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Review article

Remarks on an Encyclopaedic Article on Togre

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Bibliographical abbreviations used in this volume

CSCO  Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1903ff.
EMML  Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa.
OrChr  Oriens Christianus, Leipzig–Roma–Wiesbaden 1901ff.
PO  Patrologia Orientalis, 1903ff.
RRALm  Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, Roma, 1892ff.
SAe  Scriptores Aethiopici.
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 Tǝgre 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 ‘Afar, Saho, Somali and Beğa. Due to his work on Beğa he has also come into contact with Tǝgre and has published two contributions on various Tǝgre dialects (Morin 1996; 2010). In the encyclopaedia article here under review, where he deals with Tǝgre (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 Tǝgre is inadequate.

1. Location (pp. 1142–1143)

Sometimes one gets the impression that the author is not familiar with certain aspects of the Tǝgre language and people. To start with the statements made to describe the location of the Tǝgre speaking areas, the author identifies the areas where Tǝgre is spoken as ‘the Sudan-Eritrean grazing lowlands and the Ḃ tëràː : ṭɔ̀rɔ́rə Rora Mansa’, the Mansa plateau’. It should be noted that the Mansa plateau refers to a very small part of the Mansa’s 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 Tǝgre speaking people live. In the author’s description of ‘Tigre’s traditional linguistic area’, places such as Ḃ të tàː (Rora Ḥaba), Ḃ tëː ṭɔ̀n (Rora Márýa) and Ḃɔːn : ṭɔ̀hɔ̀hɔ̀ (‘Ad-Tekles), where Tǝgre is exclusively spoken, are not included. Locating Arkiko (ḥ hútɔ̀, Ḍárgágo) as Tǝgre’s southern limit in the east is also not correct. Tǝgre 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’ is not correct. Tǝgre is still spoken in 1.၃၄ ṭɔ̀n (Ginda’) as the primary language together with Tǝ DRV
and Soho. It is spoken beyond Ginda all the way up to the eastern edges of
the capital Asmāra including villages such as ያዳሱ (Darfoo) and ከሆስ (Gsla).
With regard to the status of the Tǝgré 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, Tǝgré is a fully developed language of literature, media, arts, and
education. In the same way, like Tǝgré, Tǝgré 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 Tǝgré or
are being translated into Tǝgré. To correct one more misunderstanding,
although Tǝgré 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 Tǝgré 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-
‘Āmar) dialect. The Eritrea Dialect Survey that the author quotes in the
article here under review, clearly shows how the Beni-‘Āmar dialect and the
Samhar dialect are the two most divergent dialects of the Tǝgré language,
maintaining the lowest affinity towards each other (Ministry of Education
lower status of the lowland dialects in comparison to the ‘written dialect of
Keren’ is not a sociolinguistic fact that all Tǝgré speakers agree on (ibid.).
The influence of Beja, Arabic and Tǝgré on the Tǝgré language and the
degree of variation within the language is overestimated and not supported
by convincing data. He argues that the Tǝgré 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 Beja influence on Tǝgré.

maqaddan i-kǝwoy tu ‘jealousy is not good’.

His interpretation of this sentence reads, ‘The adjective kǝwoy from the Beja
verb kǝwat(im) ‘to be good’ replaces the sanni (sanni ikon) but follows Tigre
syntax with the presence of the copula tu’. This interpretation, unfortunate-
ly, is based on a doubtful etymology. Indeed there is a verb kwatiimaa ‘be
happy, lucky’ (Wedekind, Wedekind and Abuzeinab Musa 2007) and the
Review articles

adjective kwatiib, f. kwatiit ‘fine, happy’. However it is unclear how the form kwoy could be derived from it. Instead we would like to propose to connect ikwoy (i.e. not with the segmentation i-kwoy ‘not good’) with Tagre ḥōr (‘akkuw’, ‘bad’. This adjective is derived from the Tagre verb ḥōr aka, ‘be bad, be evil, deteriorate’) and is related to the Semitic root ḱ/kəy (see Dillmann 1865, 788; Leslau 1991, 17).

The other example,

tūn-hilil ‘adīg hoy rebeta ‘Have you seen a donkey in this dry river-bed?’
is either a hypothetical sentence or was uttered by a Beğa speaker who attempted to speak Tagre unsuccessfully. From the personal experience as a native Tagre speaker of the Sāhāl region and as a person who lived with Bet-Awad and Labad/t, this sentence does not represent any stable Tagre variety in the Sāhāl region. Again the verb ḥa (ra’a), ‘to see’ is not an Arabic loanword in Tagre. It is a native Tagre verb which has a common root (🇻/vy) in Semitic languages in general and in Ethio-Eritrean Semitic languages in particular (see Leslau 1991, 459). The Tagre dialect of Beni-ˁĂmar is the one with the highest rate of contact with Beğa. Therefore, the highest Beğa influence on Tagre must be seen in the Beni-ˁĂmar dialect of Tagre. 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 Beğa language on Tagre. Beğa 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 Tagre varieties are Tǝgǝnña 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 Mansaˁ, David Elias on the dialect of Gindaˁ, and Nakano and Tsuge (1982), however, do not support the high influence of the Beğa language on Tagre. Beğa words or hybrid constructions such as the one mentioned above by Morin are hardly found in these publications.

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 kyān ‘goodness’, dà kyān ‘all right’ (personal communication with Joe McIntyre).
ume, but it also contains some mistakes. The short central vowel /ɔ/ 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 Tägre grammar, including Shlomo Raz himself, has completely ignored the presence of /ɔ/ as a Tägre vowel (but see Leslau 1945, 165; Elias 2005, 55; Grammatica 1919, 5). Its phonemic identity can be seen in minimal pairs such as:

ǔ́ (kis), ‘sack’ : ǹ́ (kọš), ‘one type of Tägre dance, accusation’,
ǹ́ (kabbat), ‘receive’, 2nd pers. masc. sg. imper.: ǹ́ (kabbat), ‘let somebody receive’, 2nd pers. masc. sg. imper.,
ǹ́ (gabbab), ‘one with big forehead’: ǹ́ (gabbab), ‘he hits with forehead’,
ǹ́ (qaddad), ‘rough’, act. part.: ǹ́ (qaddad), ‘he cuts or tears’ : ǹ́ (qaddad), ‘cut off’.

While the statement about the relevance of vowel quantity (between a : á) is correct, the examples are wrong. First, ñ́ (ba ál) 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 ál (‘owner’) and ba ál (‘feast, holiday’). The word ba ál with the meaning of ‘feast’ is a loanword from Tägräñña which has no phonemic contrast in terms of vowel quantity. Many sets of minimal pairs can be listed, such as:

ǹ́ (hál), ‘maternal aunt’ : ǹ́ (hál), ‘maternal uncle’,
ǹ́ (atá), ‘he entered’ : ǹ́ (ätá), ‘he entered something’,
ǹ́ (qár), ‘horn’ : ǹ́ (qár), ‘valley’,
ǹ́ (sättár), ‘pieces’ : ǹ́ (sättár), ‘a piece’.

The word ñ́ (sa’ayat) ‘hope’ is used in all Tägre dialects including Beni-Ámar, not only in Mansa’. The other word for ‘hope’ is not sa’ayót, as given by Didier Morin, but ñ́ (sa’ayob). It is also used in other Tägre dialects as a poetic word. In the suffix -b we have a Beğa morpheme which marks the feminine accusative of non-lexical nouns; this is clear evidence of Beğa influence.

The pl. imperative form of the verb ‘to see’ is given wrongly as ra’ay (Mansa’) and its Beni-Ámar counterpart as ra’aty (?). These words represent the 2nd pers. fem. sg. imperative form ra’ay. The plural imperative, at least for the Mansa’ dialect, is ǹ́ (ra’aw, masc.) and ǹ́ (ra’aya, fem.). The demonstrative ǹ́ (lohan/lōhan, gender fem. characterization is missing) in Mansa’ and Beni-Ámar respectively are translated as ‘these’ instead of ‘those’ (pl. fem.). The demonstrative for ‘these’ is ñ́ (allan, 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. ָשפ (faddaba), ‘to be brave, strong’, ָה (balla), ‘to be, exist’, ָמג (garrama), ‘to be beautiful’) is not correct since there are no examples of B stems derived from the simple basic stem (A). The derivation ָתג (kabbara), ‘to give news’ from ָתג (kabra) ‘to be honoured’ is most emphatically incorrect—kabbara is a loan from Arabic ָב bara (‘id.’) and has nothing to do with the root ָקן, 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. ָחנ (kafla), ‘to pay, to divide’—אחנ (kàfàl), ‘to divide repeatedly, to distribute’.

‘The verb can be simple, derived or in composition with an auxiliary (קון, BALLA)’—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 קון which is mentioned explicitly only occurs in the literary language in the fossilised form אקונ (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 ָה (balla), which has a dialectal and literary variant ָל (balla), the auxiliary ָה (‘ala) which serves to signal past tense deserves a mention. The use of balla/halla vis-à-vis ‘ala in Tagre corresponds to אלה vis-a-vis נבנ in Tagroôna.

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 אלחנ : אצל : ָה (ra’esshe hammanni halla), ‘I have a headache’ is correct, a reference is needed to state that the verbal form hamm-anni is an imperfect 3rd pers. masc. without overt marking of this person (= subject to ra’esshe, ‘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 Ṭageṛ.

When illustrating the derived verbal forms the author mentions correctly ṭḥns (sabra), ‘to break’ – C ṭhns (sābara; for ‘sābara’ although this misprint already appears in Morin 2010, 154) ‘to break in pieces’ – D ṭhnns (sāhabara), ‘to break thoroughly’. Another example is: ṭṭn (qatla), ‘to kill’ – ṭṭn (qatāla), ‘to kill several people, to slaughter’ – ṭṭn (qatāṭala), ‘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 ṭḥn (mazzana), ‘to weigh’, wrongly given as a basic B-stem (it is a T2 stem ṭḥn (‘to be weighed’)), is used. The jussive is presented without any further commentary as ‘ṭṭmzno’, 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 Ṭageṛ 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 ḥḥ-ʾ (fālley), ‘bull-calf’— ḥḥ-ʾ (fālit), ‘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 ṭḤlley-t the sequence uy becomes yi > i in a closed syllable. Other examples are: ḥḥ-ʾ (bḥṣey), f. ḥḥ-ʾ (bḥṣyt (< bḥṣayt < *bḥṣayt) ‘betrothed’), ḥḥ-ʾ akkuy, f. ḥḥ-ʾ (akkit (< akkayt < *akkayt) ‘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. ḥṣʾ-ʾ (adɡat) ‘she-donkey’; cf. m. ḥṣʾ-ʾ (ādɡ), ‘donkey’—dim. ḥṣʾ-ʾ (adɡat-it), ‘little she-donkey’, ḥḥʾ-ʾ (walat), ‘girl’—dim. ḥḥʾ-ʾ (walat-it), ‘little girl’.

When it is said that the plural ‘marked with various suffixes: -at, -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 -at and -otāt as can be seen with ṭṭʾc (mādż); pl. ṭṭʾc (amdār), ṭṭʾc (amdarāt), ‘land’ and ṭṭʾc (b’rāy); pl. ṭṭʾc (ab’rat), ṭṭʾc (ab’ratāt), ‘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. ҭӑpe (talayt), pl. (*talayt-) ҭӑpe-ҭӑpe talayt, (>ta-tač ‘shepherd’. In other cases the plural form with -ayt is not documented as in ҭӑpe (karay); pl. (*karayt > *karayt >) ҭӑpe (karač), ҭӑpe (‘akkarit) ‘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, Ƽз, 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 Tәgre and Tәgrәnә are ‘replete with internal plurals’. And they continue to say: ‘That the modern languages have shifted away from internal plural marking’—Tәgre and Tәgrәnә 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 Tәgrәnә 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 Tәgre, 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 ={$\alpha$}y, allan).

When dealing with the possessive particle ԥԥ (nәy), ‘of’ its use as a possessive pronoun is pointed out. However in the example ԥԥ (nәy-ye), ‘mine’ the segmentation is misleading; nәyә comes from nәy-ye, where the long semi-vowel is shortened in some dialects of Tәgre. It is simply not true that semi-vowels could never be geminated, as Didier Morin proposes, following Shlomo Raz. It is only the morphological lengthening of semi-vowels that is excluded, cf. ҭӑnә (labbas), ‘he gets dressed’ but ҭӑnә (gay(ә)s), ‘he goes’. However lengthening due to random contact between two morphemes is possible, cf. nәy + the suffix ending 1st pers. sg. -ye.

This nәy is also used to express a genitival connection, as e.g. in (Mansa’ dialect) ҭӑpә ԥԥԥԥ ҭӑpe (bet mәbro nәy ‘awәlod), ‘girls’ school’. The

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4 See Palmer (1962, 83); Raz (1983, 18) has akkarit.
remark that in the dialect of the Beni-\text{"Ämar n\text{"ay} can be ‘elided’ is misleading since bet mahbo (cf. T\text{"a}g\text{"a}n\text{"a} bet tambarti) is already a genitival phrase (‘house of study’) and n\text{"ay} shows a general tendency in all dialects towards elision.

A simple segmentation is here simply impossible as can be seen in another example: "be-\text{"e\text{"e}}", ‘my house’, which comes from 3\text{"b}et-\text{"e}y.

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 3\text{rd} pers. fem. pl. \text{"u}t\text{"u}, betan for bet\text{"a}n) we are offered a chart of the verbal object suffixes with only three examples. The two examples \text{"u}t\text{"u} (hab\text{\text{"e}}hu), ‘we gave him’ and \text{"u}t\text{"u} (\text{"a}rab\text{"a}hu) (an error for rakab\text{"a}hu), ‘you found him’ are not well chosen because the perfect endings of 1\text{st} pers. pl. and 2\text{nd} pers. masc. sg. behave in the same way. Before an object suffix the originally long vowel in -\text{"a}k and -\text{"a}n is either lengthened or reduced to shwå’. The third example of an object suffix with the verb—\text{"u}t\text{"u} (kor\text{\text{"a}}\text{\text{"u}}, \text{‘put (m. pl.) it down’)—is parsed incorrectly. The plural imperative is \text{"u}t\text{"u} (kor\text{"e}; masc. sg. \text{"u}, kore), to which the object suffix -\text{"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. 3\text{rd} pers. masc. sg. \text{"a}m\text{"a}m (\text{"a}m\text{"a}\text{\text{"a}}, ‘he weighs’), and the same is done with the suffixes in perfect forms (e.g. 1\text{st} pers. sg. \text{"a}m\text{"a}m, mazz\text{"a}m-ko), this is not done with personal suffixes prefixing conjugational forms, e.g. 3\text{rd} pers. masc. pl. \text{"a}m\text{"a}m (\text{"a}m\text{"a}\text{\text{"a}}: read \text{"a}m\text{"a}\text{\text{"a}}-\text{"a}m\text{"a}) instead.

The verb mazz\text{"a}m 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 T\text{"a}g\text{"a} the mazz\text{"a}m paradigm gives the forms of a T\text{2}-stem \text{"a}m\text{"a}m (\text{"a}m\text{"a}\text{\text{"a}}) because any 0\text{1}-stem regularly forms a passive T\text{2}-stem in this way, e.g.:

\begin{align*}
\text{O} & \quad \text{T} \\
\text{"a}t\text{"e}c & \text{sabra} \quad \text{"a}t\text{"e}c & \text{sabbara} \quad \text{tsh\text{"a}b\text{"e}} & \text{‘to break’} \\
\text{\text{"a}t\text{"e}c} & \text{satra} \quad \text{\text{"a}t\text{"e}c} & \text{sattara} \quad \text{t\text{"a}t\text{"a}r\text{"e}} & \text{‘to hide’} \\
\text{\text{"a}m\text{"a}} & \text{masla} \quad \text{\text{"a}m\text{"a}} & \text{massala} \quad \text{tm\text{"a}m\text{"a}} & \text{‘to be similar’} \\
\text{\text{"a}m\text{"a}} & \text{bal\text{\text{"a}}} \quad \text{\text{"a}m\text{"a}} & \text{ballasa} \quad \text{tm\text{"a}m\text{"a}} & \text{‘to turn’} \\
\text{\text{"a}m\text{"a}} & \text{g\text{\text{"a}}} \quad \text{\text{"a}m\text{\text{"a}}} & \text{garraba} \quad \text{tm\text{"a}m\text{"a}} & \text{‘to cut off’} \\
\text{\text{"a\text{"a}}m\text{"a}} & \text{\text{"a\text{"a}}m\text{"a}} & \text{\text{"a\text{"a}}m\text{"a}} & \text{\text{"a\text{"a}}m\text{\text{"a}}} & \text{‘to save’}
\end{align*}

This list could easily be continued. More than a century ago Enno Littmann (1898, 162) expressed the opinion: ‘q\text{"a}tt\text{"a}l\text{\text{"a}} [sc. w\text{"i}rd] im weitesten Umfange
als Passiv gebraucht’ (i.e. *qattala* is used as a passive to the fullest extent). And even before him Carlo Conti Rossini (1894, 111) had already remarked that the form *qattala* is a ‘derivazione della forma precedente con la quale spesso coesiste’, i.e. *tagattala*, and he offers this example: *baqqaqa*, better *baqqaga* ‘consumarsi dal dispiacere’, which was later re-quoted in Littmann and Höfner (1962, 77) as ‘*(+)*h̃b̃ph̃’ 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 Tagre 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 01 verbs in his *Vocabulaire*. Our attempt to record all verbs following this pattern proved to be unworkable because in as little as ten *h/b* pages we found twenty examples, e.g.:

- wíbása ‘to become worn’;  
- wíbalaba,
- wíbalala,
- wíbalafa,
- wíbaggama,
- wíbaffara.

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

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.

- w̃hama ‘to be tender’;  
- w̃tahamama,
- w̃hame (today w̃hm hama) ‘to abuse, accuse’;  
- w̃thamme (today w̃hm hamma),
- w̃harsa ‘to plough’;  
- w̃tharrasa.

However verbal pairs as *w̃h* (*aggaba*), ‘to do wrong’—*w̃h* (*ta’aggaba*), ‘to be wronged’ (cf. the identical forms in Tagrhoña) do occur. Nevertheless the verb *w̃hm* (*mazzana*), which we have, if at all, to consider as an Amharic loan, has long been traditionally employed in the description of Tagre. According to Littmann and Höfner (1962, 138a) it is attested by Gustav Richard Sundström, Näffà Wàd ‘Etàmn 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 \(0 \, \text{mazna} (\text{cf. } \text{T} \, \text{maza})\) has the passive stem \(T \, \text{tmazzana}\) the shortened form of this being \(\text{mazzana}\).

In the paradigm of the imperfect conjugation the loss of the \(la\)-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. \(\nu \, \text{tnn} \, \text{nebbër} (\text{nabbër})\), 3rd pers. masc. pl. \(\nu \, \text{tnn} \, \text{nabrô} (\text{nabro})\).

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 \(0 \, \text{mazna}\) as expected but instead the \(0 \, \text{mazzana}\) stem which appears to be the \(T \, \text{tmazzana}\)-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 Verbüm der Tigresprache’ (1898–1899), together with his ‘Die Pronomina im Tigre’ (1897), that must surely be counted as the first scientific linguistic contribution to Tigre, and which, together, are over two hundred pages long.

Also the Manuale by Perini, the Capitano nel 4° 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 Taʃfay: \(\nu \, \text{y} \, \text{tnn} \, \text{I-natfanat} \, \text{t} \, \text{y} \, \text{na}\) (2007)), Tigre television programmes and the Tigre newspaper \(\nu \, \text{y} \, \text{tnn} \, \text{Esatrzya Haddás}\), now in its seventh year of publication. Tigre is clearly a fully developed literary language, which unfortunately has not been adequately described in Dider Morin’s contribution.

**Literatur**

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