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Review

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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

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

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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*

The volume opens with a more recent item by Hatem Elliesie, Stefan Sienell, Roswitha Stiegner and Bogdan Burtea: 'Der Littmann-Nachlass im Archiv der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften' (pp. 1–11), in which the authors survey the tortuous fate of Littmann's Nachlass, its definitive placing in the Archiv der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften and its final complete cataloguing by the same authors presented at the above-mentioned conference. We learn not only about Littmann's legacy proper but also about the impressive material written in Təgre, collected at the beginning of the last century by the Swedish missionary and Littmann's collaborator, Richard Sundström which is included in the *Nachlass* and which still awaits publication (see the volume under review, pp. 116–119). It will be interesting to use this material and follow the evolution of the modern Təgre language and style over the last hundred years, for which, to my knowledge, historical studies are scarce if not inexistent.

The articles which follow are divided into two parts: the first and the largest on 'Language and literature' (pp. 15–149) and the second on 'Society, traditions and institutions' (pp. 153–237). Two of the six authors in the first part of the Volume, Paolo Marrassini and Andrzej Zaborski have, unfortunately, died since the 3rd *International Enno Littmann Conference*, leaving behind them a vacuum of erudition and scientific excellence which will be difficult to fill, if at all possible. With the help of an impressive number of sources on many other Semitic languages, Paolo Marrassini's article 'Linguistic Stratification in Tigre' (pp. 63–77) challenges our certainty about the relative antiquity of such accepted phenomena as, for instance, the origin of the Təgre imperfect *yəqättəl* from Proto-Semitic **yəqqättəl* suggesting that it could have originated from the imperfect of the intensive stem **yuqättilu* together with phonological changes attested elsewhere in Semitic. Similarly the external nominal plural, instead of being considered an innovation, could be an anachronism vis à vis the internal plural.⁴ On the basis of the Təgre definite article *lä-* and its history in those Semitic languages which use one, the author establishes a chronology according to which Ethio-Semitic separated from South Semitic at the end of the 2nd millennium BCE. Andrzej Zaborski's article 'Notes on Tigre–Beḡa Interference' (pp. 137–149) points out the antiquity of contact

(London: Routledge, 1997), 3–15, here p. 6, where Arabic with all its branches and dialects receives one mention against twelve languages for Gurage.

⁴ This could explain the astonishing vitality of the external plural in Təgrāñña (and Təgre?) in creating ever new forms as demonstrated in O. Kapeliuk 'Innovation within Archaism in Modern Ethio-Semitic', in J.P. Monferrer-Sala and W.G.E. Watson, eds, *Archaism and Innovation in the Semitic Languages*, Series Semitica Antiqua, 1 (Cordoba: Oriens Academic, 2013), 59–71, here pp. 60–64.

between the Beḡa and speakers of Ethiopic-Semitic dating contact back to the treaty concluded between them and king ʿEzana, as attested in an Aksumite inscription; he also details the various degrees of mixture or bilingualism of Beḡa and Təgre in the speech of Beni ʿAmər in particular. The author suggests that the combination in Təgre of a noun accompanied by a possessive pronoun with the definite article, e.g. *lä-ʾamʾit-u ʾafgärä mǝnnu* ‘he took (the) his entrails from him’ is a loan from Beḡa, and points out that the same happens in Təgrǝñña. However, since Təgrǝñña did not have direct contact with Beḡa, it could perhaps point to a more general tendency, for instance in Italian, e.g.: ‘il mio padre’.

Maria Bulakh’s very substantial paper ‘The prefix ʾat- in Tigre’ (pp. 13–45) is an exhaustive description of verbal stems with the historically causative-reflexive prefix ʾat-, based on all occurrences in Enno Littmann and Maria Höfner, *Wörterbuch der Tigré-Sprache* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1962). The author seeks to determine from which other stems they are derived, what they represent semantically, and what their semantic and syntactic (the governing objects) relationship is to the simple causative prefix ʾa-. A brief paragraph with a final conclusion as to what the main function of this element is, would be helpful in order to overcome the *embarras de richesse* of details. The next well-researched article ‘Anmerkungen zur Palatalisierung im Tigre’ by Bogdan Burtea (pp. 47–62) makes the distinction between morphological palatalization such as in the case of the palatalizing effect (sometimes accompanied by gemination of the consonant) of the 1st person singular possessive pronoun, e.g. ʿad ‘village’ – ʿaḡḡe ‘my village’ or in some cases of the historical external plural e.g. ʾab ‘father’ – ʾabač – ‘fathers’, and historical palatalization in certain roots and nouns which seems random. As for the absence of information on the Cushitic substrate, the exhaustive paragraph on palatalization in Xamir, with numerous references to Bilin, Qwarǝñña and with Ethiopic-Semitic etymologies by Leo Reinisch in his *Die Chamir Sprache in Abessinien* (Wien: Carl Gerold’s Sohn, 1884, I, 20–31) could have been consulted. The title of the paper by Tesfay Tewolde (pp. 85–114) ‘Relations between Verb Types and Internal Plurals in North Abyssinian Semitic’ offers a surprise: the return to legitimacy of the name Abyssinia, considered in the last century as the quintessence of colonialism not to mention its folk etymology. This change means we no longer need to use the two terms ‘Ethiopian Semitic’ and ‘Eritrean Semitic’ which nevertheless the author uses profusely in the paper; why not consistently use ‘North Abyssinian’ and ‘South Abyssinian’? The author compares the process in the creation of verb stems B (gemination), C (vowel ā/a) and the frequentative with certain broken plurals and, based on comparison with Cushitic, suggests that the primary source of reduplication, such as in the frequentative, could be Afroasiatic before being Semitic.

Rainer Voigt's 'The Development of Tigre Literature' (pp. 115–134) completes the first part of the book. The author classifies literature in Təgre into two periods. The first period refers to the publications of a religious or pedagogical character by missionaries, especially those of the Swedish Evangelical Mission, during the first decades of the twentieth century. The second began with the educational and propaganda activities of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in the liberated territories and continues till now following the recognition of Təgre after independence as one of the institutionalized languages in Eritrea used both in education and the media. It 'is now a fully normalized valid literary language which has the status of a quasi-national language of Erythra—besides Tigrinya' (p. 125). Importantly, the author provides a complete list of all the books published in Təgre during both periods. A special long paragraph is devoted to the writings of Musa Aron, well known to students of Təgrəñña from previous generations, thanks to his translation of Robinson Crusoe and his novel *Embafraš*, who also produced three works on language in Təgre, one on proper names, one on orthography and a voluminous monolingual dictionary.

In the second part of the book, customary law is the subject of two contributions: in 'Conflict resolution and customary law in contemporary Eritrea' (pp. 153–168), the authors, Abdulkader Saleh Mohammad and Nicole Hirt, deal with traditional Saho customary law which 'is partly based on regulations derived from the Šari'ah law, but contains also many passages that are rooted in traditional, probably more ancient sources of law' (p. 156). The authors show, with the help of four case studies, how, in difficult cases, or those where they do not succeed in enforcing their verdict on the defendant, the present judicial authorities do not hesitate to pass them on to the traditional mediation of the *šəmagəllä*. In the second contribution entitled 'Social construct and system in Tigre tradition: a contribution to Eritrean customary law' (pp. 169–180) Hatem Elliesie quotes eight paragraphs of the Mansā^c people's customary law or *Fətəḥ Maḥāri*, translated from Təgre; the passage refers to class stratification into the ruling caste or the *šəmagəllä*, the class of serfs or vassals namely the *Təgre*, and the slaves, and to their reciprocal obligations. The next article is 'Rab'at: The Tigre Traditional Youth Organization' by Mohammed-Ali Ibrahim (pp. 181–214). The goal of this organization, which symbolizes the beginning of adulthood, is to socialize its members and introduce them to the ideals of mutual help. It used to be common both among boys and girls (separately for each sex) but nowadays it has deteriorated. The rules of the organization were, until now, oral, and are here, for the first time, codified and put into writing by the author after long research involving fieldwork and interviews.

Reviews

In the final contribution ‘The Tigre and their traditional beliefs and super-superstitions: a socio-linguistic survey’ (pp. 215–237) Saleh Mahmud Idris describes the main aspects of the traditional social structure of the Təgre people. The author maintains that, since the British administration in the 1940s, and especially since the beginning of the armed struggle in 1961, most of the principles of the ancient social structure were abandoned, but some of the popular superstitions remain. Much of the information is based on the official publication of the Eritrean Ministry of Information *Eritrea Profile* from the years 1996–1999. The author, having conducted a dialectological survey for the Ministry of Education in 1997, offers his own conclusions about dialect distribution of the Təgre language in Eritrea, namely: 1. Barka, Saḥəl, Marya Şällam; 2. Marya Qäyyaḥ, Bet Ğuk, Sänḥit; 3. Sämhar (pp. 223–224). It should be pointed out that the author, Saleh Mahmud Idris, does not include the language of the Dahlak Islands among the Təgre dialects, and that he was directly involved in the recent controversy⁵ about the status of this language, as to whether it should be considered a Təgre dialect or a separate, newly discovered, Semitic language.

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SALEH MAHMUD IDRIS, *A Comparative Study of the Tigre Dialects*, *Semitica et Semitothamitica Berolinensia*, 18 (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2015). 264 pp. Price: € 49.80. ISBN 978-3-8440-3438-7.

The publication of Saleh Mahmud Idris’s doctoral dissertation prepared under the supervision of Prof. Rainer Voigt in the Freie Universität Berlin is an important event in Ethiopian Semitic linguistics. Based on extensive field research, carried out in 2011 and 2012 in more than 20 localities, it presents an overview of the dialects of the Təgre language, the fifth largest Semitic language spoken mainly in Eritrea. (Although there are some Təgre speakers in eastern Sudan, the data for this investigation was collected only in Eritrea.) The author, himself a native speaker of Təgre, identifies the main dialects of this language, analyses the most important lexical and grammatical isoglosses and proposes a new classification of Təgre dialects. According to this, they are divided into three major groups: north-western (including the dialects of Ḥabab, °Ad Täkles, Marya Qäyyaḥ, Marya Şällam, Beni °Amər), the south-eastern (including the dialects of Zula, Massawa, Gənda°,

⁵ For which cf. the articles by Saleh Mahmud Idris, Marie-Claude Simeone-Senelle and Didier Morin in G. Lusini’s work quoted in footnote 1 above (pp. 113–157).