Aethiopica 17 (2014)

International Journal of Ethiopian and
Eritrean Studies

_____

_____

Bibliographical abbreviations used in this volume

AÉ   *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*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003; II: *D–Ha*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005; III: *He–N*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007; (in cooperation with A. BAUSI), IV: *O–X*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010; A. BAUSI (ed. in cooperation with S. UHLIG), V: *Y–Z*, *Supplementa*, *Addenda et Corrigenda*, *Maps*, *Index*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014.

EFAH   Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Orient-Abteilung, Epigraphische Forschungen auf der Arabischen Halbinsel, herausgegeben im Auftrag des Instituts von NORBERT NEBES.

EMML   Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa.

IJAHS   *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Boston, MA – New York 1968ff.

JAH   *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge 1960ff.

JES   *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa 1963ff.

JSS   *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Manchester 1956ff.

NEASt   *Northeast African Studies*, East Lansing, MI 1979ff.

OrChr   *Oriens Christianus*, Leipzig – Roma – Wiesbaden 1901ff.

OrChrP   *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, Roma 1935ff.

PICES 15   S. UHLIG – M. BULAKH – D. NOSNITSIN – T. RAVE (eds.) 2005, *Proceedings of the XV*th *International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, *Hamburg July 20–25, 2003* = AethFor 65, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

PICES 16   H. ASPEN – BIRHANU TEFERRA – SHIFERAW BEKELE – S. EGE (eds.) 2010, *Research in Ethiopian Studies*: *Selected papers of the 16*th *International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Trondheim July 2007* = AethFor 72, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

PO   Patrologia Orientalis, 1903ff.

RIÉ   É. BERNAND – A. J. DREWES – R. SCHNEIDER 1991, *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.

RSE   *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, Roma 1941–1981, Roma – Napoli 1983ff.

SAe   Scriptores Aethiopici.

ZDMG   *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Leipzig – Wiesbaden – Stuttgart 1847ff.

Review articles

Joachim Crass – Ronny Meyer (eds.), *Language Contact and Language Change in Ethiopia* = Topics in African Studies 14, Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2009. 120 + VI pp. Price: € 24.80. ISBN: 978–3–89645–258–0.

The six papers collected in this volume developed out of a workshop organized by the two editors at the University of Mainz on December 13–14, 2007, with the aim of discussing "linguistic contact and contact-induced language change in Ethiopia from a broader perspective" (p. 2). It followed a first workshop held in 2004 at the same institution, which especially targeted deictics, copulas and focality in Cushitic, Omotic, and Semitic languages of the Horn of Africa.[1]

The authors of the papers in the 2009 volume are two young Ethiopian (Binyam Sisay and Ongaye Oda), and four German and Swiss Ethiopian scholars (Ronny Meyer, Christian J. Rapold, Sascha Völlmin, and Silvia Zaug-Coretti). For a member of the older generation like the present reviewer, it is refreshing to see so many young people engaged in new and well-documented research of Ethiopian languages, their structure and their historical contacts.

Binyam Sisay addresses the function and origin of the morpheme *-(k)ko* in two East Ometo languages, Koreete[2] and Haro. He does not deny the received view that this morpheme derives from an old masculine 'copula', whose feminine counterpart is *-tte*, as shown by other East Ometo languages, such as Zayse and Zargulla.[3] The two copular markers ultimately derive from an old deictic, with a grammaticalization process that occurred several times across several Afroasiatic language groups.[4] Yet Binyam does not pursue this

---

[1] Some of the papers of this first workshop were published in J. Crass – R. Meyer (eds.), *Deictics, Copula and Focus in the Ethiopian Convergence Area* = Afrikanistische Forschungen 15, Köln: Köppe, 2007.

[2] Also known as Koyra in the previous literature. It is the language whose verb morphology Binyam Sisay discussed in his Ph.D. thesis at the University of Oslo in 2008.

[3] This view has been suggested, e.g., by Hayward in a paper on the notion of "default gender", cp. R.J. Hayward, "The Notion of Default Gender: A Key to Interpreting the Evolution of Certain Verb Paradigms in East Ometo, and its Implications for Omotic", *Afrika und Übersee* 72, 1989, pp. 17–32.

[4] As argued, e.g., by G. Banti, "'Adjectives' in East Cushitic", in: M. Bechhaus-Gerst – F. Serzisko (eds.), *Cushitic-Omotic: Papers from the International Symposi-*

distant origin further; rather, he discusses the distribution and function of this morpheme in the two above languages, clearly arguing that it is only a marker of focus, that can be attached to the right of different clause constituents, such as the subject, the object, the verb, etc. He argues that this is an instance of a grammaticalized focus system "which originated from copula constructions", i.e., *-(k)ko* in Koorete and Haro previously had a copular function, but lost it and became a marker of focus. Implicitly, this means that such focus constructions derive from older cleft sentences, and one wonders whether traces of their old biclausal structure, with the presupposed part embedded as a subordinate clause, are still visible in the Koorete and Haro focus constructions. The short paper is well argued, even though there are some terminological problems. For instance, on p. 8 the author writes that "the assertive focus marker in interrogative sentences is *-a* which occurs instead of *-ko*". Since the standard dictionary definition of an assertion is "a definite statement or claim that something is true", one wonders what an interrogative assertion might be. The simpler phrase "the focus marker in interrogative sentences" would have avoided this oxymoron. Another point regards example (3.b) on p. 9, i.e., *kana-ko keema-i* 'THE DOG is an animal'. Binyam explicitly states that the focus marker is here suffixed to the subject, and his translation appears to reflect this analysis, whereby 'an animal', i.e. *keema-i* is the predicate. But he glosses *-i* as a nominative marker, even though he concedes in note (3) that "the issue needs further investigation". The problem is that in other known instances, both Omotic and East-Cushitic languages with case systems appear to have so-called marked nominative systems, whereby the subject and the nominal predicate of a verbless sentence are marked differently: only the subject is in the nominative or subject case. It is in some Semitic languages such as Classical Arabic and in several Indo-European languages that both of them are in the nominative case. As a consequence, the present reviewer suggests that there may have been some misunderstandings with the informants in eliciting example (3.b).

   In the second contribution, Ronny Meyer discusses the quotative verb in the Ethio-Semitic languages and in Oromo. By quotative verb he refers to verbs that mean 'to say', etymologically derived from **BHL* both in North and in South Ethio-Semitic, as different from verbs meaning 'to tell' (e.g., Təgrəñña *nägärä*, Amharic *näggärä*, Harari *ēda*, etc.) or 'to speak', like Təgrəñña *ṣäwäya*, Amharic *tänaggärä*, Harari *asēnana* (a denominative from *sinān* 'language, speech'), etc. The Oromo counterpart of these Ethio-semitic quotative verbs from **BHL* is *jedhe* [ʤed'e] 'he said' (southern

Oromo *yedhe*), that this reviewer has shown to derive etymologically from
*EDH an old prefix-conjugated verb that still survives, e.g., in Saho–ᶜAfar
-*edḥ-* (e.g., Saho *yerhxe* 'he said'), Northern Somali *yidhi* 'he said', etc.[5] The
main foci of his paper are, on the one hand, the different valency frames or
argument structures of these verbs and, on the other hand, a careful charac-
terization of several other syntactic features (e.g., the affectedness of the
subject) of the major constructions the quotative verbs are used in, especial-
ly in South Ethio-Semitic and, particularly, in Muḫər, one of the Gurage
languages. Such constructions range from functioning as supporting verbs
with ideophones, to the well-known idiomatic pseudo-quotations that one
frequently finds in these languages, e.g., 'the house door said to me "I won't
be open"' = 'I didn't manage to open the house door' (example 19). Meyer
adds a number of other uses to these constructions, such as the frequent
occurrence of converbs or other subordinate forms of quotative verbs for
expressing purpose, as in his example (27) 'It was while saying "for you!"'
that I came' = 'I came for the sake of you'.

The paper is well argued, and discusses a significant part of the previous lit-
erature. Some claims should have been explained in more detail, however; for
instance, Meyer writes that in Oromo the addressee of the quotative verb "is
treated as the emphatic direct object marked by the instrumental -*(dha)an*"
(p. 26). It is true that in, e.g., *naan jedhe* 'he told me', *naan* is the INS case
form of *na* 'me', but it is wholly unclear to the present reviewer why this
should be an "emphatic direct object". Owens just remarks that this is an
instrumental complement in his example *dubbii náan jeʾe* 'he said a word to
me'. Interestingly, this verb also requires an instrumental marker for the ad-
dressee in Northern Somali, i.e. the etymologically different preverbal particle
ku, as in *dhurwaagii baa dabadeed ku yidhi* "…" 'and later the hyena told
him "…"'.[6] In addition to this, it would have been interesting to look not only
into what happens in Oromo, but also in other Cushitic languages as the pic-
ture is partially different in, e.g., Northern Somali and Saho-ᶜAfar. To men-
tion just one example, it is true that "deriving ideophones from existing verb
roots to express an augmented or weakened result of an action" does not ap-
pear to be attested in Oromo, whereas it is well described for Amharic, as in

[5] Cf. G. Banti, "New Perspectives on the Cushitic Verbal System", in: A. Simpson
(ed.), *Proceedings of the Twenty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics
Society, March 22–25, 2001 – Special Session on Afroasiatic Languages*, Berkeley, CA:
Linguistics Society, 2004, pp. 1–48, here p. 4.

[6] J. Owens, *A Grammar of Harar Oromo (Northeastern Ethiopia)*: *Including a Text
and a Glossary* = Kuschitische Sprachstudien 4/Cushitic Language Studies 4, Ham-
burg: Helmut Buske, 1985, p. 118.

säbär [sic!][7] *alä* 'it broke a little bit' and *səbərr alä* 'it broke completely' from *SBR* 'break' (p. 33). But similar phenomena are also well known in Afar, e.g., *fákka iyye* 'it opened' from *fake* 'open', *nabsí faḍḍímma iyya* 'food is really wanted' from *faḍḍiime* 'to be wanted'. As in Amharic, the final consonant of the stem or of the stem extension is geminated. Parker and Hayward treat such derived verb forms as a 'diminished action stem',[8] whereas Bliese states that they offer "a stylistic method of emphasizing the verb".[9] In his review of Parker and Hayward's above-mentioned dictionary, Bliese insists that describing these ʿAfar forms "as 'diminished action' is questionable. It seems rather that they show intensified action. Recently, Yvonne Genat in discourse analysis studies of ʿAfar narrative has found that these compound verbs mark pivotal events, which are normally high points in the action".[10] It would thus have been quite interesting to further investigate this area, where an Ethio-Semitic and an East Cushitic language clearly display similar constructions. In addition to this, it would have been useful at least to mention the fact that verbs meaning 'to say' are also used as supporting verbs with ideophones in several Omotic and even Nilo-Saharan languages of the Horn, not only in Ethio-Semitic and in Cushitic.

Ongaye Oda discusses 'The spread of punctual derivation in Dullay and Oromoid languages' in the third contribution. He thus focuses on a peculiar area of intensive language contact in south-western Ethiopia that Sasse suggested to name the "Sagan language area" in 1986.[11] It includes the entire Dullay group, the Konsoid group of Oromoid, Burji of Highland East Cushitic (HEC), and ʿOngota (also known as Birale or Birelle in the literature), and Ongaye describes in some detail the current social developments in this area, with a particular focus on the Konso. Punctual derivation "expresses doing something only once" (p. 46), and may additionally "convey the meaning of

---

7 Cf. T.L. Kane, *Amharic–English Dictionary*, I, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1990, p. 517a: *sabärr alä*.

8 R.J. Hayward – E.M. Parker, *Afar–English–French Dictionary with Grammatical Notes in English,* London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1985.

9 L.F. Bliese, *A Generative Grammar of Afar* = Summer Institute of Linguistics, Publications in Linguistics 65, Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics – The University of Texas at Arlington, 1981, p. 147.

10 L.F. Bliese, review of: R.J. Hayward – E.M. Parker, *Afar–English–French Dictionary with Grammatical Notes in English*, in: *BSOAS* 50, 1987, pp. 208–209, here 209.

11 H.J. Sasse, "A Southwest Ethiopian Language Area and Its Cultural Background", in: J.A. Fishman – A. Tabouret-Keller – M. Clyne – B. Krishnamurti – M. Abdulaziz (eds.), *The Fergusonian Impact, in Honor of Charles A. Ferguson on the Occasion of His 65ᵗʰ Birthday*, I: *From Phonology to Society*, Berlin – New York – Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter, 1986, pp. 327–342.

intensity" (pp. 46, 54); it has been called "singulative" derivation in a part of the previous literature on these languages, but Ongaye explains why he prefers the term "punctual" derivation, that was introduced by Savà in 2005.[12] Both in Dullay and in Konsoid it involves geminating the second stem consonant, as in Konso *ikk-* 'take a drink' from *ik-* 'drink', Ṣamakko ᶜ*ugg-* 'sip' from ᶜ*ug-* 'drink', Ṣamakko *baqʾqʾal-* 'sprout at once' from *baqʾal-* 'sprout', etc. It doesn't seem to occur neither in Oromo nor in Burji, and is thus an isogloss that links just Dullay and Konsoid. The author reports several details about how verbs displaying this kind of derivation are used, particularly in Konso and in Ṣamakko, the best described Dullay language. For instance, in both languages punctual derivation in imperatives "also indicates an immediate fulfilment of an order" (p. 53); in addition to this, "the objects of transitive punctual verbs are understood as a single item" (p. 54), because the action is performed only once. With plural objects, punctuality requires not only punctual derivation, but also the reduplication of the first syllable of the verb, that by itself marks frequentative or distributive derivation, as in *inantasi hellaasine lelebbiti* 'the girl kicked each of the children once' (example 21, with *lelebbiti* from *leb-*).

In the fourth paper of the volume, Christian Rapold and Silvia Zaug-Coretti discuss data from the two Omotic languages they have been doing extensive fieldwork on, respectively Benchnon (Benč) and Yämsa (Yäm). Both languages have been referred to in the older literature with different names: Gimira for Benchnon, and Ǧanǧäro for Yämsa. The former is in contact with other Omotic languages to the north and west, and with Nilo-Saharan Surmic languages to the south and east; instead, Yämsa is spoken to the west of the Gurage cluster, and is surrounded by several HEC languages and by Oromo. After describing in some detail the sociolinguistic situation of the two languages, Rapold and Zaug-Coretti investigate and try to evaluate "the presence or absence in Benchnon and Yämsa of the features identified for the 'Ethiopian Linguistic Area' by Crass and Meyer".[13] These features are the following:

(i.)   ablative > comparative,
(ii.)   ablative > 'since'-temporal > real conditional,
(iii.)   similative > complementizer > purposive,
(iv.)   prospective aspect and intentional as separate categories,
(v.)   experiential perfect with the verb 'know',
(vi.)   benefactive focused by the verb 'say',

[12] Cf. G. Savà, *A Grammar of Tsʾamakko* = Kuschitische Sprachstudien 22, Köln: Köppe, 2005.

[13] J. Crass – R. Meyer, "Ethiopia", in: B. Heine – D. Nurse (eds.), *A Linguistic Geography of Africa* = Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact, Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 228–250.

(vii.) different copulas in main and subordinate clauses,
(viii.) existential > 'have' possessive,
(ix.) 'have' possessive > obligation and, finally,
(x.) past > apodosis of irrealis condition.

On p. 77 these ten features are displayed in a table, together with their occur-rence in five southern Ethio-Semitic languages (Amharic and four Gurage languages, i.e., Zay, Wäläne, Gumär, and Muḫǝr), in Oromo, and in two northern HEC languages (Qabeena and Libido). It appears that the two HEC languages, the four Gurage ones and Amharic share most of them, with min-imal deviations for one or two features in a few of them, whereas Oromo and the two Omotic languages display a quite different picture:

Oromo lacks features (ii.), (iv.), (viii.) and (ix.);
Yämsa lacks features (ii.), partially (iii.), (iv.), (ix.) and (x.),
Benchnon lacks features (i.), (ii.), (iii.), partially (iv.), (ix.) and (x.).

Rapold and Zaug-Coretti insist that this is just a first probe into the actual significance of Crass and Meyer's ten features that were initially developed for languages of the Central Highlands. Indeed, as the two authors of this contribution write, it would be necessary to have, on the one hand, (a.) a wider palette of Omotic languages, chosen both among those that are geo-graphically closer to HEC and Gurage, and among those that are spoken farther away; (b.) "to see whether Yämsa, Benchnon and Oromo also have positive features in common, to the exclusion of the Semitic and Highland East Cushitic languages" (p. 78). The present reviewer would also add (c.) some other East Cushitic languages, since at least Saho-ᶜAfar behaves differ-ently from Oromo in some of them; for instance, both Saho and ᶜAfar are positive for features (ii.) and (ix.). And (d.) also the areas further north should be taken into account, i.e. Agäw and northern Ethiosemitic. Any-how, it is clear that there is still much to investigate in the languages spoken in the central areas of the Horn, in order to shed more light upon the com-plex contact phenomena that have been taking place between them.

Sascha Völlmin's paper assesses a number of similarities and differences be-tween Čaha and Gumär, the language he focused his own 2006–08 fieldwork upon. It is a Gurage variety that had not received much attention before Völlmin's new extensive data. On the one hand, the Gumär regard themselves as being very closely related to the Čaha: *cǝxa tǝ-gʷǝmarǝ ǝmmat-u* 'Chaha and Gumer are the same' (example 1) and, for their language, Leslau claimed that "there is no difference between Gumär and Čaha".[14] On the other hand,

---

[14] W. LESLAU, "Čaha and Ennemor: an analysis of two Gurage dialects", in G. HUDSON (ed.), *Essays on Gurage Language and Culture*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996, p. 111.

almost 20 years before Leslau, Hetzron had written that "Chaha and Gumer … should be considered two dialects of the same language".[15] Völlmin's data show that Leslau's claim was too extreme, and that there are indeed a few dialectal differences between these two Gurage varieties. Most of the differential features he lists are phonological ones, such as (i.) the preservation of *ai* and *ay*, and of *au* and *aw* in Gumär vs. their reduction to *ɛ* and, respectively, *ɔ* in Čaha, (ii.) the partial preservation of historical geminates in some verbs as well as in nominals, whereas Čaha generally replaced the old geminates with devoiced or strengthened consonants, or (iii.) the preservation of *-l-* in the Gumär benefactive object suffixes such as 3SM *-lə*, 3SF *-la*, 3PM *-lo* and 3PF *-ləma*, while Čaha has rhotacized forms, i.e., 3SM *-rə*, 3SF *-ra* etc. A historically somewhat puzzling difference is the variation between *-p-* and *-k-* in several Čaha 'heavy' malefactive object suffixes, such as 1S *-pi* ~ *-ki*, 3SM *-pə* ~ *-kə*, etc., while Gumär has only the variants with *-p-* that preserve their etymological place of articulation, since they originated from forms with the old preposition **b-*. Völlmin adds that "there might also be differences in vocabulary" (p. 93), but does not pursue this any further in his paper. It is interesting to note that most of the differential features discussed by Völlmin show Gumär to be more conservative than Čaha; can this be due to the fact that the Gumär are settled at a higher and, thus, relatively less accessible area than the Čaha? The author adds however that "in villages close to the Chaha area one can also hear Chaha-like pronunciations … The two variants are hardly separated by a sharp borderline but seem to form a continuum" (p. 94).

The final contribution in this volume is by Silvia Zaug-Coretti, who discusses the Yämsa focus marker *-tu* as a possible instance of morphological borrowing from Cushitic Oromo. She carefully discusses how *-tu* marks focussed subjects, direct objects, instrument and locational phrases, adverbs and converbs, but not main clause verbs in Yämsa, and that it "occurs only on one constituent in a sentence". In order to focus main verbs, a verbal noun derived from the main verb has to precede it and to be focussed by means of *-tu*, as in example (23): *Kòrbŏo ībē Yèmnī kèjà=tū kèjfē* 'the Gurage formerly used to FIGHT the Yem', with *kèjà=tū kèjfē* being lit. 'fighting=FOC use-to-fight'. A more complex function of *-tu* can be observed when it is attached to converbs in narrative texts, as in examples (24)–(26). In such cases, Zaug-Coretti points out that "equal weight is granted to both actions" (p. 105), i.e. what is expressed by a focussed converb and what by the main verb; "none of them is presupposed" (*ibid.*), but "there is a conceptual shift after the converb marked

---

[15] R. HETZRON, *The Gunnän-Gurage Languages* = Ricerche 12, Napoli: Istituto Orientale di Napoli, 1977, pp. 4f.

by =*tu*. The first action, represented by the converb, is completed before the next action starts" (*ibid.*). After a detailed discussion, the author concludes that the focus marker -*tu* on such converbs "does not seem to indicate focus per se, but simply shows that the marked clause with its possible preceding clauses is not presupposed but asserted" (p. 106). Subsequently, the author discusses how -*tu* is used in Oromo. After correctly pointing out that "the use of -*tu* differs among the varieties of Oromo" (p. 106), she describes its behaviour in Wälläga Oromo because (a.) "this has been the variety that is in contact with Yemsa" (p. 107), and (b.) there is a detailed article by Dabala Goshu and Ronny Meyer on the grammar of focalization in this very variety of Oromo.[16] As in Yämsa, -*tu* marks subject focus in Wälläga Oromo, as well as in the other known varieties of this language, with the exception of the southernmost dialects where it is marked by -*ti* ~ -*tti*. Direct objects are not focalized by means of -*tu* in Wälläga Oromo, but adjuncts and "medial verbs in adverbial function" (p. 108) are. The present reviewer has shown that such verbal forms are "functional equivalents of converbs" to all effects,[17] and the similarity with the Yämsa converbs with -*tu* is thus more apparent. Dabala Goshu and Meyer claim that -*tu* functions in questions as an "assertive focus" marker in Wälläga Oromo (p. 185), and Zaug-Coretti repeats their claim: "-*tu* is used to mark … assertive focus in interrogative sentences" (p. 109) without realizing that, as already pointed out above, this is an oxymoron, because an interrogative assertion makes no sense. Finally, the author discusses with great care (i.) whether the Yemsa focus marker -*tu* can be a development of an old feminine copular marker related to Zayse and Zargulla -*tte*, that was briefly mentioned above while discussing Binyam Sisay's paper; or whether it should be regarded as the result of borrowing from (ii.) a southern Ethio-Semitic copula in -*t*- (e.g., in some Gurage languages such as Zay and Kəstane), (iii.) a HEC feminine copula such as Hadiyya/Libido -*tte* or Qabeena -*ta*, or (iv.) the Western Oromo focus marker -*tu*. In the present reviewer's opinion, she argues quite convincingly that the latter is "the most plausible of all options" (p. 116), because:

a) "the functions are very similar, more so that [sic!] compared to other candidates" such as the Eastern Ometo, Gurage or HEC copulas;
b) "the forms are identical, not only similar";
c) "contact between Yemsa and Oromo must have been quite intense" as shown by the high number of Oromo lexical loanwords in Yämsa (p. 116).

[16] DABALA GOSHU – R. MEYER, "Focus Phenomena in Wellega Oromo", *Afrika und Übersee* 86, 2003, pp. 161–197.
[17] G. BANTI, "Converbs in East Cushitic", in: S. VÖLLMIN – AZEB AMHA – C.J. RAPOLD – S. ZAUG-CORETTI (eds.), *Converbs, Medial Verbs, Clause Chaining and Related Issues* = Frankfurt African Studies Bulletin 19, Köln: Köppe, 2007, pp. 31–80.

She attaches however too much importance to the fact that she analyzes Yämsa -*tu* as a clitic, and accordingly usually spells it as =*tu*, whereas in descriptions of Oromo it has been treated as "a suffix". She wonders how it is possible that a suffix of the donor languages is borrowed as a clitic in the receiver language. The issue is theoretically interesting, but becomes practically meaningless if one considers that the terms "clitic" and "suffix" are used in quite dishomogeneous ways by the different authors that described Oromo, and that Zaug-Coretti and her data relies on this East Cushitic language and its dialects on other people's analyses, not on her own one. In addition to this, she does not discuss one further fact that strengthens the case of Yämsa -*tu* being borrowed from Wälläga Oromo, namely that when it is used for focussing the subject, "the verb always occurs in the 3rd person". This has an obvious parallel to Oromo where the verb in a clause with a focussed subject marked by -*tu* must occur in a special form that is segmentally similar to the 3rd masculine singular, even if it is 3rd plural, 1st or 2rd person. Differently from Oromo, the Yämsa verb whose subject is marked by -*tu* has to agree with it in gender, but this can easily be explained as an innovation that took place when -*tu* was adapted to Yämsa. Zaug-Coretti also remarks that when the subject is focussed by -*tu* "the verb is obligatorily nominalized by the suffix -*r*", and adds: "This is a cleft sentence" (p. 98). Yet she does not explain why this should be a cleft, nor further elaborates upon the suffix -*r*. Does she mean that verbs with the suffix -*r* are relative verb forms? A few more details to justify her claim would have been useful, just as a few more words on what she means by "completive and contrastive focus" (p. 102). Indeed, the conceptual frameworks used for describing information structure (IS) phenomena such as focus are extremely varied and it is useful to clearly define one's use of such terms. Finally, a remark about relying too much upon other people's analyses of a language one only knows partially. Zaug-Coretti reports a Wälläga Oromo subject-focussed sentence in her example (27): *isheetu dhufa* 'SHE comes', and remarks that "this construction is not to be considered a cleft-sentence synchronically, because there is no copula" (p. 107). It is true that this is not a cleft, but not for the reason she mentions. Indeed, *dhufa* is not a relative or dependent verbal form, and thus it does not justify a biclausal analysis, and clefts are always at least biclausal constructions. Secondly, had she read Owens,[18] or Banti,[19] she would have realized that whenever one analyzes Oromo

[18] OWENS, *A Grammar of Harar Oromo* (*Northeastern Ethiopia*), Hamburg, 1985, pp. 79f. [s. fn. 6 above].

[19] G. BANTI, "Two Cushitic Systems: Somali and Oromo Nouns", in: H. VAN DER HULST – N. SMITH (eds.), *Autosegmental Studies on Pitch Accent* = Linguistic Models 11, Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1988, pp. 11–49.

grammar and takes into consideration also tone and not only segmental pho-
nemes, one sees that Oromo "has no proper affirmative imperfect copula.
Adjectives and nouns used as predicates are marked phrase-finally by a special
tone pattern".[20] The elements *-ti* and *–dha*, that have sometimes been regarded
as copulas, are actually suffixes that are also added to non predicates in differ-
ent contexts, for supporting word final inflectional suffixes or tonal melodies.

In conclusion, the volume is a collection of quite interesting contribu-
tions on a wide palette of languages spoken in the Horn of Africa. It is an
important reading for scholars interested in Cushitic, Ethio-Semitic, and
Omotic, as well as in contact phenomena and areal linguistics.

Giorgio Banti, Università degli studi di Napoli L'Orientale

ANTONELLA BRITA, *I racconti tradizionali sulla «Seconda Cristia-
nizzazione» dell'Etiopia. Il ciclo agiografico dei Nove Santi* = Studi
africanistici, Serie etiopica 7, Napoli: Università degli Studi di Napoli
«L'Orientale», Dipartimento di Studi e Ricerche su Africa e Paesi
Arabi, 2010. XXXV + 286 pp. Prix: € 40.–. ISBN: 9788895044675,
ISSN: 0391–8270.

Antonella Brita nous livre, dans ce beau volume, une version révisée de la
première partie de sa dissertation doctorale – *I racconti tradizionali sulla
cristianizzazione dell'Etiopia*: il *"Gadla Liqānos" e il "Gadla Panṭalēwon"*,
réalisée sous la direction d'Alessandro Bausi et soutenue à "l'Orientale" de
Naples, au mois de juin 2008 – consacrée à une étude d'ensemble des textes
hagiographiques mettant en scène les *Təsʾatu Qəddusan*, les célèbres "Neuf
Saints", les moines "missionnaires" originaires de "Rom" (l'Empire byzan-
tin) qui seraient arrivés à Aksoum à l'époque du roi Ǝllä ʿAmida et qui au-
raient été les héros, sous ses successeurs Tazena, Kaleb et Gäbrä Mäsqäl, au
cours du dernier quart du Vᵉ et des premières décennies du VIᵉ siècle, de
celle que l'on a l'habitude d'appeler la "seconde christianisation" (l'utili-
sation des guillemets est, dans ce cas, de rigueur) de l'Éthiopie.

L'introduction (pp. VII–X), dans laquelle sont brièvement présentés le
contenu et les perspectives de l'ouvrage, est suivie d'une bibliographie ex-
haustive (pp. XI–XXX) et d'une liste des abréviations utilisées (pp. XXXI–
XXXIII). Le premier chapitre (pp. 1–17) s'ouvre sur un recensement des
textes examinés et de leurs témoins manuscrits, souvent inédits, que
l'auteure a eu le mérite de découvrir et de photographier, principalement au

---

[20] Cf. G. BANTI, "Oromiffaa", in: *EAe* IV, pp. 54b–59a, here 58b.