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**Gamo-English-Amharic Dictionary. With an**  
**Introductory Grammar of Gamo**

Yvonne Treis

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# AETHIOPICA

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Gold coin of King Aphilas, early third century CE, as drawn by A. Luegmeyer after the coin in Rennau collection. Weight 2.48 grams, diameter 17 mm.

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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 ‘19<sup>th</sup> 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* Äthiopistische 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.  
*E Ae* 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).  
*EP* *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.





unknown. It will prove an indispensable tool for anybody interested in Təgre language, and will be of great use for scholars dealing with Ethiopian Semitic linguistics, as well as for the dialectologists, historical linguists, and scholars of linguistic typology. The material presented will also be of value for future research on the history and ethnography of Eritrea.

Maria Bulakh, Russian State University for the Humanities

RICHARD J. HAYWARD and ESHETU CHABO, *Gamo–English–Amharic Dictionary: With an Introductory Grammar of Gamo* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014). 1172 pp., hardback. Price: € 198.00. ISBN: 978-3-447-10109-7.

The lexical documentation of Omotic languages is patchy and still in its early stages. Apart from Wolf Leslau's (1959) *Moča Dictionary*, a slim book with ~1,000 entries, lexical data on individual languages is, at best, to be found in research articles, in the appendices of grammars and in grey literature. The *Gamo–English–Amharic Dictionary* (hence GEAD) is thus an immensely valuable new publication. Omotic linguistics owes a lot to the first author, Richard J. Hayward (RJH), who has been engaged for more than three decades in the description of Omotic languages, especially of the Ometo group. The second author, Eshetu Chabo (EC), is a Gamo native speaker originally from Čenča (Čänča), living in London since (at least) the end of the 1980s, and RJH's long-term research assistant. The GEAD is a voluminous book, consisting of a grammar (pp. 11–346), an extensive trilingual dictionary (pp. 347–862), and two indexes (English: pp. 863–1006, Amharic: pp. 1007–1172). It addresses a scientific audience as well as the Gamo community.

Gamo is spoken by more than one million speakers in southwestern Ethiopia in the Gamo-Gofa Zone whose administrative centre is Arba Məñč. It is a member of the Central Ometo dialect cluster and thus closely related to Wälaytta. Gamo is used nowadays as a medium of instruction in primary schools (grade 1–4) and taught as a subject up to grade 10. Apart from a grammatical pilot sketch by Éva Hompó in 1990 and a PhD thesis on Gamo syntax by Nicholas Taylor in 1994, a few articles have been dedicated to individual grammatical issues and to the politically sensitive question of how far Gamo and the other North Ometo varieties differ from each other. To date, the boundaries and the internal dialectal variation of the lects called 'Gamo' are uncharted terrain and defining them would call, as RJH/EC state, 'for an Ometo-wide research programme involving mutual intelligibility tests across an extensive network of lects displaying varying degrees of divergence over a

considerable number of morphosyntactic features' (p. 6). Here, an almost unexplored field for future research opens up.

Part 1 of the GEAD is a detailed description of phonology and morphosyntax. Despite its length, the authors call it an 'introductory' grammar. It aims at providing the analytical background for the transcription and grammatical glosses used in the example sentences of the dictionary. But, in fact, it goes far beyond this modest goal. The phonology chapter treats consonants, vowels and tonal accent as well as phonotactic issues. The subsequent chapters are concerned with the morphology and morphosyntax of nominals (subtypes of nouns, pronouns and numerals) (§ MS1.0), adjectives (§ MS2.0), postpositions (§ MS3.0), verbs (§ MS4.0) including so-called 'compound verbs', consisting of an invariant 'particle' (ideophone) and a light verb (§ MS4.1.2.7), adverbs (§ MS5.0) and 'pro-sentences' (interjections) (§ MS6.0). Sections § MS7–8 deal with coordination, disjunction and (in)direct speech.

In the dictionary (part 2), lexical entries covering half a page are common. An entry consists of a Latin transcription of the lemma plus a second word form, an Ethiopic transcription, an indication of the word class membership of the lemma, an English and an Amharic gloss. This is followed by (i) sub-entries for morphologically derived forms, compounds and idioms, (ii) sub-entries for another word class, if a lemma belongs to more than one, and (iii) sub-entries for distinct meanings of a polysemic (or homophonous) entry. All head and sub-entries are illustrated by glossed examples with an English and an Amharic translation. Ample cross-references are given. The English–Gamo index (part 3) is a reverse wordlist based on part 2 and enables 'the user to locate the appropriate Gamo entry (or entries) in the *Dictionary*, for it is only there that proper detail and exemplification will be found' (p. 863). The Amharic-Gamo index (part 4) provides easy access for users with an Amharic background.

Due to limitations of space, I cannot attempt anything approaching a full review. In the following, I restrict myself to observations on the orthography and the presentation of examples before proceeding to a general critique. On pp. 24–35, the authors introduce the two transcriptions used in their dictionary, a modified Latin alphabet and a modified Ethiopian script, both of which are 'maximally phonemic' (p. 24). Although RJH/EC state that they 'would not wish to get into debate' on their Latin transcription (p. 7), I cannot but disagree with their decision to establish yet another Latin-based orthography. The GEAD orthography follows neither the transcription used by RJH in earlier publications nor today's official Gamo orthography, which largely follows the Qubee conventions. The official Gamo orthography is not even reviewed in the present work. In an already messy orthographic landscape such as South Ethiopia, it would have been all the more important for

the Gamo community, which has hardly any access to written material in their language, to have the official orthography applied in the GEAD.

Since Gamo has only fairly recently been introduced as a medium of instruction, most literate Gamo speakers are more familiar with the Ethiopic script used for Amharic. In order to make the Ethiopic script, an alphasyllabary, fit a phonemic transcription of a language with phonemic consonant and vowel length, RJH/EC decide on several adjustments (pp. 31–35). While an established diacritic (˘) is applied to mark long consonants, new symbols and conventions are invented to overcome other shortcomings of the script. The *hulätt näṭ<sup>2</sup>ib*-symbol (ṭ), which serves as a word separator in the Ethiopic script, is introduced as a mark for long vowels, e.g. ṭṭ ṭṭ for *póó'o* 'light' (p. 34). Gamo consonant phonemes which have no equivalent in the Ethiopic syllabary are represented by unused signs, e.g. Gamo /dz/ is symbolized by ṭ/ṭ(ä)/ (p. 34). The modifications result in a complex, non-intuitive Ethiopic transcription, which differs, firstly, from other modified Ethiopic scripts used to write Omotic languages of the area (e.g. Baskeet) and, secondly and more importantly, from the Ethiopic script used by bible translators in the Gamo area itself. RJH/EC were certainly well-intentioned in trying to make the GEAD accessible to readers who are more familiar with the Ethiopic than the Latin script. However, in the end, RJH/EC might confuse all Gamo users, irrespective of the script they learned in school. This confusion is potentially disastrous in a community with only a very young writing tradition.

The GEAD is a rich source of examples, which all readers will welcome. They are, however, extremely difficult to process. The source line is not segmented. The gloss line is not aligned and appears as running text. Overly complex grammatical abbreviations are used (pp. 336–343), e.g. 'FpartProx-DeicPron' for 'feminine particularising proximal deictic pronoun'. Readers must pay attention to the conventions for capitalization, bracketing and subscripts. Postpositions (Pp) receive no functional glosses. Derived verbal stems are translated rather than glossed (e.g. 'talk-to-one-another' for 'talk-PASS'), and thus the visibility of derivational morphology is lost. Readers have to adjust to the unconventional values attributed to full stops, plus signs and hyphens (pp. 331–335): '.' marks morpheme boundaries in a word (elsewhere in the linguistic literature: '-'), '+' marks enclitic elements (elsewhere mostly: '='), and '˘' marks one-to-many-correspondences between a Gamo morpheme and several glossing elements as well as multi-word English translations (elsewhere: '˘' and '˘'). To further complicate matters, the hyphen has a different function in the source line, where it indicates a morpheme boundary and thus corresponds to '.' or '+' in the gloss line.

Umpuši      aččan gididaakko      ta  
*Umpúšó.Obl RelN(Prox).Obl+Pp(-n)      be-present.I.RelvPf.Int.Hypo 1SgDet]N*  
 haa yikke-šin  
*ProxDeicDet]N come.Pf-1Sg-Neg+Past*

I wouldn't have come here if I had been at *Umpúšó's* (place) (ex. 34b, p. 92)

A truly interested reader might not be deterred by examples such as the one above, but she is finally close to despair when she arrives at example 40c (p. 97), in which four uninterrupted gloss lines spread across two pages.

The present work is monumental, precious, exceptionally detailed and mirrors the intimate knowledge that the authors have of Gamo. However, the weaknesses of the GEAD are also apparent. Too much was attempted: a grammar and a dictionary in a single volume, a book for linguistic experts, for Gamo native speakers who want to learn more about their language and extend their knowledge of English (p. 963), and for people accessing Gamo through Amharic. The resulting tome is heavy and difficult to handle. It would have been better to split it up into two volumes or to develop a linguist and a native-speaker version.

Despite its volume, indispensable information is missing. There is no mention of the classification of the language, of closely related languages, of speaker numbers, no information on the internal differentiation of the language and not even a sketchy map of the speaker area. Most notably, no information on the data sources is given. The book seems to be based entirely on the native speaker knowledge of the second author. I might, of course, be wrong, but no other sources (consultants, oral or written corpora) are mentioned. I do not intend to question EC's authority, but, from a methodological point of view, it would be problematic if such an authoritative publication as a dictionary were based on a single source, the more so when the person providing the data has been living outside the speaker area for decades.

The layout of the GEAD is unsightly (e.g. abundant use of italics and bold, ragged right-alignment). The GEAD would have benefitted from another round of proof-reading. Errors in wording, missing diacritics, misplaced or forgotten tone marks and other typos can be spotted easily when reading through the book. Here are some examples: *variatiion* > *variation* (p. 34), *phenemes* > *phonemes* (p. 35), *azini* < *azinâi* (p. 73), *áse* > *asé* (p. 74), *seen* > *seem* (p. 82), undeleted: *\*\*\*Check this example* (p. 95), *yuuyyá* > *yuuyá* (p. 847). The indexes have not been edited, and one wonders who would look up 'be reported', 'be born', 'be in disgrace' under B and 'the future' and 'the cold' under T.

Beyond any doubt, the GEAD is a huge leap forward in the study of Gamo and an invaluable, data-rich input for researchers working on syn-

## Reviews

chronic studies of related languages and on diachronic studies of Ometo and Omotic. If only we could look forward to a second edition or an electronic version!

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