

**28th Annual Conference
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**Linguistic documentation of the
Ethiosemitic languages –
Focus on Gurage**

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Paris



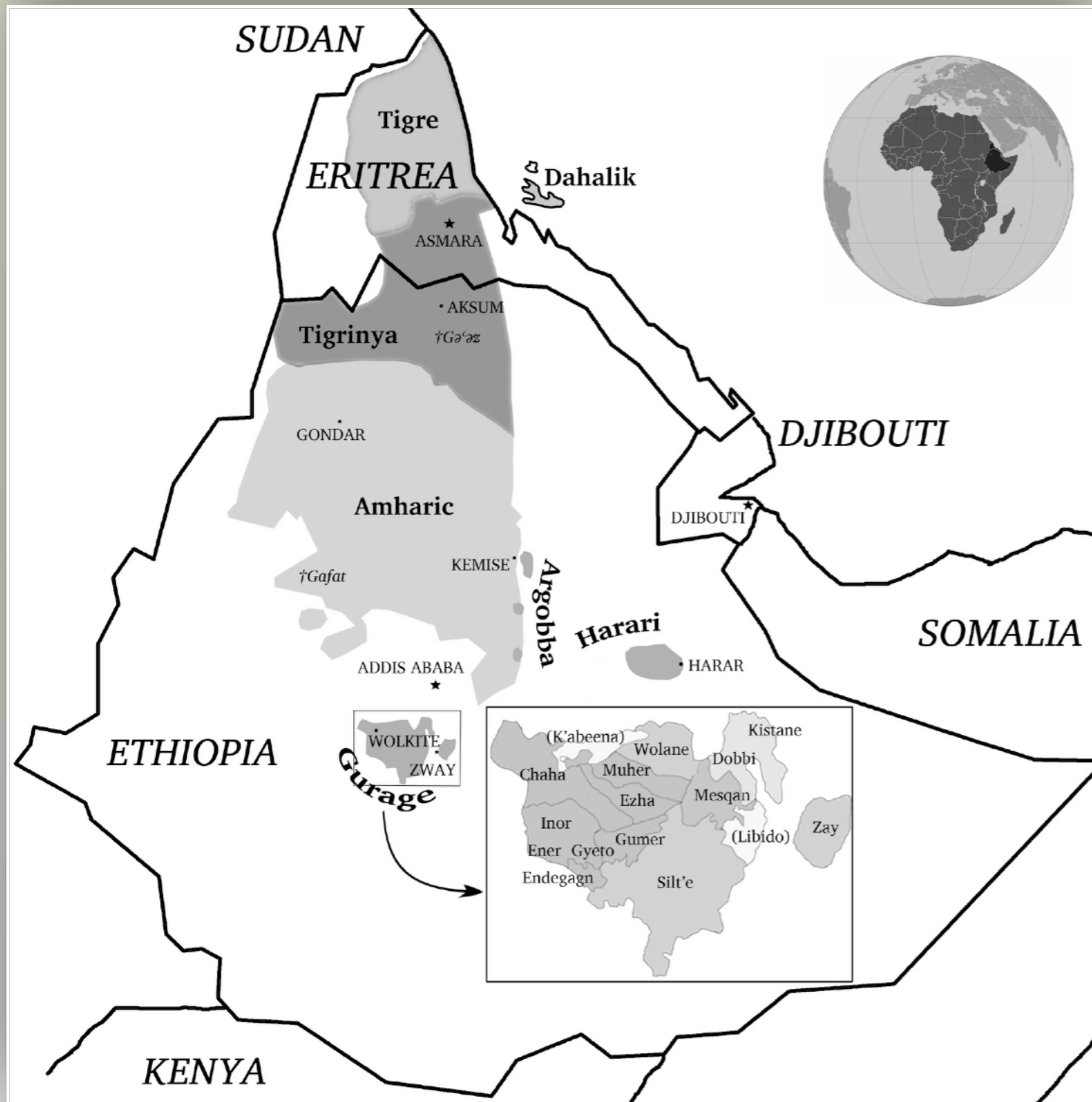
Structure of the Presentation

Overview of Ethiosemitic languages

Major periods in linguistic research on Gurage

General outlook

Ethiosemitic Languages



Horn of Africa

Ethiopia

Eritrea

(Sudan)

Genetic classification

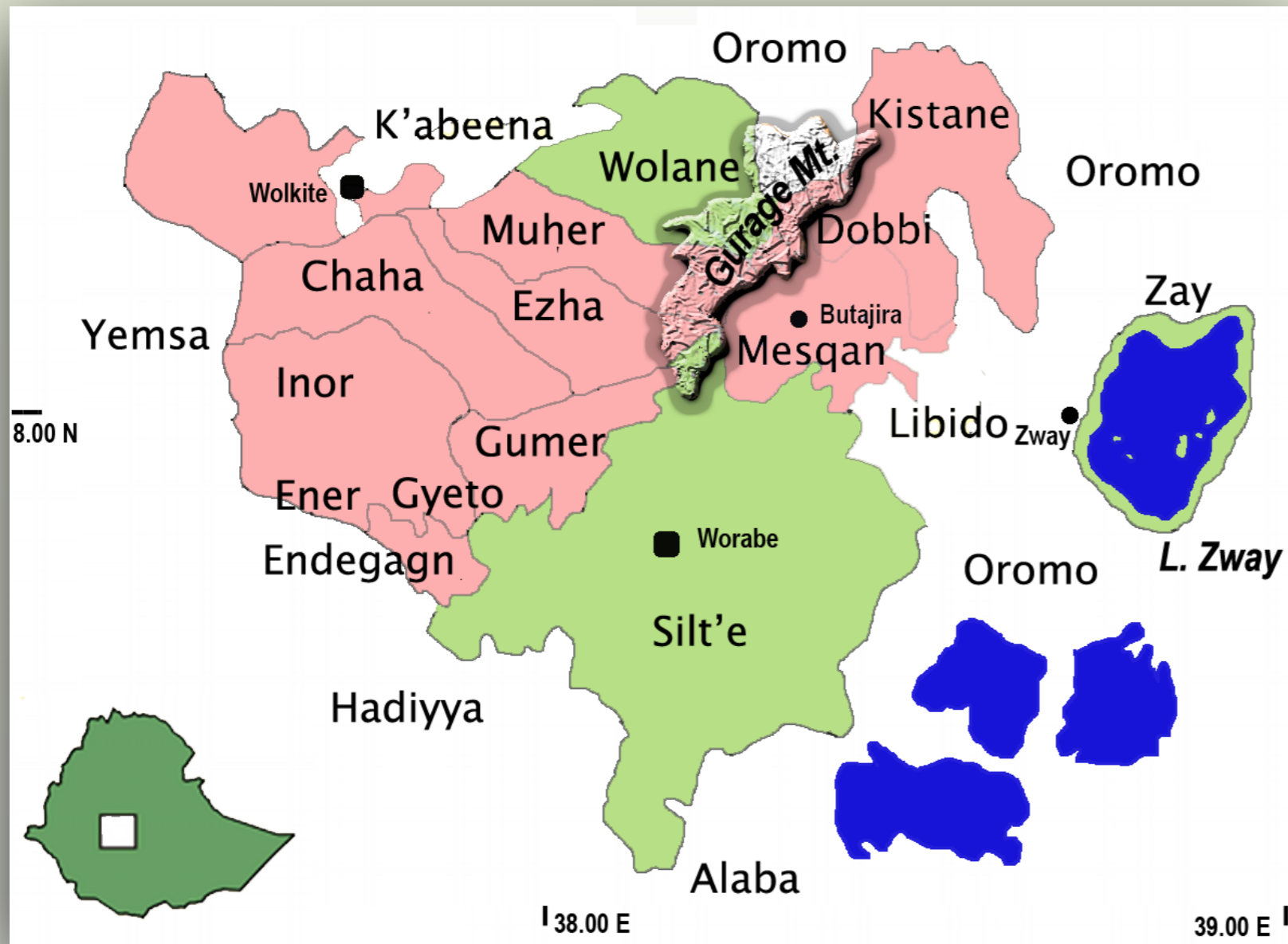
North

South

Transversal

Outer

Gurage Varieties



Geographically:
Southern pocket of
Ethiosemitic

Linguistically:
Eastern Gurage
Gunnän Gurage

Major periods in the linguistic research of Gurage varieties

- Early linguistic testimonies from the 14th century
- Missionaries and travelers ca. 1850–1920
- Gurage as part of Semitic Studies ca. 1920–1980
- Gurage in Formal and Descriptive Linguistics since ca. 1980

Early Linguistic Testimonies

Second half of the 14th century

Islamic scholars

Abū Ḥayyān al-Ġarnāṭī (1256–1344)

- Quran scholar but also Arabic grammarian, historian
- Lived and worked in Alexandria and Cairo

Provides verb paradigm for the “**Abyssinian language**” in one of his commentaries (see Bulakh & Kogan 2011)

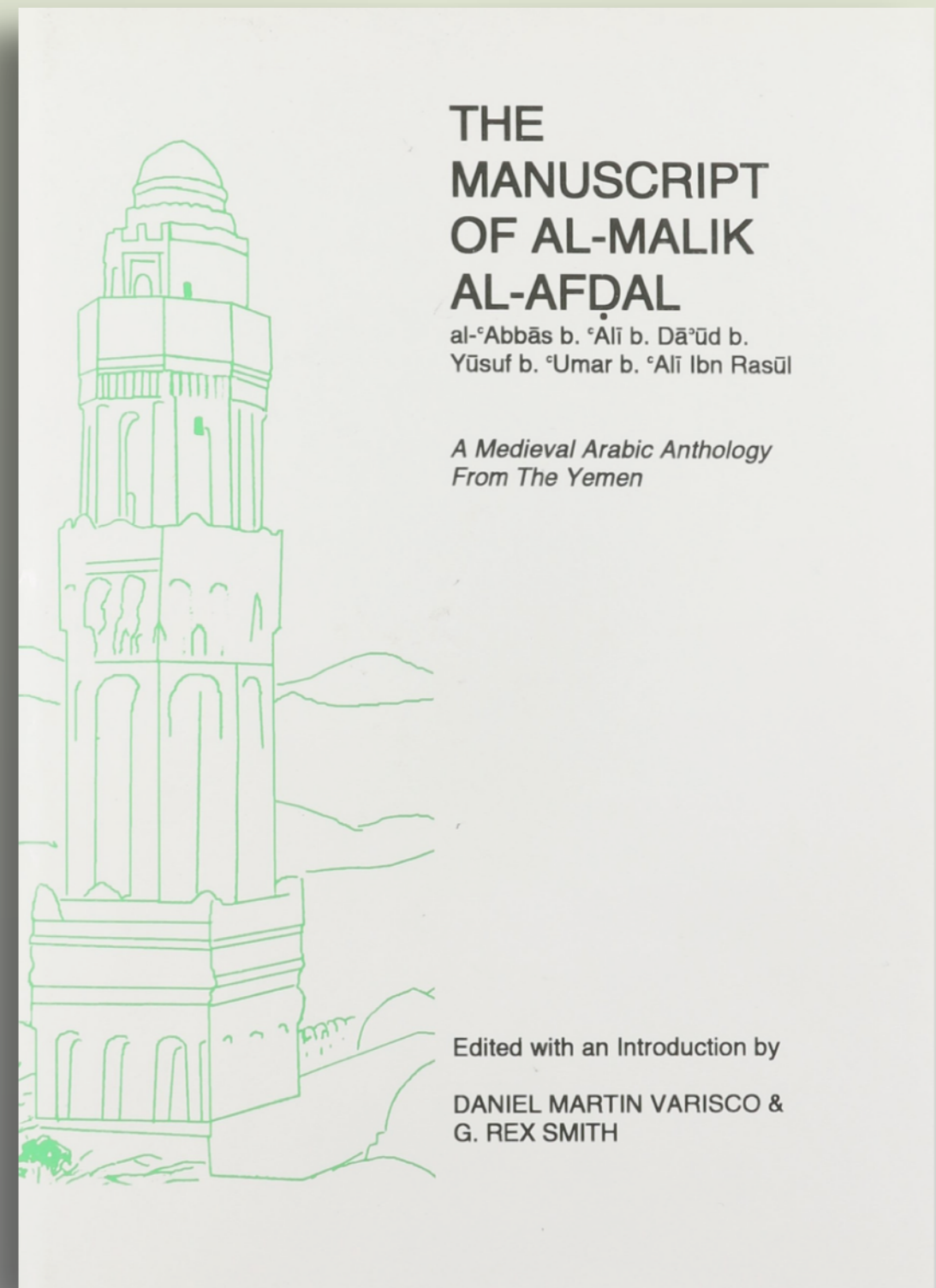
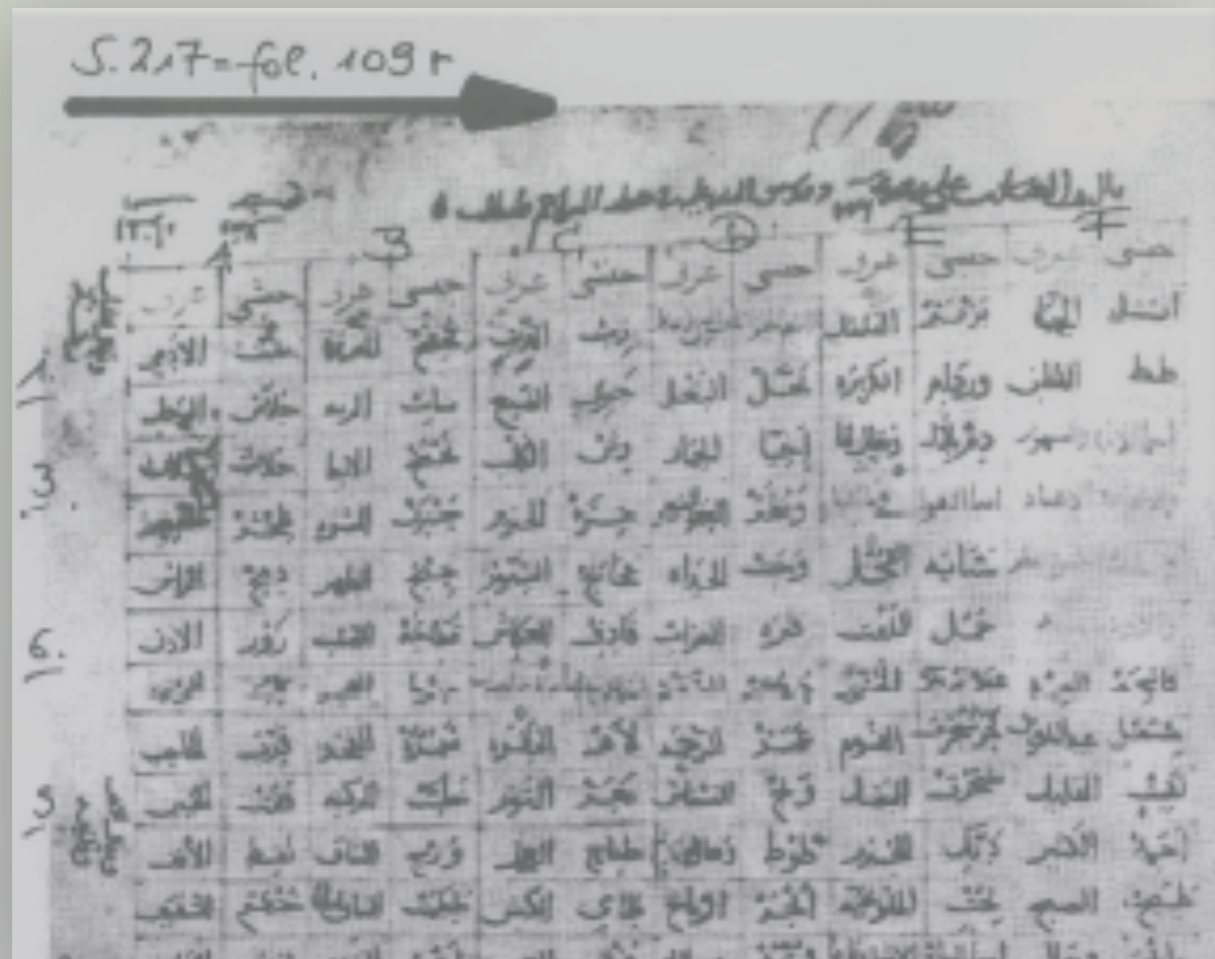
مَحَطٌ	<i>māxät'</i> ‘(he) hit (PFV)’	يَمْحَطُ	<i>jä-mxät'-u</i> ‘(he) hits (IPFV)’
أَتَا تِمْحَطُ	<i>atä ti-mxät'-u</i>		‘you (SM) hit’
إِيَاءِ إِمْحَطُ	<i>ijja i-mxät'-u</i>		‘I hit’
إِنْيَا نِمْحَطُ	<i>inja nä-mxät'-u</i>		‘we hit’

➡ Early Eastern Gurage/Harari

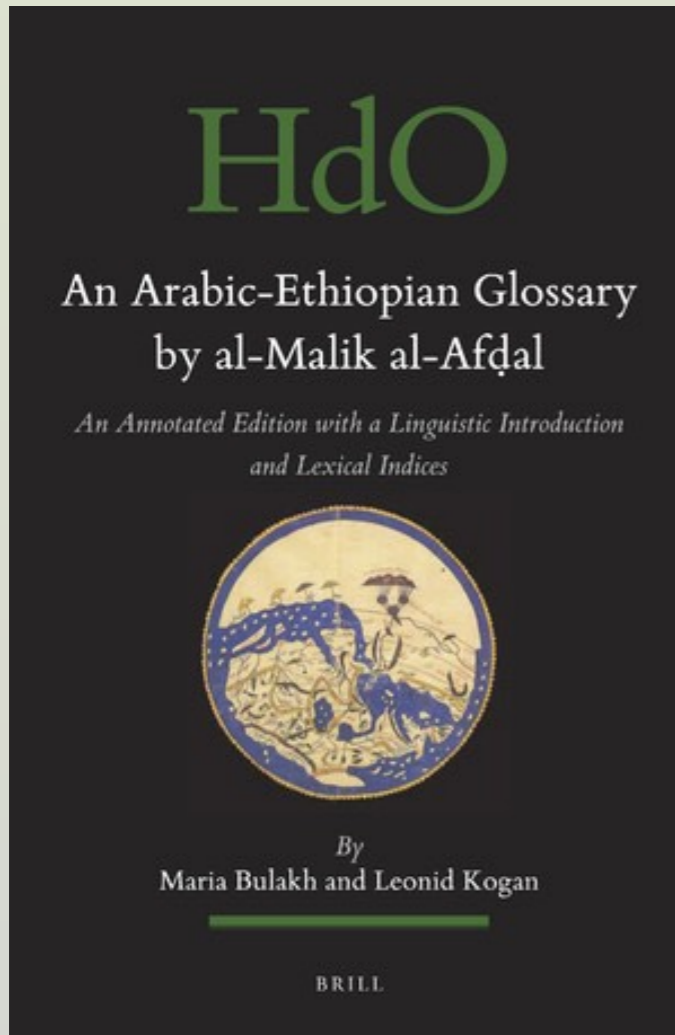
Yemenite ruler Al-Malik Al-Afdal (r. 1363-1377)

Collection of texts on history, health, law, etc.

Includes a 3-page Arabic-
“**Abyssinian**” glossary



Glossary contains mainly terms appealingly cognate with various Ethiosemitic languages including Gurage



<i>*qafat</i>	‘forehead’	<i>k’äfät</i>	(East Gurage)
<i>*ğingă</i>	‘back’	<i>ɸinzä</i>	(Muher)
<i>*wand</i>	‘young man’	<i>wänd</i>	(Amh/Arg)

(Bulakh & Kogan 2017)

Remarks

First linguistic works on Gurage were prepared by Arabic-speaking scholars at places with an expatriate Ethiopian community

- Alexandria = Seat of the Coptic Patriarch
- Yemen = Slave trade

➔ Mixing of various Ethiosemitic languages under the label “**Abyssinian**”/“**Language of the Habesha**”

Gurage not mentioned as term for a group/language

Practical interest for communication with Ethiopians

Missionaries & Travelers

ca. 1850–1920

Development of Protestant missions
Exploration and colonization of Africa

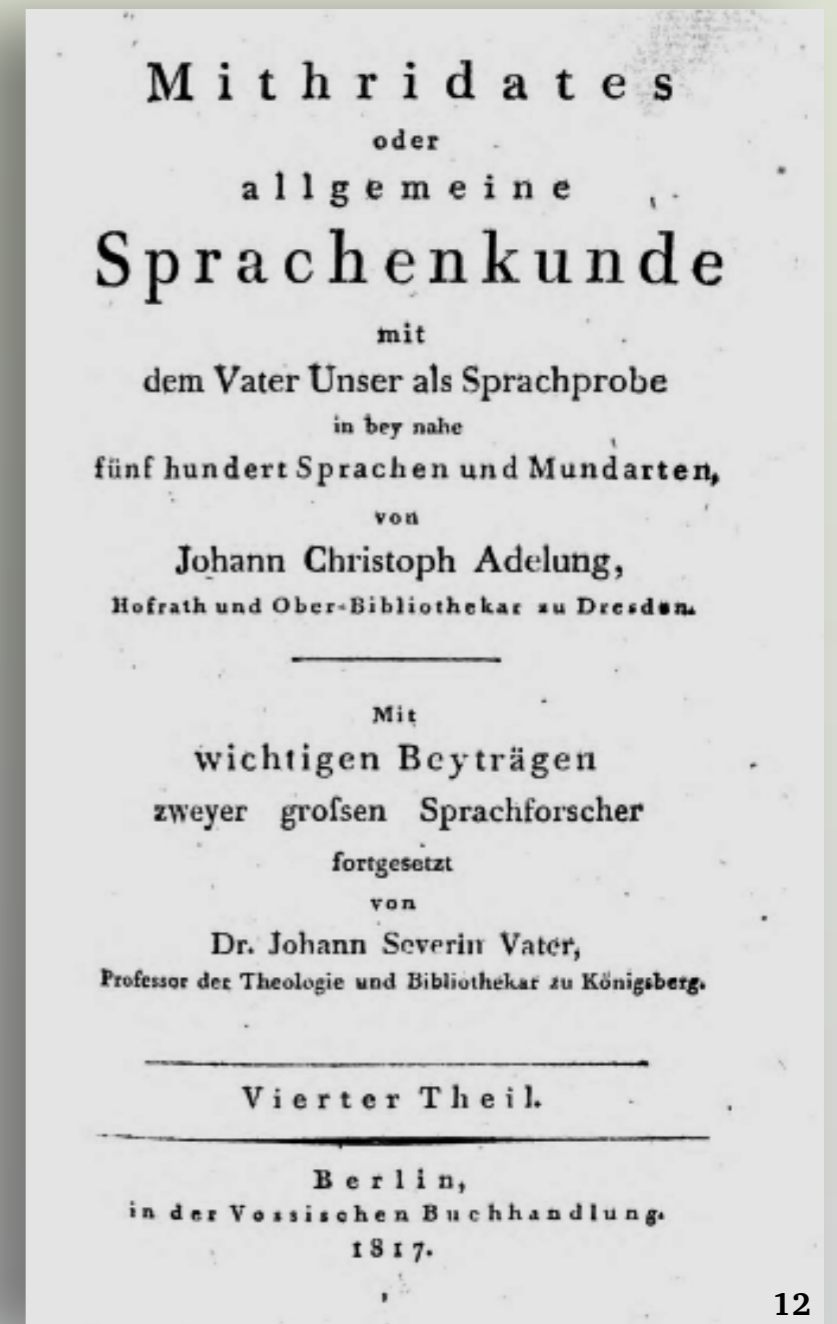
Growing interest in language comparisons (lexicon, morphological type) in Europe since the 18th century:

- Search for the original language (Hebrew or Latin)

Various comparative works, like

Mithridates

- collection of the Lord's Prayer published by J. C. Adelung in 1806
- Contain data on Ethiopian languages, but not on Gurage

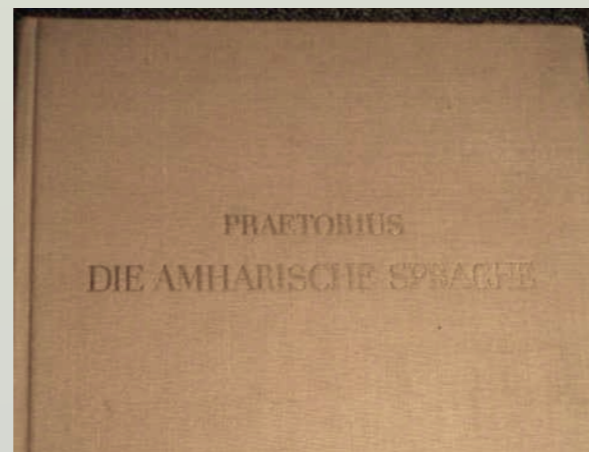


Johannes Mayer (*1831, Germany – †1893, Syria)

- First linguistic work on Gurage in that period
- 1856: went as missionary to Maqdala, where he learnt Amharic and Oromo
- 1871: Menelik II invited him to Ankober, where he founded schools for teaching freed slaves, some of them were from Gurage
 - ➔ With their assistance, Mayer prepared
 - Vocabulary Amharic–Oromo–Gurage (1878)
 - Translation of Matthew (Mt 2) into Gurage

Mayer's Gurage data were used by the German Semitist **Franz Praetorius (1847–1927)**

- Considered it to be a southern dialect of Amharic
- Included it in his Amharic grammar from 1879



Later, identified as Kistane Gurage

Giovanni Chiarini (1849, Italy – 1879, Ethiopia)

Italian travelled in Ethiopia 1876–1879

➔ linguistic notes on Chaha

Casimir Mondon-Vidailhet (1847–1910, France)

Correspondent for *Le Temps* in Ethiopia, 1892-97

- Also served as advisor to King Menilik II
- Vocabulary and grammar notes on various Ethiopian languages, including Chaha, Dobbî, Silt'e
 - *La langue harari et les dialectes éthiopiens du Gouraghê* (1902)
 - *Les dialectes éthiopiens du Gourâghê* (1901-1902)

1898 founding professor for Amharic at the École des Langues Orientales, Paris

Remarks

- Mainly practical aims: Bible translation, and business opportunities
- Gurage now a known ethnolinguistic term
- Defined through wordlists, grammar notes, transliterations of parts of the Bible
- Data were gathered from Ethiopians living outside their home area

Gurage in Semitic Studies

ca. 1920–1980

New methods in comparative linguistics in the 19th century

- Semitic languages of particular interest due to their ancient attestations (e.g. Akkadian from 2500 BC)

Ferdinand de Saussure established Linguistics as a science of synchronic language description at the beginning of the 20th century

Regarding Gurage – the main research question concerns its linguistic status

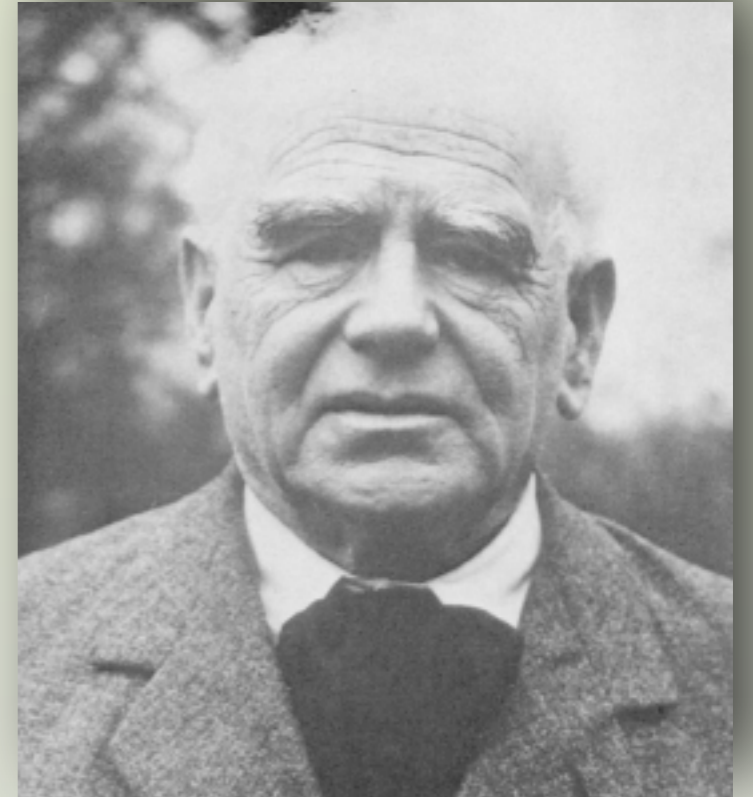
- Single language with various dialects
- Separate languages (with various dialects)
- Its position within Ethiosemitic

Need for more accurate data on Gurage varieties

Marcel Cohen (1884 – 1974, France)

Travelled to Ethiopia in 1910–1911 to collect data on various Ethiopian languages including Gurage

- Gurage consultant was Gäbrä Maryam – native Muher speaker who also knew Kistane and Chaha



1911–1950 lecturer/professor for Amharic at the École des Langues Orientales



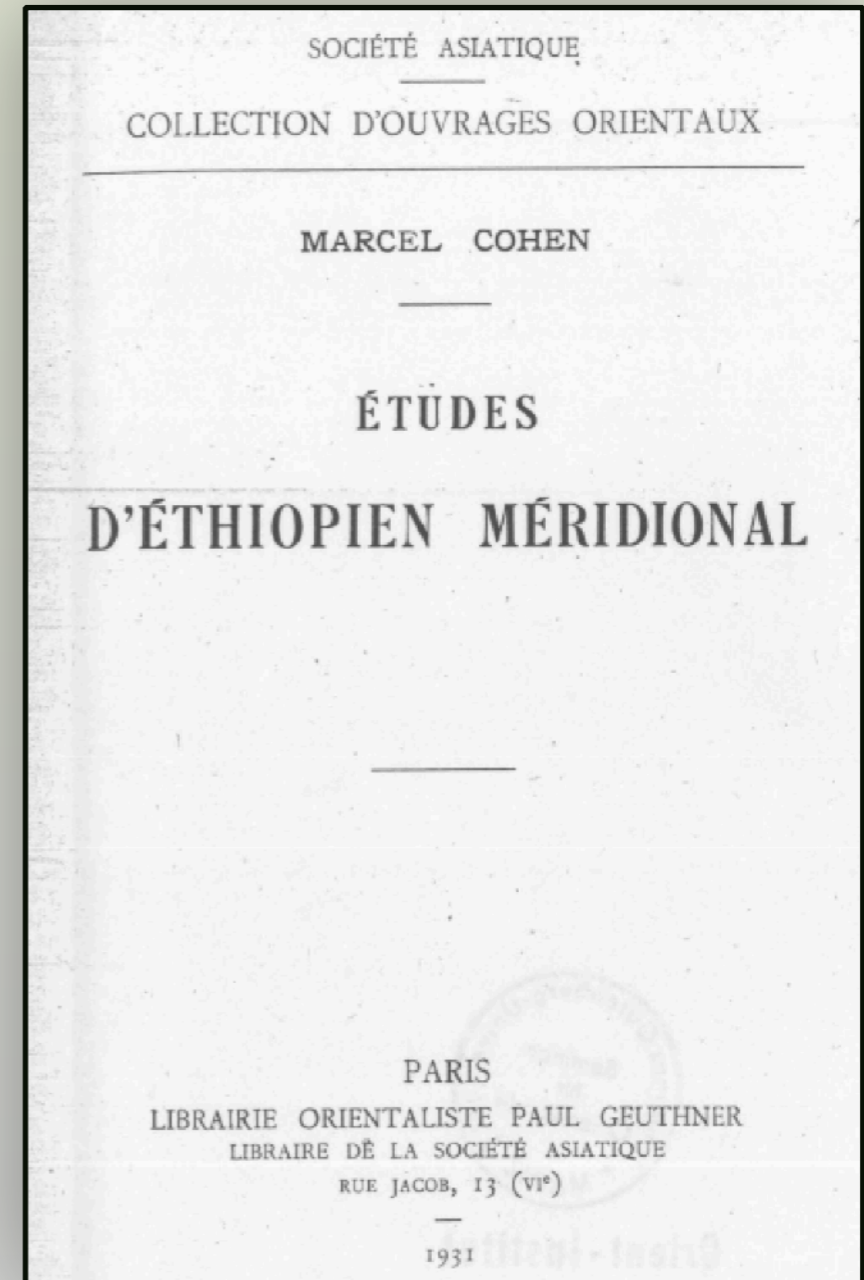
1919-1967 (in addition) professor for Ethiopic at the École Pratique des Hautes Études

- Vast number of publications
- Regarding Gurage: 1931 *Études d'Éthiopien Méridional*

Contains a detailed summary of previous works on Gurage (geography, phonology, (verb) morphology, lexicon)

Proposes a tripartite classification:

1. Eastern Gurage
2. Northern Gurage
3. Western Gurage



Wolf Leslau (1906, Poland – 2006, USA)

“Father” of Gurage Linguistics

1946–1976: visited Ethiopia every 2-3 years

1955–1976 professor of Hebrew and Semitic Linguistics at the University of California at Los Angeles

- Co-founder and leader of the Department of Near Eastern Studies
- Teacher/advisor for many Ethiopian and foreign students of Ethiosemitic languages



Most productive Ethiosemitist with more than 300 publications

First linguistic fieldwork in the Gurage region

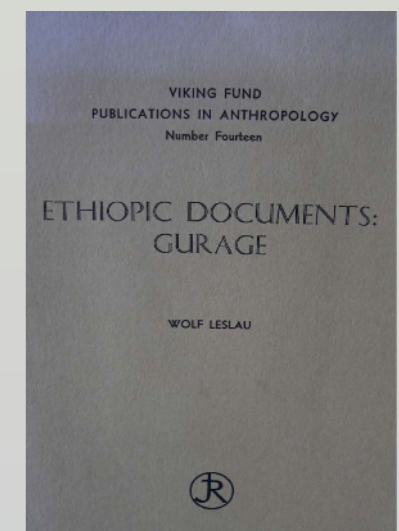
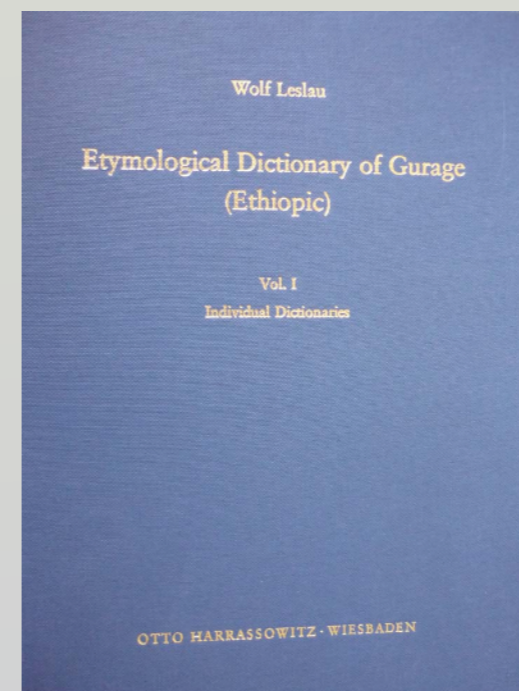
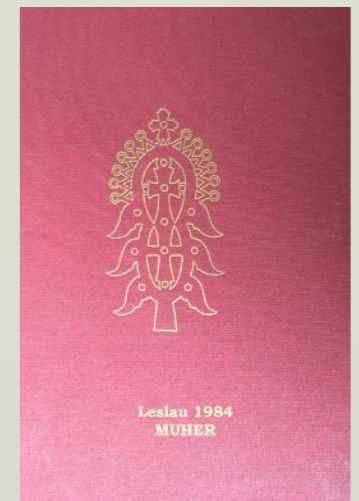


Started with study of Chaha in Emdeber in 1946

- Worked with students who could speak and write Amharic

- Produced sketch grammars and text collections for Chaha (1950, 1966, 1983), Kistane (1968), Muher (1981), Inor (1983), Zay (1999)

- Gurage Etymological Dictionary in three volumes (1979)

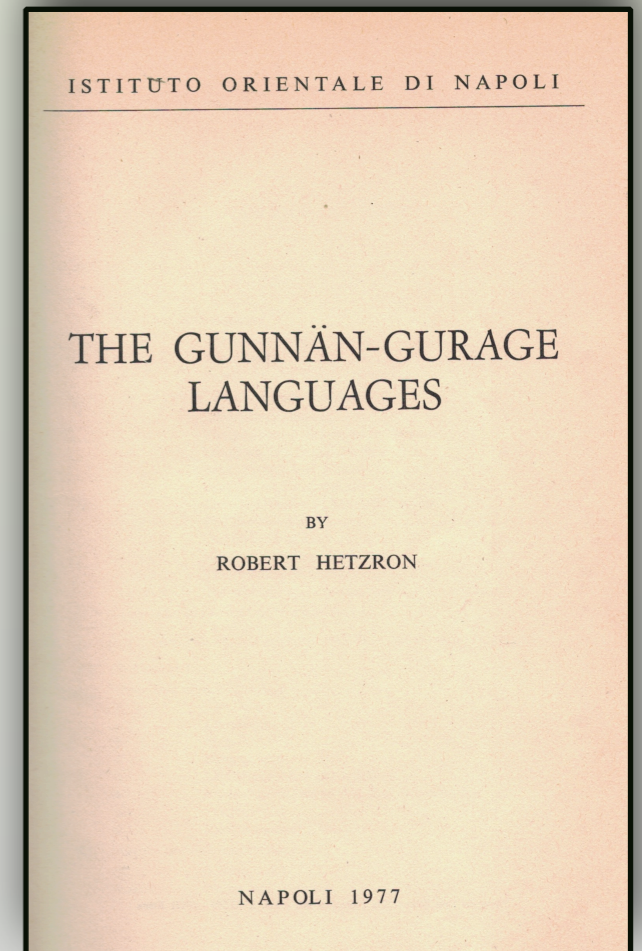


Robert Hetzron (1938, Hungary – 1997, USA)

1965-66 fieldwork in Ethiopia on Agaw for his PhD at UCLA, but also study of Gurage during that time

Various comparative works, most influential

- 1972 *Studies in Ethiopian Classification*
- 1977 *Gunnän Gurage*



Genetic classification of Gurage

- Gurage belongs to different sub-groups

Strong typological orientation for the linguistic description of Gurage

Remarks

- Broader data base on Gurage varieties
 - Mainly due to the fieldwork
 - Grammatical sketches, text collections and basic lexical for most Gurage varieties
- Genetic classification follows Hetzron's (1972) model
- Description and analysis of particular grammatical features, like labialization/palatalization, main verb marker, copulas, converbs, etc.
- Linguistic research has now a more scientific-foundational orientation – less for practical reasons

Gurage in Theoretical & Descriptive Linguistics

Since ca. 1980

Linguistics as established subject and field of study at most universities

Linguistics divided into various (new) subfields (e.g. Sociolinguistics, Pragmatics, Semantics, Syntax, Phonology, etc.)

Formal Linguistics

Bedilu Wakjira

Focus on Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG)

Morphology and verb construction types in Kistaniniya (2010, PhD)

John J. McCarthy

Invented the model of non-linear morphology

Used Chaha for developing/testing parts of his theories

Consonantal morphology in the Chaha verb (1983, 1987)

Lexical phonology and nonconcatenative morphology in Chaha (1986)

Several BA and MA on Gurage at AAU between 1990s–2000s were done in the Chomskyan syntactic framework

e.g. Tesfaye Aberra (1990, MA): Structure of the NP in Kistaninya, Tigist

Berhe (2008, MA): Pronominal empty categories in Kisaninya, Belay

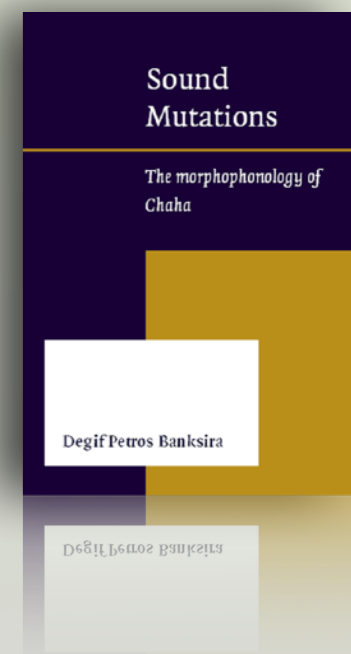
Tesfay (2001, BA): Structure of the verb phrase in Ennemor, Endalew

Aseffa (2008, MA): Syntax of Ezha nominal functors, Alemayehu Abebe

(1990, MA): Relative clause in Chaha: A GB approach

African Linguistics project at the University of Quebec at Montreal (Canada)

- Scholars (many students of Leslau/Hetzron) with interest in Gurage and theories about the interface between phonology and morphology
 - Jean-François Prunet (Inor)
 - Jean Lowenstam (Chaha)
 - Robert Boivin (Inor)
 - Sharon Rose (Chaha, Muher)
 - Berhanu Chamora (Inor)
 - Degif Petros Banksira (Chaha)
- Focus on Inor and Chaha probably due to the language background of Degif and Berhanu
- Rose also undertook fieldwork on Muher in Ethiopia

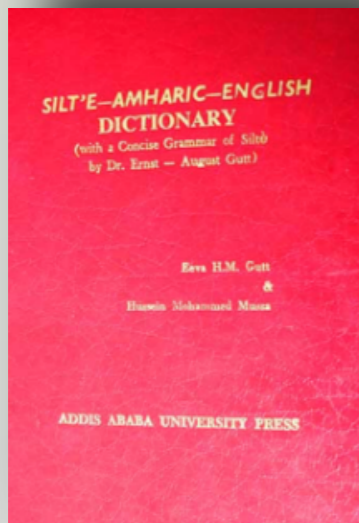


Descriptive Linguistics

Missionaries usually work in the descriptive linguistics framework

Carolyn M. Ford (SIM)

Work on Chaha, including the translation of the New Testament



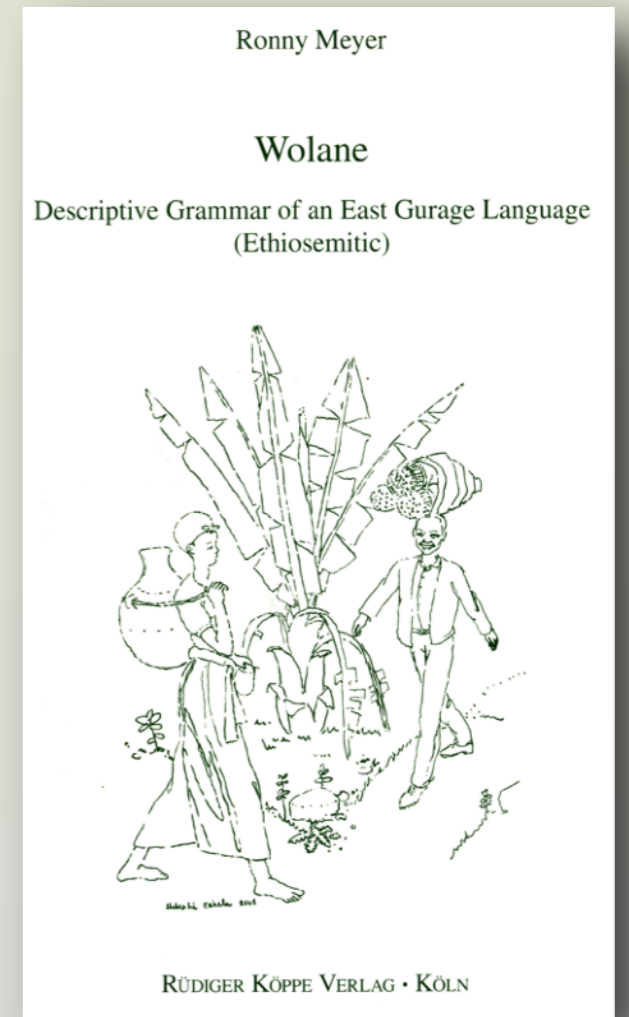
Ernst-August and Eeva Gutt (SIL)

Work on Silt'e, particularly *Silt'e-Amharic-English Dictionary* (1997)

➡ Best dictionary of a Gurage language!

Since the 2000s, increase in descriptive grammars of Gurage languages based on fieldwork, especially in the PhD program at AAU

Ronny Meyer	2005 Grammar of Zay, 2006 Grammar of Wolane
Sascha Völlmin	2014 PhD Verb in Gumer
Endalew Assefa	2014 Grammar of Ezha
Meheretu Adnew	2015 Grammar of Gyeta
Ousman Shafi	2015 Grammar of Mesqan
Yohannes Adigeh	2015 Grammar of Endegagn
Tsehay Abza	2019 Grammar of Inor
Wendimu Habte	2020 Grammar of Ennär



Sociolinguistics

Variety of topics, center of research activity at AAU

Michael Ahland

2010 MA on Language death in Mesmes +
Communication in Gurage

Tesfaye Sima

2012 PhD Linguistic expressions and social
stratification in Kistane

Getu Shikur

2012 PhD Ethnolinguistic identity in Mesqan

Fekede Menuta

2013/2015 PhD Intergroup communication in Gurage

Tiglu Geza

2015 PhD Language planning in Silt'e

Etaferahu Haile

2019 PhD Gurage secret language of M^woyet and
“Fuga”

Awlachew Shumneka

2019 PhD Language contact Muher/Ezha

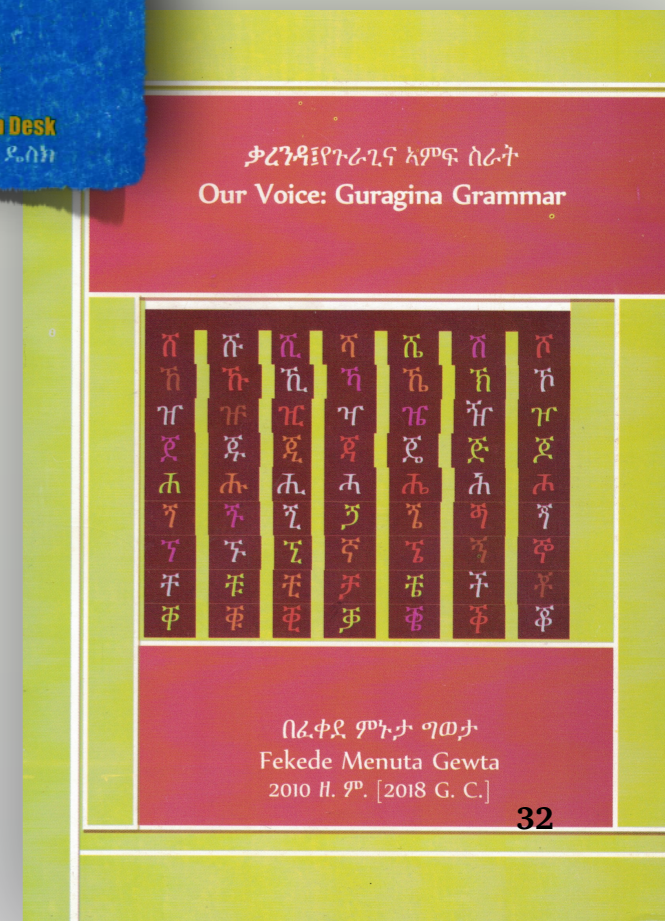
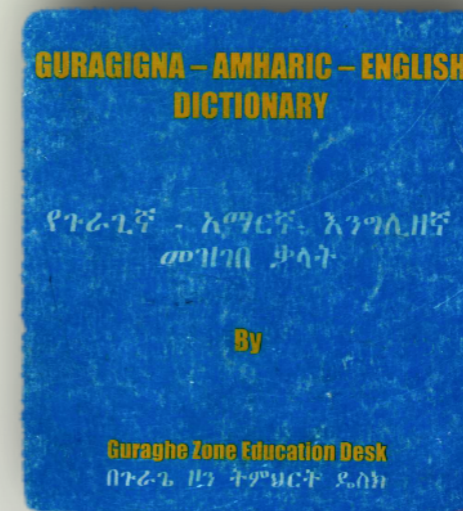
Negash Getachaw

2020 PhD Language revitalization in Zay

Language Standardization

Since the end of the 2010s, the Gurage Zone is actively involved in language planning for Gunnän Gurage

- Gurage vocabulary in 201X (?)
- Establishment of the Gurage Language Board in 2013
- Official Gurage orthography in 2013
- First Gurage primer in 2018
- Gurage in primary schools in 2020



Remarks

- Linguistic description of Gurage enhanced remarkably
 - Mainly grammar descriptions
 - Sociolinguistic issues on identity and standardization became new research topics
 - Few publications on discourse, pragmatics, semantics

Change of research activities from universities abroad to Addis Ababa University

Language Planning is an important new research topic – change from General Linguistics to Applied Linguistics

General Outlook

Within the Ethiopian context, Gurage languages are relatively well researched, i.e. for most varieties there are

- Basic grammars
- Comparative vocabularies
- Text collections

But there is still a need for

- Corpus linguistic research, language documentation
- Oral literature

Gurage Research Center for dissemination and archiving of research results

Development of the linguistic documentation of Gurage languages over there four periods seems to represent a kind of spiral

- Started with “Applied Linguistic” interest (kind of language guides) to ease communication between “Ethiopians” and Arabs
- Slowly, a “purely” foundational linguistic orientation was getting predominance
- Finally, the applied linguistic research for the use of Gurage in the administration and educational system of the Gurage Zone is gaining more and more importance