending *-it*, rather the feminine ending is simply *-t*; what has happened is that in **fəluj-t* the sequence *uj* becomes *əy > i* in a closed syllable. Other examples are: ስጹይ (*ḥəṣuj*), f. ስጹት (*ḥəṣit* (< *ḥəṣəyt* < **ḥəṣuyt*) ‘betrothed’), እኩይ (*əkkuj*), f. እኩት (*əkkit* (< *əkəkəyt* < **əkkuyt*) ‘bad’) (this is the curious ‘*i-kwoy*’ of the author).

It must be added that there is also a diminutive ending *-it* for feminine nouns, e.g. እድግት (*ədḡət*) ‘she-donkey’; cf. m. አድግ (*ādəg*), ‘donkey’—dim. እድግቲት (*ədḡət-it*), ‘little she-donkey’, ወለት (*walat*), ‘girl’—dim. ወለቲት (*walat-it*), ‘little girl’.

When it is said that the plural ‘marked with various suffixes: *-āt, -otāt, -(a)č*, and/or by internal vowel change including the ‘broken plural’ (the difference between an internal vowel change and an internal plural is never explained) this means that the three previously mentioned external plural endings can also be suffixed onto internal plurals—but not a single example is provided for this. This is correct in the case of the plurals *-āt* and *-otāt* as can be seen with ምድር (*mədər*); pl. አምዳር (*amdār*), አምዳራት (*amdārāt*), ‘land’ and ብዕራይ (*bəʿrāy*); pl. አብዕራት (*abʿərat*), አብዕራታት (*abʿərotāt*), ‘ox, bull’ resp. However, for the ending *-ač* there are no attested internal plurals to which they may have been added.

In a superficial analysis one might speak of a plural suffix ‘-(a)č’, where, however, no examples are given. This is an ending that is only attested for a few nouns. Indeed the ending *-ač* could be considered the result of a palatalization process from *-ayt* in which the plural element is only *-t*, e.g. ተላይ (talāy), pl. (*talāy-t >) ተላይት talayt, (>) ተላች talač ‘shepherd’. In other cases the plural form with *-ayt* is not documented as in ክራይ (karāy); pl. (*karāyt > *karayt >) ክራች (karač), አክራት (akarrit) ‘hyena’.⁴

When dealing with the broken plural, which is done very thoroughly indeed in the literature, it would have been apposite to point out how frequently this plural formation is applied, a fact that is not fully appreciated in Semitic studies despite Frank R. Palmer’s contribution (1962). An example of this misjudgement can be found in Huehnergard and Rubin (2011, 273): ‘that while Ethiopian Semitic in its oldest attested form, Gəʿəz, is replete with internal plurals, modern Ethiopian Semitic languages have shifted away from this method of plural marking’, a statement that can easily be proved wrong. Although they concede that ‘numerous internal plurals’ are found ‘in some languages, like Tiginya’, it would have been more correct to say that, among the modern languages, only Təgre and Təgrəñña are ‘replete with internal plurals’. And they continue to say: ‘That the modern languages have shifted away from internal plural marking’—Təgre and Təgrəñña are by this account not modern languages—‘is possibly due to areal influence’. These infelicities of judgement can perhaps be explained as a lack of familiarity with these two languages, which is astonishing bearing in mind that Təgrəñña is the third largest Semitic language. And the article by Morin under consideration does not contribute in any way to correct the misleading view concerning Təgre, which is after all the third largest Ethio-Erythreo-Semitic language.

In the paradigm for the demonstrative pronouns three of the eight forms are incorrect (e.g. *alla* instead of አለን, *allan*).

When dealing with the possessive particle ናይ (*nāy*), ‘of’ its use as a possessive pronoun is pointed out. However in the example ናይ (*nā-ye*), ‘mine’ the segmentation is misleading; *nāye* comes from *nāy-ye*, where the long semivowel is shortened in some dialects of Təgre. It is simply not true that semivowels could never be geminated, as Didier Morin proposes, following Shlomo Raz. It is only the morphological lengthening of semivowels that is excluded, cf. ለበስ (*labbəs*), ‘he gets dressed’ but ገይስ (*gay(ə)s*), ‘he goes’. However lengthening due to random contact between two morphemes is possible, cf. *nāy* + the suffix ending 1st pers. sg. *-ye*.

This *nāy* is also used to express a genitival connection, as e.g. in (Mansa^c dialect) ቤት ምህር ናይ አዋልድ (*bet məhro nāy ʾawāləd*), ‘girls’ school’. The

⁴ See Palmer (1962, 83); Raz (1983, 18) has *akkarrit*.

remark that in the dialect of the Beni-^cĀmər *nāy* can be ‘elided’ is misleading since *bet mabro* (cf. Təgrāñña *bet təmhərti*) is already a genitival phrase (‘house of study’) and *nāy* shows a general tendency in all dialects towards elision.

A simple segmentation is here simply impossible as can be seen in another example: **ቤቼ** (*be-čče*), ‘my house’, which comes from **bet-ye*.

3.2.4. Pronouns (pp. 1149–1150)

The section on the pronouns—amounting to eight lines (without the two charts)—forms the conclusion of the grammatical part. After the personal pronouns (read 3rd pers. fem. pl. **ህተን**, *hətan* for *hətān*) we are offered a chart of the verbal object suffixes with only three examples. The two examples **ህብንሁ** (*hab-nə-hu*), ‘we gave him’ and **ረከብኩሁ** (*‘rakab-kä-hu* (an error for *rakab-kā-hu*)), ‘you found him’ are not well chosen because the perfect endings of 1st pers. pl. and 2nd pers. masc. sg. behave in the same way. Before an object suffix the originally long vowel in *-ka* and *-na* is either lengthened or reduced to *shwä*. The third example of an object suffix with the verb—**ክረዎ** (*kəra-wo*), ‘put (m. pl.) it down’—is parsed incorrectly. The plural imperative is **ክረው** (*kəraw*; masc. sg. **ክራ**, *kəre*), to which the object suffix *-o* is added.

The second paradigm in the section under review concerns the ‘Subject pronouns in conjugation’, by which is meant the paradigms for the perfect and imperfect—with partial segmentation. Although the prefixes are segmented in the imperfect (e.g. 3rd pers. masc. sg. **ለመዘን** (*lə-mazzən*), ‘he weighs’), and the same is done with the suffixes in perfect forms (e.g. 1st pers. sg. **መዘኑ**, *mazzan-ko*), this is not done with personal suffixes prefixing conjugational forms, e.g. 3rd pers. masc. pl. **ለመዘኖ** (*lə-mazno*: read *lə-mazn-o*) instead.

The verb *mazzana* which is used here does not lend itself well as an example of the perfect and imperfect conjugations because it is not the simplest form of a verb in its basic stem, rather it is a verb of a B-type with lengthening of the second radical. In fact, for someone who is familiar with Təgre the *mazzana* paradigm gives the forms of a T₂-stem **መዘኑ** *mazzana* (< *tmazzana*) because any O₁-stem regularly forms a passive T₂-stem in this way, e.g.:

O ₁				T ₂	
ሰብረ	<i>sabra</i> ‘to break’	ሰበረ	<i>sabbara</i> ,	ትሰበረ	<i>tsabbara</i> ‘to be broken’
ሰትረ	<i>satra</i> ‘to hide’	ሰተረ	<i>sattara</i> ,	ትሰተረ	<i>tsattara</i> ‘to be hid’
መሰለ	<i>masla</i> ‘to be similar’	መሰለ	<i>massala</i> ,	ትመሰለ	<i>tmassala</i> ‘to resemble’
በልሰ	<i>balsa</i> ‘to turn’	በለሰ	<i>ballasa</i> ,	ትበለሰ	<i>tballasa</i> ‘to be turned’
ገርበ	<i>garba</i> ‘to cut’	ገረበ	<i>garraba</i> ,	ትገረበ	<i>tgarraba</i> ‘to be cut off’
ጠምዐ	<i>ṭam^ca</i> ‘to save’	ጠምዐ	<i>ṭammə^ca</i> ,	ትጠምዐ	<i>tṭammə^ca</i> ‘to be saved’

This list could easily be continued. More than a century ago Enno Littmann (1898, 162) expressed the opinion: ‘*qattalà* [sc. wird] im weitesten Umfange

als Passiv gebraucht' (i.e. *qattalà* is used as a passive to the fullest extent).⁵ And even before him Carlo Conti Rossini (1894, 111) had already remarked that the form ቀተለ (*qattala*) is a 'derivazione della forma precedente con la quale spesso coesiste', i.e. ተቀተለ *taqattala*, and he offers this example: *hāqqāqā*, better *haqqāqa* 'consumarsi dal dispiacere', which was later re-quoted in Littmann and Höfner (1962, 77) as '(ተ)አቆቆ' with reference to Munzinger (1865).

It is astonishing and hardly conceivable that this characteristic trait of the language that has been described by various authors should have escaped a Təgre scholar such as Shlomo Raz and those who use his grammar uncritically.

So almost 150 years have passed since Munzinger listed a large number of perfect *t*-less T₂-formations of O₁ verbs in his *Vocabulaire*. Our attempt to record all verbs following this pattern proved to be unworkable because in as little as ten *h/h* pages we found twenty examples, e.g.:

ካለሰ	<i>halsa</i>	'to become worn';	pass.	ካለሰ	<i>hallasa,</i>
አለበ	<i>halba</i>	'to milk';	pass.	አለበ	<i>hallaba,</i>
ካለፈ	<i>halfa</i>	'to pass';	pass.	ካለፈ	<i>hallafa,</i>
አግመ	<i>hagma</i>	'to cup';	pass.	አግመ	<i>haggama,</i>
ካፍረ	<i>hafra</i>	'to dig';	pass.	ካፍረ	<i>haffara.</i>

Here the original transcription by Munzinger (1865) which has a number of idiosyncrasies has been changed into the current transcription according to which his 'š' stands for the voiceless sibilant *s* and his 'ts' for the glottalised sibilant *ʃ*.

With some of the above-mentioned verbs perfect formations of T₂-stems that do contain *t* are also listed. And apart from that, there are also some verbs of which perfect formations without *t* are not attested, e.g.

አምለ	<i>hamla</i>	'to be tender';	pass.	ተአመለ	<i>taḥammala,</i>
አሜ	<i>hame</i>	(today አመ <i>hama</i>) 'to abuse, accuse';	pass.	ተአሜ	<i>taḥamme</i> (today ተአመ <i>taḥamma</i>),
አርሰ	<i>harsa</i>	'to plough';	pass.	ተአረሰ	<i>taḥarrasa.</i>

However verbal pairs as ሀገበ (*aggaba*), 'to do wrong'–ተሀገበ (*ta'aggaba*), 'to be wronged' (cf. the identical forms in Təgrəñña) do occur. Nevertheless the verb መዘነ (*mazzana*), which we have, if at all, to consider as an Amharic loan, has long been traditionally employed in the description of Təgre. According to Littmann and Höfner (1962, 138a) it is attested by Gustav Richard Sundström, Näffä° Wäd °Etmān and Arnauld d'Abbadie. In Raz (1983, 52) *mazzana* is the first verb that is mentioned when he deals with type B verbs (the same is true in Raz 1997). This was then wrongly repeated by Morin in

⁵ Nöldeke (1890, 293) had already pointed this out.

two of his articles (2010, 2011). In the monolingual dictionary by Musa Aron (2005) we find that O_1 መዝኒ *mazna* (cf. Təgrəñña *māzānā*) has the passive stem T_2 ትመዝኒ *tmazzana* the shortened form of this being መዝኒ *mazzana*.

In the paradigm of the imperfect conjugation the loss of the *lə*-prefix is not noticed. Raz (1983) does mention it in his grammar but the phenomenon is not reflected in the verbal paradigms which one normally has to consult. Contrast this with the early mention by Ruffillo Perini in his *Manuale* (1893), i.e. even before Littmann's works, where we find e.g. 3rd pers. masc. sg. ነብር 'nebbêr' (*nabbər*), 3rd pers. masc. pl. ነብሮ 'nabrò' (*nabro*).⁶

Summarising this paragraph we can say: of the two paradigms presented in the article both are seriously flawed: the first (perfect conjugation) because it does not describe the basic stem O_1 as expected but instead the O_2 stem which appears to be the T_2 -stem, and the second (imperfect conjugation) because it does not fit with the first paradigm. Furthermore the loss of the imperfective prefixes is not given any mention.

The literature here mentioned is not sufficient. It is simply not enough for a grammatical description to quote Leslau (1945) as the first 'scientific description of Tigre', Palmer (1962) and Raz (1983). It is Enno Littmann's doctoral thesis 'Das Verbum der Tigrsprache' (1898–1899), together with his 'Die Pronomina im Tigre' (1897), that must surely be counted as the first scientific linguistic contribution to Təgre, and which, together, are over two hundred pages long.

Also the *Manuale* by Perini, the Capitano nel 4^o battaglione indigeno, cannot simply be dismissed as unscientific. His work offers a wealth of material, extensive paradigms and a large number of context examples. However, the transcription is Italianized and does not meet today's stringent standard.

With the enormous growth of the corpus of literature since Eritrea's independence certain genres and media beyond 'novels, written poetry' should have been given appropriate attention, e.g. non-fiction literature (such as Alam-Sagad Tasfāy: ኢ.ንትፈ.ና.ቴ (*I-nəṭfanāte*) 2007), Təgre television programmes and the Təgre newspaper ኤረትሮየ ፡ ሐዳስ (*Eratrəya Haddās*), now in its seventh year of publication. Təgre is clearly a fully developed literary language, which unfortunately has not been adequately described in Didier Morin's contribution.

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⁶ For an even earlier report of this phenomenon see Voigt 2009.

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