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► **To cite this version:**

Ronny Meyer. ON IDEOPHONES IN ETHIOSEMIITC. 29th Annual Conference and Annual Research Week of the College of Humanities, Language Studies, Journalism and Communication, May 2022, Addis Abeba, Ethiopia. <hal-03831939>

HAL Id: hal-03831939

<https://hal.science/hal-03831939v1>

Submitted on 27 Oct 2022

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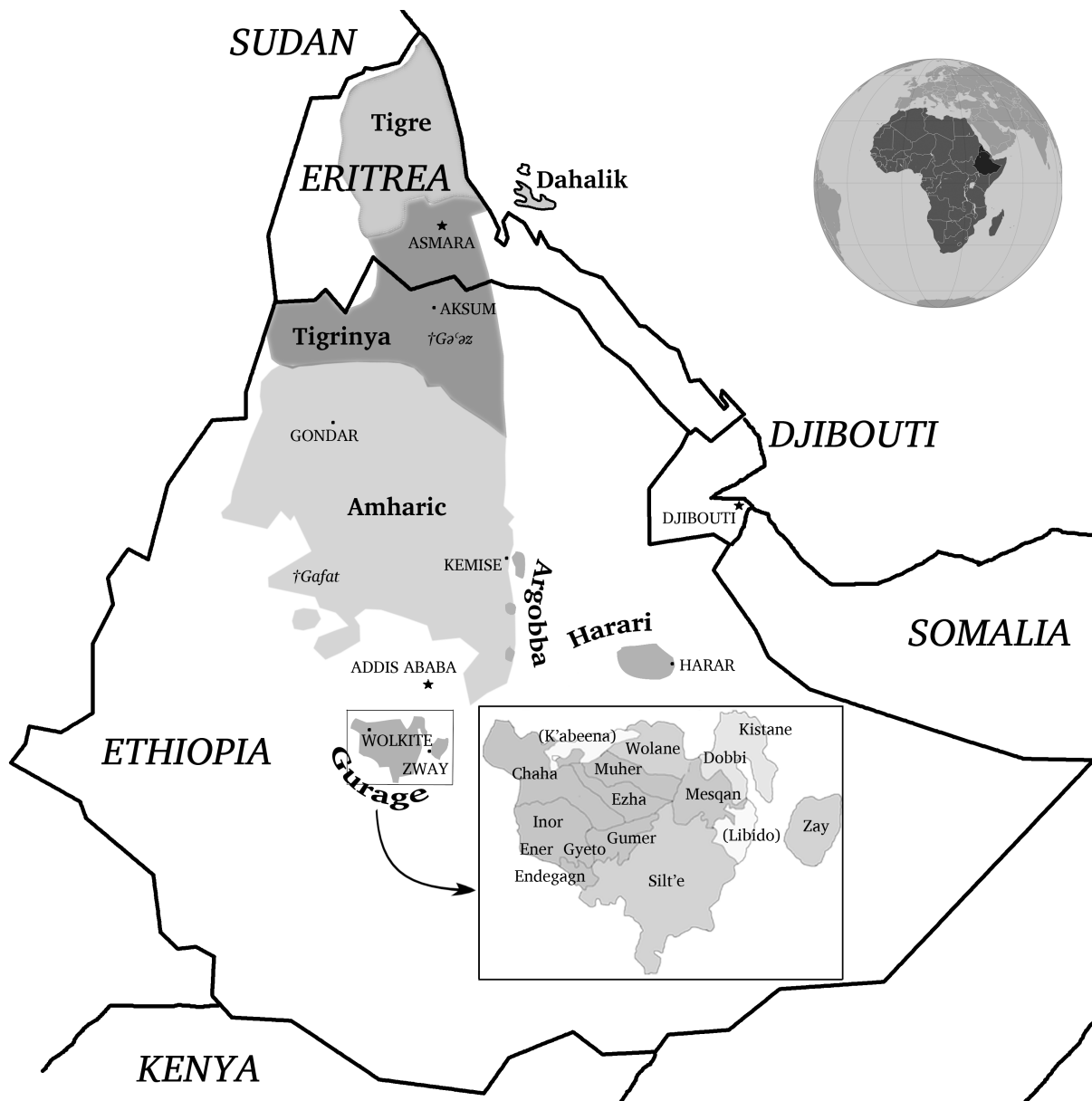
ON IDEOPHONES IN ETHIOSEMITIC

Ronny Meyer (INALCO/LLACAN, Paris)

29th Annual Conference and Annual Research Week of the College of Humanities,
Language Studies, Journalism and Communication

Addis Ababa University, 10–12 May 2022

Map 1: Ethiosemitic Languages



(1) [Several guests sit in a cafe bar drinking coffee and reading newspapers. Suddenly one of the guests jumps up startled and searches for his cell phone. Since he can not find it, he accuses the waiter and the other guests of theft. The waiter then asks him to pay the bill ...]

(1a) [...] የሂሳብ ደረሰኝ የመጣበትን ትንሽቶ
jä-hisab dörösäjn jä-mätt'a-bbät-in tinnif-ijje
 GEN-bill receipt GEN-[REL]come\PFV.S3SM-APL.O3SM-ACC small-DIM
 አቃፊ ነገር ብድግ ሲያደርገው --
ak'afi nägär biddigg s-j-adärg-äw
 holding thing IDPH.lift_suddenly when-S3SM-make\IPFV-O3SM
 'When he suddenly took up the rather small folder in which the bill came –'

(1b) ክው!! እፍር!! ሽምቅቅ!! እንደው መግቢያ ጥፍት!!
kiww iffirr fimk'ikk' indäw mägbija t'iffitt
 IDPH.very_scared IDPH.very_ashamed IDPH.be_folded_up even entrance IDPH.absence
 'He got frightened! He got ashamed! He pulled (his arms) over (his chest)! He did not know where to disappear!'

(1c) «ምድር ዋፊኝ፣ ሰማይ ተከደንብኝ» አይነት ነገር፤
midir watf'i-jjn sämaj täkädän-ibbi-jjn ajnät nägär
 earth swallow\IMP.S2SF-O1SG heaven cover_up\IMP.S2SM-APL-O1SG kind thing
 '(He was thinking) Something like "(Oh) earth swallow me, (oh) heaven cover me up" –'

(1d) ሞባይሉ ዱብ አላለም!!
mobajl-u dubb al-al-ä-mm
 cell_phone-POSS.3SM IDPH.appear/fall_suddenly NEG-say\PFV-S3SM-NEG
 '(when) his cell phone suddenly appeared (in front of him) (lit. did not say "appearance").'

Source <https://www.sewasew.com/p/ፈትሹልኝ>

Complex predicates with a transitivity distinction (cf. Leslau 1995: 580–596)

(2) a. INTRANSITIVE b. TRANSITIVE
bikk' al-ä *bikk' adärräg-ä*
 IDPH say\PFV-S3SM IDPH make\PFV-3SM
 'It appeared suddenly.' 'He took out (something).'

Semantic types of ideophones (Wetter 2003)

(3) IMITATIVE SOUND SYMBOLISM (Onomatopoeia)	<i>t^wa</i> (popping noise)	<i>fɪww</i> (whizzing noise)
SYNESTHETIC SOUND SYMBOLISM	<i>billittf'</i> (flashing)	<i>zimm</i> (quietness)
CONVENTIONAL SOUND SYMBOLISM	<i>s'ätt</i> (calmness)	<i>däss</i> (joy)

Nouns and verbs with sound symbolic features (cf. Baye 1999a)

(4) Nouns	Verbs
<i>fʼatfʼut</i> ‘chick’	<i>täntfʼattfʼa</i> ‘twitter’
<i>f^waf^wate</i> ‘waterfall’	<i>tänkätäkkätä</i> ‘bubble’
	<i>tänkʼätʼäkkʼätʼä</i> ‘shiver’
	<i>tänäkʼännäkʼä</i> ‘wobble’
	<i>täwäzäwwäzä</i> ‘flutter’

Linguistic features of Amharic ideophones

– Reduplication

(5) a. SINGLE EVENT	b. REPEATED EVENT
<i>tʼäbb</i> <i>alä</i>	<i>tʼäbb~tʼäbb</i> <i>alä</i>
‘It dripped (once).’	‘It dripped repeatedly.’

– Function as predicate

(6) ለጅቷ	ብቅ	ጥልቅ	–	እናትዬዋ	ቆጣ	ደርቅ።
<i>liḍi-twa</i>	<i>bikkʼ</i>	<i>tʼillikkʼ</i>		<i>inat-jewa</i>	<i>kʼoma</i>	<i>dürrikkʼ</i>
child-DEF.F	IDPH.	IDPH.		mother-SNG.F	stand\CNV.S3SF	IDPH.
	appear_from_below	immerse				very_dry

‘The daughter goes up and down – the mother standing rigidly.’

– Nominalization in -ta

(7) a. <i>zimmi-ta</i> ‘silence’	c. <i>inde-ta</i> ‘of course’
b. <i>dässi-ta</i> ‘joy’	how-NMLZ

Non-lexical ideophones

a. Constructions with a reduplicated noun as coverb

(8) a. <i>fʼäw~fʼäw</i> <i>al-ä</i>	b. <i>fʼis~fʼis</i> <i>al-ä</i>
salt~salt say\PFV-S3SM	smoke~smoke say\PFV-S3SM
‘It tastes salty.’	‘It smells like smoke.’
c. <i>bird~bird</i> <i>al-ä-ገገ</i>	
cold~cold say\PFV-S3SM-O1SG	
‘I feel cold.’	

b. Derived ideophones (cf. Baye 1999b)

- (9) Root $\sqrt{s_1-b_2-r_3}$ (BREAK) Regular verb: $tä-s_1äbb_2är_3ä$
MPASS-break\PFV-S3SM
'it is broken'

INTENSIVE TEMPLATE

- $C_1CC_2CC_3 > s_1ibb_2irr_3 > s\dot{i}bbirr\ alä$ 'it broke completely'
 $s\dot{i}bbirr \sim s\dot{i}bbirr\ alä$ '(several things) broke completely'
 $s\dot{i}bbirr\ adärrägä$ 'he broke (it) completely'

ATTENUATIVE TEMPLATE

- $C_1äC_2äC_3 > s_1äb_2är_3 > säbär\ alä$ 'it cracked'
 $säbär \sim säbär\ alä$ '(several things) cracked'
 $säbär\ adärrägä$ 'he cracked (it)'

- (10) a. GUMER $tän \sim tän$ $ji-bir$ smoke~smoke S3SM-say\IPFV 'It smells like smoke.'
b. SILT'E $iseettfä \sim iseettfä\ i-l-aan$ butter~butter S3SM-say\IPFV-AUX.NPST 'It smells/tastes like butter.'
- c. TIGRINYA $t'äsmi \sim t'äsmi$ $ji-bil-ilo$ butter~butter S3SM-say\IPFV-AUX.NPST 'It smells/tastes like butter.'

- (11)
- | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| | AMHARIC | SILT'E | |
| REGULAR VERB | $däräk'ä$ | $däräk'ä$ | 'be(come) dry' |
| INTENSIVE | $därrikk' alä$ | $kifif\ baalä$ | 'dry up completely' |
| ATTENUATIVE | $däräk' alä$ | $kuss\ baalä$ | 'be a little bit dry' |

- (12) TIGRINYA
Regular verb $xäfätä$ 'open'
Intensive $xiffit\ bälä$ 'open completely/suddenly'
Attenuative $xift\ bälä$ 'open a little bit'

Abbreviations

ACC	Accusative	NEG	Negation
APL	Applicative	NMLZ	Nominalizer
AUX	Auxiliary	NPST	Non-past
CNV	Converb	O	Object
DEF	Definite	PFV	Perfective
DIM	Diminutive	POSS	Possessive
F	Feminine	REL	Relative clause marker
GEN	Genitive	S	Subject
IDPH	Ideophone	SF	Singular-feminine
IMP	Imperative	SG	Singular
IPFV	Imperfective	SM	Singular-masculine
M	Masculine	SNG	Singulative

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