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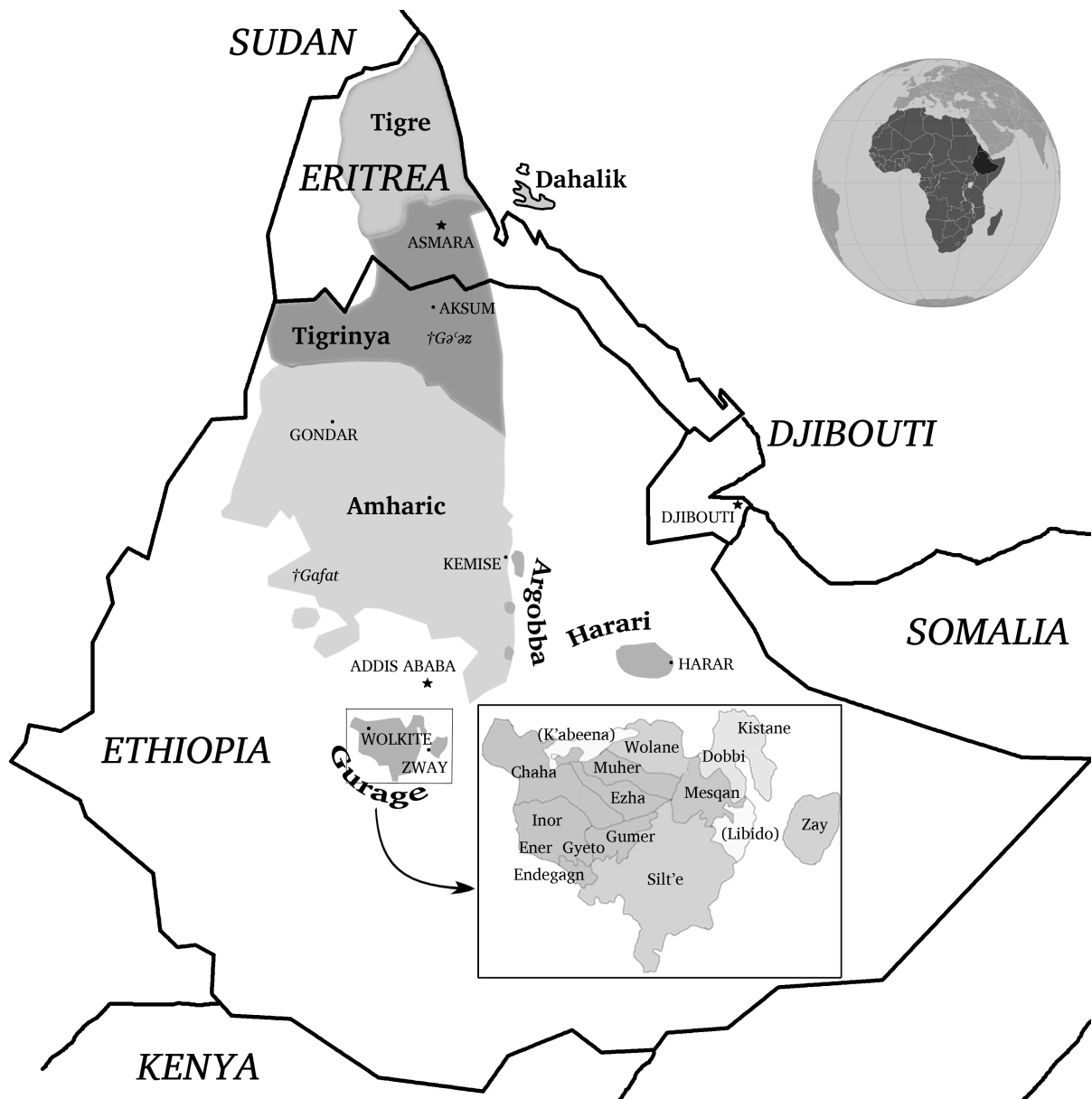
# ON IDEOPHONES IN ETHIOSEMITIC

Ronny Meyer (INALCO/LLACAN, Paris)

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

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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 ትንሽዬ  
*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<br>(Onomatopoeia) | <i>t<sup>w</sup>a</i><br>(popping noise) | <i>fɪww</i><br>(whizzing noise) |
| SYNESTHETIC SOUND SYMBOLISM                     | <i>billittf'</i><br>(flashing)           | <i>zimm</i><br>(quietness)      |
| CONVENTIONAL SOUND SYMBOLISM                    | <i>s'ätt</i><br>(calmness)               | <i>däss</i><br>(joy)            |

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

|   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| (4) Nouns   | Verbs                            |
| <i>fʼatfʼut</i> ‘chick’                           | <i>täntfʼattfʼa</i> ‘twitter’    |
| <i>f<sup>w</sup>af<sup>w</sup>ate</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) ለጅጌጅጌ        | ብቅ                | ጥልቅ              | – | እናጉዳዋ            | ቆጣ             | ድርቅ።            |
| <i>liḍጅi-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

- $C_1CC_2CC_3 > s_1ibb_2irr_3 > s\textit{ibbirr} alä$  'it broke completely'  
 $s\textit{ibbirr} \sim s\textit{ibbirr} alä$  '(several things) broke completely'  
 $s\textit{ibbirr} adärrägä$  '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    | $därrikk' alä$ | $kifitf baalä$ | '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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