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**Review**

RONNY MEYER, YVONNE TREIS, and AZEB AMHA, eds, *Explorations in  
Ethiopian Linguistics: Complex Predicates, Finiteness and Interrogativity*

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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<sup>e</sup> 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*.

RONNY MEYER, YVONNE TREIS, and AZEB AMHA, eds, *Explorations in Ethiopian Linguistics: Complex Predicates, Finiteness and Interrogativity*, *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 91 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014). 299 pp., maps, tables. Price: € 68.00. ISBN: 978-3-447-10214-8.

This interesting and carefully edited collection brings together twelve articles on three specific problems centered on sentence predicates in Ethiopian linguistics which, to the best of my knowledge, have not been treated in depth until now. Most contributions are based on presentations made at the 18<sup>th</sup> *International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* in Dərre Dawa in November 2012. The editors should be complimented for publishing these well chosen articles in a separate volume thus offering some authors an opportunity to elaborate more extensively their texts by exceeding the procrustean space limits of the official Conference proceedings. The texts are arranged according to subject: interrogativity, complex predicates and finiteness rather than according to the Semitic, Cushitic and Omotic genetic families represented in the Volume, reflecting the current approach to the study of Ethiopian linguistics as an areal and typological entity. I will, however, stick to my old ways and start with Semitic in which I feel more competent. Considering that the authors display diverse theoretical and methodological approaches I'll try to make the material more accessible to the less-committed readers by using a more traditional terminology.

The volume opens with Magdalena Krzyżanowska's article 'Questions about Amharic Questions with *yəhon*: A tentative Semantic Study' (pp. 17–39) which offers an analysis of interrogative sentences accompanied by the element *yəhon* as an auxiliary, known as 'deliberative or meditative questions' (p. 17). The author bases her semantic description on a theoretical framework elaborated by two Polish linguists for the Polish language and it is refreshing to acknowledge that, contrary to what seems to be an axiom, original and sound linguistic theories based on languages other than English do exist and can safely and profitably be applied to Ethiopian languages. The author uses both genuine examples from literary texts and one radio play and examples elicited from informants. It would have been preferable if only genuine examples had been quoted. Material provided by native speakers is extremely valuable in phonetics, morphology and lexicon but as far as the less specific domain of syntax is concerned they tend sometimes to get carried away and overlook the difference between theoretical possibilities of producing sentences and the actual usage. Thus, the genuine example no. (46) *addis-u gänzäb yä-mätäyyäqiya sält män l-i-hon yəhon* 'What might become a new way of asking for money?' is paralleled by the elicited similar example no.

(45) with *yəhon yəhon* which sounds unfamiliar to me, unless it is a very recent innovation. And, as a matter of fact, in Goldenberg's Table<sup>1</sup> which contains all possible combinations of auxiliated verbs with auxiliaries the combination *lihon yəhon* exists but *yəhon yəhon* is not mentioned at all. In connection with the 'modal epistemic auxiliary *yəhonall* in declarative sentences' as opposed to *yəhon* in interrogation (pp. 27–28) Baye Yimam's paper 'Modality in Amharic'<sup>2</sup> should be added to the sources cited.

In the section on verb compounding Abdu Ahmed's paper 'Complex Predicates in Amharic Counterfactual Antecedent Clauses' (pp. 79–90) deals with compound verb forms in the protasis of unreal conditional sentences followed by negation in the apodosis. It is the form of the protasis which defines the character of the condition hence the importance of fixing once for all the exact form or forms of its predicate. The author is right in stating that this chapter is not focused enough in the extant grammars and needs a more concise rephrasing. He proposes two formulas for the verb of the unreal protasis: *b*+imperfect+*noro* and gerund+*b-ihon noro* with, in the apodosis, negation+imperfect+*näbbär*. A third possibility with *bä*+perfect in the protasis and *bä*+negation+perfect+*näbbär* in the apodosis is dismissed as 'perhaps more archaic' (pp. 80–81). Any additional precision in the description of the complicated chapter on conditional sentences in Amharic is most welcome. The author is right in distinguishing these constructions from gerunds used adverbially as well as from complex verbs formed with the supporting verbs *alä* or *adärrägä* which both belong to different chapters of grammar. In the first case the gerund is used for creating adverbs in the same manner as the imperfect in *yələq* or the perfect in *əyyadär*<sup>3</sup> or for modifying the meaning of the verb and should not be considered as a component of a compound predicate, whereas the second case belongs to word formation and not to syntax.

In the section on Finiteness five articles out of six deal with Semitic starting with 'Multiple Exponence in the Long Prefix Conjugation of Transversal South Ethio-Semitic Languages' (pp. 149–179) by Maria Bulakh from the Moscow University of Humanities, very active in Ethiopian linguistics, notably as co-editor, together with Leonid Kogan, of an imposing recent vol-

<sup>1</sup> G. Goldenberg, *The Amharic Tense-System*, Ph.D. thesis Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1966, p. 174; many genuine examples of *yəhon* in an array of constructions are found in O. Kapeliuk, *The Language of Dialogue in Modern Amharic Literature*, Ph.D. thesis (in Hebrew), Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1968, pp. 234–238.

<sup>2</sup> Baye Yimam, 'Modality in Amharic', *RSE* n.s., 3 (2011), pp. 41–62.

<sup>3</sup> On verbs as adverbs see O. Kapeliuk, 'Creating Adverbs in Amharic', in L. Busetto, R. Sottile, L. Tonelli, and M. Tosco, eds, *He Bitaney Lagge: Studies on Language and African Linguistics in Honour of Marcello Lamberti*, Quaderni di Lingua e Storia, 3 (Milano: Qu.A.S.A.R.s.r.l, 2011), pp. 81–90.

ume in Russian of over 600 pages on Ethiopian Semitic in the series *Languages of the World* to which she contributed, alone or with a co-author, six chapters.<sup>4</sup> Her paper deals with the compound imperfect with the auxiliary *allä* in the sub-group of South Ethio-Semitic classified by Robert Hetzron as Transversal, namely in Amharic, Argobba, Harari and in the East Gurage dialects Z<sup>w</sup>ay, Wälane and Sälṭi. The phenomenon of multiple exponence occurs when an auxiliated verb and its auxiliary both carry the verbal marks of person gender and number. The author deals with what happens to the double marking in the process of the fusion of the two by comparing the behaviour of the languages in question. It seems that this process occurred, at least in the Amharic compound imperfect, sometime between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries because it is not represented in the Royal Songs<sup>5</sup> but Hiob Ludolf already mentions fully fused forms of the imperfect identical with the modern forms.<sup>6</sup> It follows ‘The Finite-Infinite Dichotomy in a Comparative Semitic Perspective’ (pp. 179–223) by Lutz Edzard who has the rare merit of including material from modern Ethio-Semitic in his comparative Semitic studies. He mentions in the opening of his paper the use of the infinitive as an imperative in Hebrew and German as an example of a non finite independent predicate. Also in Amharic an infinitive as the main verb closing a sentence is found but rather in exclamative clauses expressing surprise, mostly negative, e.g.: *yägärm-all, a-ttämäta-mm bəyye ... ləhed sännässa antä dägmo käčč malät-əh* ‘It is strange, ... when I got up to leave saying [to myself] that you won’t come, here you show up (infinitive) again!’<sup>7</sup> The author

<sup>4</sup> M.C. Булах, Л.Е. Коган, and Н.В. Романова, eds, *Языки мира: Семитские языки. Эфиосемитские языки* (Moscow: Academia, 2013), 621 pp. (M.S. Bulakh, L.E. Kogan, and N.V. Romanova, eds, *Languages of the World: Semitic Languages – Ethiosemitic Languages*).

<sup>5</sup> R. Richter, ‘Some Linguistic peculiarities of Old Amharic Texts’, in K. Fukui, E. Kurimoto, and M. Shigeta, eds, *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective: Papers of the XIII<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Kyoto, 12–17 December 1997* (Kyoto: Shokado Book Sellers, 1997), 543–551, here p. 550.

<sup>6</sup> However he does not mention the compound gerund at all: H. Ludolf, *Grammatica Linguae Amharicae* (Frankfurt a.M.: Prostat apud Johannem David Zunnerum, 1698), 10–12 (reprinted in Halle in 1986); see also O. Kapeliuk, ‘Auxiliaires et leur omission: guèze, amharique, tigrigna’, in J. Lentin and A. Lonnet, eds, *Mélanges David Cohen: Études sur le langage, les langues, les dialectes, les littératures offertes par ses élèves, ses collègues, ses amis présentés à l’occasion des son quatre-vingtième anniversaire* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2003), 347–355; reprinted in: Id., *Selected Papers in Ethio-Semitic and Neo-Aramaic Linguistics* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2009), 443–451.

<sup>7</sup> Bā’əmnät Gäbrä Amlak, *Ləjənnät tāmälləso a-yəmāṭa-mm* (Addis Ababa: s.n., 1949 EC (1956/1957 CE)), 66/18–25, quoted with several similar examples in O. Kapeliuk 1968, 261–263 (mentioned in n. 1).

draws a comparison between the various functions of the subordinate form of the converb/gerund in Semitic and in other Afro-Asiatic languages and deals also with examples of non-subordinate—asyndetic—two verb sequences in which the first verb modifies the meaning of the following verb. In Amharic the gerund, when not rendering a separate action, often resembles preverbs in the Indo-European languages (especially in Slavonic), whereas asyndetic constructions with a similar function are frequent also in another modern Semitic branch, in the standardized Neo-Aramaic of Urmi.<sup>8</sup>

The Gurage dialects receive a most thorough treatment in Ronny Meyer's enlightening contribution 'Finiteness in Gurage Languages' (pp. 225–258). Beside the much needed Map indicating the exact distribution of the dialects and a genetic classification Chart, the paper is rich with numerous comparative Tables of independent and subordinate verb forms in all the representatives of Northern, Western and Eastern Gurage. The material is presented in a most systematic and clear manner and the author should be complimented for rendering such a complex and varied material so transparent and easy to grasp. The Gurage dialects present some interesting peculiarities within the South Semitic group such as, for instance, the use of the jussive *yäsbär* as the negation of the perfect. I know that now it is not customary to mix a historical-comparative approach with a synchronic description, but, all the same, what about the Classical Arabic jussive *lam yaf'al* لم يفعل 'he didn't do' with the preformative *ya-* in a form identical with the Gurage jussive and serving as the negation of the past? To the list of references Raz 'Archaic and Innovative Tense Forms in Gurage',<sup>9</sup> which also contains comparative Tables, should be added. The following contribution 'Case Marking in Amharic Copular Constructions' (pp. 259–281) by Mulusew Asratie does not fit exactly under the heading of Finiteness. It deals, in the generative perspective, with copular sentences in which the complement of the copula is either in the nominative or in the accusative. In descriptive terms in examples such as *läḡočč-u raqut-aččäw-n naččäw* 'the children are naked' the accusative is adverbial and can be used freely also with other verbs, e.g. *ṭomaččäw-n motu* 'they died of hunger', whereas in the (not common!) cases such *läḡ-očč-u tämari-wočč-ən naččäw* 'the children are students' the accusative completes, acting as a remnant from

<sup>8</sup> See O. Kapeliuk, 'The Enrichment of the Verbal Systems in Peripheral Neo-Semitic', in F. Corriente, G. del Olmo Lete, Á. Vicente, and J.-P. Vita, eds, *Dialectology of the Semitic Languages: Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting on Comparative Semitics – Zaragoza 6/9–11/2010*, (Sabadell: Editorial AUSA, 2012), 25–30, here pp. 28–29; see also Kapeliuk 2011 (mentioned in n. 3).

<sup>9</sup> S. Raz, 'Archaic and Innovative Tense Forms in Gurage', in G. Goldenberg and S. Raz, eds, *Semitic and Cushitic Studies* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), 197–205.

Gəʕəz syntax,<sup>10</sup> the meaning of the copula as its predicative complement, and can be used only with the copula and verbs which demand a predicative complement, e. g.: *ənnih set akiste-n yəmāslu-ññ-all* ‘this woman seems to me [to be] my aunt’.<sup>11</sup> The last contribution on Semitic ‘Wanderings along the Border of Finiteness: The Gəʕəz and Tigrinya Converb(s) in a Diachronic Perspective’ (pp. 283–295) by Stefan Weninger presents a comparison between the consistent use of the Gəʕəz converb (*gerund*) as an infinite verb used bare in affirmative subordinate clauses and the various possibilities of using the *gerund* as the main verb of an independent sentence, in negation (rarely) and in subordinate clauses with certain conjunctions in Təgrəñña. There are texts in which the old perfect in independent affirmative clauses does not appear at all even in the third person, having been replaced by the *gerund*, notably in texts produced by a writer native of the Tigre province.<sup>12</sup> It was suggested elsewhere that the possibility of using the Təgrəñña *gerund* in main clauses was the result of the loss of an auxiliary.<sup>13</sup>

The other contributions deal with several Cushitic and Omotic languages. The exact area where they are spoken is indicated on a map in the comprehensive introduction by Ronny Meyer and Yvonne Treis (pp. 6–16). Two Cushitic languages—Xamtanga and Libido—are discussed in the volume. In ‘Benefactive Applicative Periphrases with *yəw-* ‘give’ in Xamtanga’ (pp. 137–147) by Chloé Darmon presents benefactive expressions which are created by the use of the verb ‘to give’ as the main verb of a sentence and with the lexical verb as a converb, which, according to her, form together a complex predicate; thus ‘X wrote a letter for Y’ would be literally in Xamtanga ‘X a letter writing/having written (converb) for Y he gave’. The

<sup>10</sup> Or as the *خبر كان* of the Arab grammarians.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in O. Kapeliuk, ‘Quelques remarques sur l’emploi de l’accusatif en sémitique éthiopien et en arabe classique’, in S. Pines, M.J. Kister, S. Shaked, and J. Blau, eds, *Studia Orientalia Memoriae D.H. Baneth Dedicata* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1979), 225–238 (reprinted in: Id., *Selected Papers in Ethio-Semitic and Neo-Aramaic Linguistics* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2009), 111–124).

<sup>12</sup> See O. Kapeliuk forthcoming, ‘Verbal Predication in Amharic and Tigrinya: A Contrastive Study’.

<sup>13</sup> See D. Cohen, *La phrase nominale et l’évolution du système verbal en sémitique: Études de syntaxe historique*, Collection linguistique de la Société de linguistique de Paris, 73 (Leuven: Peeters, 1984), 114; J.H. Polotsky, ‘Notes on the cleft-sentence in Tigrinya’, in C. Robin, ed., *Mélanges linguistiques offerts à Maxime Rodinson par ses élèves, ses collègues et ses amis*, Comptes rendue du Groupe linguistique d’études chamito-sémitiques, supplément no. 12 (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste P. Geuthner, 1985), 287–295, here pp. 288–291; see also Kapeliuk 2003, 353–354 (mentioned in n. 6).



question is to what extent two non-consecutive verbs, separated by an additional nominal argument in the dative—‘for Y’—may be considered a syntactically complex predicate at all, even if semantically they seem as such. The author tries to address this issue but to me the syntactical problem remains unsolved. The other contribution on Cushitic ‘The Asymmetry of Verbal Markedness in Libido’ (pp. 179–204) by Joachim Crass deals with a Cushitic language spoken by 64,000 people living in a region approximately between the speakers of Sidama and Gurage 120 kilometers south of Addis Abäba. The author surveys in a very concise description accompanied by numerous tables an extremely rich verbal system with ‘17 affirmative verb paradigms ... as main verbs and subordinate verbs ... [plus three] negative paradigms, namely negative imperative, negative hortative/jussive and negative converb’ (p. 179) and demonstrates the lack of symmetry between finite and subordinate verbs both in the affirmative and in negation.

It was a pleasure to read Yvonne Treis’ ‘Interrogativity in Baskete’ (pp. 41–78) entirely based on genuine examples from her recordings. No Almaz and Berhanu here of elicited examples but only beautiful living sentences. We learn that interestingly in these small Omotic languages the jussive inflectional paradigm changes according to whether it is used in a statement or in a question. The presence of the interrogative particle *-a* in assertive constructions brings to mind an identical use of *-a* in Amharic responses.<sup>14</sup> ‘Complex Predicates in Zargulla’ (pp. 91–119) by Azeb Amha and ‘Grammaticalization of Existential Auxiliaries in Koorete’ (pp. 121–136) by Binyam Sisay Mendisu complete the Omotic part of the Volume.

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MELKAMU DURESSO, *Wörterbuch Oromo–Deutsch/Deutsch–Oromo* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag GmbH, 2014). 566 pp. Price: € 58,-. ISBN: 978-3-87548-648-3.

Oromo (in earlier publications often called Galla) belongs to the Cushitic branch of Afro-Asiatic languages and is the most widely used tongue of this branch. It is spoken mainly in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. In the Oromia regional state of Ethiopia, Oromo is an official language, used in administration, courts and schools.

<sup>14</sup> See Kapeliuk 1968, 193–206 (mentioned in n. 1); Id., ‘Particles of Concatenation and Reference in Amharic’, *BSOAS*, 41 (1978), pp. 272–282, here pp. 279–280 (reprinted in: Id., *Selected Papers in Ethio-Semitic and Neo-Aramaic Linguistics* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2009), 299–309, here pp. 306–307).