



Aethiopia 19 (2016)

International Journal of Ethiopian and
Eritrean Studies

HIRUIE ERMIA, Universität Hamburg

Review

MULUKEN ANDUALEM SIFEREW, *Comparative classification of Ge'ez verbs
in the three traditional schools of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*

Aethiopia 19 (2016), 312–315

ISSN: 2194–4024

Edited in the Asien-Afrika-Institut
Hiob Ludolf Zentrum für Äthiopistik
der Universität Hamburg
Abteilung für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik

by Alessandro Bausi

in cooperation with

Bairu Tafla, Ulrich Braukämper, Ludwig Gerhardt,
Hilke Meyer-Bahlburg and Siegbert Uhlig

Editorial

The present issue of AETHIOPICA, like the preceding one, is partly monographic, with a section containing the proceedings of the Panel on Islamic Literature in Ethiopia: New Perspectives of Research, from the '19th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies', held in Warsaw, Poland, on 24–28 August 2015.

Starting from this issue, the annual bibliography on Ethiopian Semitic and Cushitic linguistics held from its inception in 1998 for eighteen years by Rainer Voigt is handed over, on Voigt's own will, to a pool of younger scholars, with the substantial support of the AETHIOPICA editorial team. I would like on this occasion to express the deep gratitude of the editorial board of AETHIOPICA and of all scholars in Ethiopian Semitic and Cushitic linguistics to Rainer Voigt for his fundamental and valuable contribution.

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.
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).
EI² *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, I–XII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960–2005).
EMML Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa.
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.
PICES 9 A.A. GROMYKO, ed., 1988, *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Ethiopian Studies, Moscow, 26–29 August 1986*, I–VI (Moscow: Nauka Publishers, Central Department of Oriental Literature, 1988).
RSE *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, Roma, 1941–1981, Roma–Napoli 1983ff.
ZDMG *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Leipzig–Wiesbaden–Stuttgart 1847ff.

Reviews

Arabic' (pp. 280–310); Aaron D. Rubin, 'The Classification of Hobyot' (pp. 311–333); Lotfi Sayahi, 'Expression of Attributive Possession in Tunisian Arabic: The Role of Language Contact' (pp. 333–347); Juan-Pablo Vita, 'Language Contact between Akkadian and Northwest Semitic Languages in Syria-Palestine in the Late Bronze Age' (pp. 375–404); Tamar Zewi and Mikhal Oren, 'Semitic Languages in Contact-Syntactic Changes in the Verbal System and in Verbal Complementation' (pp. 405–421).

Alessandro Bausi, Universität Hamburg

MULUKEN ANDUALEM SIFEREW, *Comparative classification of Ge'ez verbs in the three traditional schools of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, *Semítica et Semitohamítica Berolinensia*, 17 (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2013). 198 pp. Price: € 48.80. ISBN: 978-3-8440-2348-0.

In present day Ethiopia, Ge'ez is predominantly studied in the *Qəne* schools of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahədo Church. Ge'ez served as the official court language for many centuries, but was replaced by Amharic in the thirteenth century; however, until the coming of Amharic literature in the nineteenth century, it remained the written prestige language. Moreover, Ge'ez is still the *lingua sacra* of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahədo Church, and serves as a medium of instruction for different ecclesiastical disciplines such as *Qəne* (Ge'ez poetry), *Zema* (*Yaredic* hymn), *Aqq^waq^wam* (*Yaredic* chanting), *Tərg^wame-mäṣahəft* (exegesis of biblical and canonical scriptures) and *Qəddase* (liturgy). Currently, there is a strong tendency within the church to consider the language as a priceless heritage and to protect it accordingly. Therefore the church has an unbroken interest in preserving and expanding Ge'ez studies in many parts of the country.

The work under review deals with the classification of Ge'ez verbs based on the methodologies applied in the *Qəne* schools. It is the result of the author's doctoral research in Semitic Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin, supervised by Prof. Dr. Rainer Voigt and defended in 2013.

For its completion, the author consulted various printed texts and handwritten copies that deal with grammatical issues of Ge'ez, as well as different dictionaries and grammars prepared by local and foreign scholars. In addition to this, the author conducted fieldwork in different places, particularly in Baḥər Dar and Addis Abäba. The duration of the fieldwork is not mentioned (pp. 18, 165). The author himself is a *Qəne* scholar and has a strong connection with the tradition of the schools. Thus, his education and experience have genuinely helped him to present extensive explanations and practical details on selected points. The book is an important contribution and helps

scholars to understand the classification of Gəʿəz verbs, comparing the traditions and methodologies presented.

The introductory part (pp. 1–18) provides different meanings and explanations about the word Gəʿəz and about the main subjects of Gəʿəz study in the *Qəne* schools. The three *Qəne* houses Wäšāra, Wadla and Gong are introduced with some illustrative pictures. A short list of publications on Gəʿəz grammar is also included in the introductory part.

The introduction is followed by the following four chapters:

1. Structure of the verb (pp. 19–57);
2. Gəʿəz verb classification (pp. 58–100);
3. Conjugation of verbs with semi-vowels (pp. 101–125);
4. Verbs with laryngeals (pp. 126–151).

In the first two chapters that comprise almost half of the entire book, the author offers detailed discussion of the typology and classifications of Gəʿəz verbs, comparing different traditions of the schools, pointing out their similarities and dissimilarities on various issues. Sometimes, the differences are expressed numerically; the estimated or the total amount of verbs is given with, from time to time, a thorough presentation of the issue under discussion. Mostly, however, the evidence collected from either the handwritten copies of Gəʿəz grammar or the information acquired from his informants are provided in Amharic with its transliteration and an English translation. This kind of presentation might fill a couple of pages with the same readings. However, if it is considered positively, it gives a chance for the reader to evaluate, analyse and compare first-hand information for him- or herself, to draw their own conclusions and to appraise the data provided.

In the same part of the book, the author shows how other grammarians classified the verbs in different ways and from different points of view. According to the author's research findings, all three *Qəne* houses follow different classifications. Wäšāra's classification demonstrates eight so-called 'main verb types' (the model verbs in a paradigm) (ቀተለ *qätälä*, ቀደሰ *qäddäsä*, ገብረ *gäbrä*, አእመረ *a'märä*, ባረከ *baräkä*, ሤመ *semä*, ብህለ *bəhlä* and ቆመ *qomä*) and 50 so-called 'sub-type verbs', whereas the Wadla house classifies eight verbs under 'main verb types' (ቀተለ *qätälä*, ቀደሰ *qäddäsä*, ባረከ *baräkä*, ማገረከ *maḥräkä*, ተንበለ *tänbälä*, ሴሳየ *sesäyä*, ክህለ *kəhlä* and ጠመረ *tomärä*) and 17 'sub-type verbs'. According to the *Qəne* house of Gong, the number of both the 'main verb types' and the 'sub-type verbs' totals fourteen, and they are: ቀተለ *qätälä*, ቀደሰ *qäddäsä*, ገብረ *gäbrä*, ሰብሐ *säbbəḥä*, ባረከ *baräkä*, ማገረከ *maḥräkä*, ተንበለ *tänbälä*, ኤለ *elä*, ሌላየ *leläyä*, ክህለ *kəhlä*, የደ *odä*, ጠመረ *tomärä*, ሐፀ *ḥäsśä* and ገሠሠ *ḥäsśäsä* (pp. 64–95).

The author indicates the following criteria for Gəʿəz verb classification:

- initial, medial, and final consonants
- number of consonants
- presence and absence of laryngeals and semi-vowels
- assimilation and gemination (p. 29)

Thus, none of the classifications of the three *Qəme* houses corresponds to the classifications of August Dillmann (1823–1894), who introduced four ‘main verb types’ and of Kidanä-Wäld Kəfle (1869–1944), who proposed seven ‘main verb types’. (pp. 29, 51–52)

The disagreement of the schools with regard to verb classification is not limited only to the number of ‘main verb types’ and ‘sub-type verbs’. The model verbs chosen in the classifications are not always the same. The author lists all data very carefully, but does not enrich the discussion with an overall conclusion or general summary in which the various classifications are considered or his own approach to them is assessed. However, his further discussions and related examples lead the reader to suppose that the verbs ቀተለ *qätälä*, ቀደሰ *qəddäsä*, ባረከ *baräkä*, ማገረከ *maḥrəkä*, ተንበለ *tänbalä*, ሲሰየ *sesäyā*, ክህለ *kəhlä* and ጠመረ *tomärä* are considered by the majority of the scholars to be the ‘main verb types’ (pp. 51, 153–154).

Apart from the major classifications that we have seen above, the author introduces in the same part of the text two minor classifications of verbs based on semantic and pattern criteria (pp. 33–34, 36–37).

In the next two chapters, the author focuses on the conjugations of verbs; one more classification of verbs is again discussed in this part to illustrate conjugation. According to the theory applied in the book, the verbs are classified into three groups for conjugation. The verb groups are labelled as follows: ‘verbs with semi-vowels’ (ወ *wä* and የ *yä*), ‘verbs with laryngeals’ (ሀ *ha*, ሐ *ḥ*, ኀ *ḥ*, አ *a* and ፀ *ʿa*) and ‘verbs without laryngeals and semi-vowels’ (p. 101).

The many tasks in the chapters illustrate the conjugations of the verbs chosen by the author to represent each group. In addition, some particular verbs such as ማከረ *mäkärä/mäkkärä*, ሰበከ *säbäkä/säbbäkä*, ክለከ *kälḥa/källəḥa* and ጸለለ *ṣälälä/ṣällälä* that could follow two different conjugational schemes are conjugated in all possible variations (pp. 149–151).

In the last chapter (pp. 165–182), the author summarizes the central points discussed earlier and recapitulates the most significant issues of his research. He ends with an urgent appeal to the reader to study and work on the tradition of the unpublished Gəʿəz grammar called *ʿAggäbab* in order to gain a deeper knowledge of the language and of its sophisticated structure (p. 164), an issue he repeatedly referred to throughout his work. In the glossary, several ecclesiastical titles and indigenous terms used in the earlier chapters

Reviews

are listed alphabetically with short explanations. An Appendix completes this valuable and commendable book.

Hiruie Ermias, Universität Hamburg

RAINER VOIGT, ed., *Tigre Studies in the 21st Century/Tigre-Studien im 21. Jahrhundert*, Studien zum Horn von Afrika, 2 (Köln: Rüdiger Köppe, 2015). xi, 241 pp. Price: € 48.00. ISBN 978-3-89645-682-3.

At the 3rd *International Enno Littmann Conference* held at the Freie Universität in Berlin on April 1–4, 2009, under the heading ‘Tigre, Aksum and More’, a special panel was devoted to the Təgre language and literature and to Təgre society.¹ The present volume, carefully edited by Rainer Voigt, who was also the organizer of the conference, contains the papers presented on this panel in which scholars from Eritrea also actively participated. It is doubtless to their presence that we owe a refreshing first in Ethiopian and Eritrean studies, namely: abstracts of the articles also in Təgre. This language is described by the editor in the Introduction as the third largest Ethiopic-Semitic language after Amharic and Təgrəñña;² this is true only if we adopt the new trend in Ethiopian studies, and consider what used to be the Gurage dialect cluster with nearly 3,000,000 speakers or more, as a distinct group of several separate languages.³

¹ On this conference see: Hatem Elliesie and F. Breyer, ‘Tigre Aksum and More: The IIIrd International Enno Littmann Conference, April 1–4, 2009 in Berlin’, *Aethiopia* online (AETHIOPICA homepage: Conference reports/Conferences 2009). To the revival of interest in Təgre studies may be added—beside two conferences held in Eritrea itself and mentioned by R.M. Voigt in the *Introduction*—a Workshop in Naples held in 2008 at the ‘Orientale’, the proceedings of which were edited by Gianfrancesco Lusini, *History and Language of the Tigre-Speaking Peoples*, Studi Africanistici – Serie Etiopica, 8 (Napoli: Università degli Studi di Napoli ‘L’Orientale’); reviewed by Olga Kapeliuk in *Aethiopia*, 14 (2011), 274–278.

² Without mentioning the number of speakers probably to avoid confusion since different sources quote quite divergent numbers; thus in D. Morin, ‘Tigre’, in S. Weninger, ed. 2012, *The Semitic Languages*, Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft, 36 (Berlin–Boston, MA: De Gruyter Mouton, 2012), 1142–1152, here p. 1143, the approximate number indicated from *Ethnologue* for the year 2005 is 800,000 whereas the same *Ethnologue* for the year 2010 quotes the number 1,390,000 (*Ethnologue* Online). In Eritrean sources the number of the speakers of Təgre is indicated as one third of the whole but the total number of population is not supplied.

³ R. Meyer 2012, ‘Gurage’, in *ibid.* 1220–1257, here pp. 1223–1224. An extreme case of this trend can be found in the Table of the Semitic languages in A. Faber, ‘Genetic Subgrouping of the Semitic Languages’, in R. Hetzron, ed, *The Semitic Languages*