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Review

GRAZIANO SAVÀ and MAURO TOSCO, *An Annotated Edition of Father G. Toselli's Dizi Grammar*

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GRAZIANO SAVÀ and MAURO TOSCO, *An Annotated Edition of Father G. Toselli's Dizi Grammar*, Cushitic and Omotic Studies, 5 (Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2016). viii, 185 pp. Price: €49.80. ISBN: 978-3-89645-490-4.

Dizin, also called Dizi, is an Omotic language in south-western Ethiopia, most closely related to Sheko and Nayi. Since we know of no written descriptions of Dizin before those of four Italian missionaries in the 1930s, this annotated version of some of their writings is a valuable addition to the literature. Questions remain about the internal relationships of the Omotic languages, so having data from eighty years ago provides clues that will support current proposals, or possibly spawn new ones.

This book has three parts. In Part 1, Savà first tells about Catholic missions in Ethiopia, some historical background that explains what led one of their missionaries, Toselli, to describe Dizin (pp. 3–19). On pages 19–51, Savà and Tosco describe Dizin in their own words, based on what they learnt from Toselli's grammar and other descriptions of the language since then.

Part 2 (pp. 53–157) is a photographic reproduction of Toselli's Dizin grammar and dictionary, along with Savà and Tosco's footnotes that translate some of the Italian into English, and provide other insights that readers might miss. The dictionary part (pp. 135–157) is especially valuable since it provides the English equivalents of all the entries at the bottom of each page.

In Part 3 (pp. 159–182) Savà introduces the readers to works on Dizin by three other Consolata missionaries: Giuseppe Goletto, Colomba Banal, and Giovanni Chiomio. He includes photographic reproductions of some of their pages, but not the kinds of footnotes that Part 2 has. References for all three parts are on pages 183–185.

Some of the most interesting data presented in the book will be addressed here.

Savà says, 'Toselli's account of plural formation is based on a suffix that is unattested in other descriptions' (p. 36). The morpheme that Toselli probably mistakenly described as the plural marker, *-el* (p. 66), is now understood to be a separate word (*el* or *hel*) which means 'all'.

Toselli's 'negative prefix' *tan-* (p. 48) corresponds with today's /taɲ/ and /naɲ/. The latter is the most common one now, but the former is still widely used.

A historical change seems evident in that Toselli saw *-en* and *-hen* as the suffixes that marked nouns as feminine (p. 65). There does not seem to be any current use of that *-hen* suffix, but *-en* and *-eni* are well attested.

On page 68, in Toselli's data, three single digit numbers are different enough to be of historical interest, so they are shown in the following table. Interestingly, recent data from Nayi and Sheko are both closer to today's Dizin than Toselli's Dizin data.[1]

Table 1 **Comparison of three single digit numbers in today's Dizin, Toselli's Dizin, Nayi, and Sheko**

Gloss	Toselli's Dizin Data	Today's Dizin Phonetic	Today's Dizin Orthographic	Nayi	Sheko
'two'	*thag*	[*t'àːgŋ̄*]	*xaagŋ*	*t'àːgn*	*t'āāgn̄*
'four'	*kum*	[*kùbi̥*]	*kubm*	*kubḿ*	*kūbm̄*
'nine'	*sagani, sagheni*	[*sāgṅ*]	*sagn*	*ságn*	*sagṅ*

The infinitive marker presented on pages 79–82, *-k*, does not seem to be used today. Instead *-kŋ* or *-ŋ* or *-dn* are used.

On page 32, Savà says that Toselli's only comment about [*h*] 'is that it can be more or less aspirated.' Though the dictionary entries do not seem to include any 'voiced *h*', this statement hints at either Toselli or his language sources detecting a distinction between two kinds of *h* that is now understood to be a voicing difference (/*h*/ versus /*ɦ*/), which is recognized in the recently developed orthography. So, for the consonant chart on page 34 to be complete and current, a row is now needed for a voiced, glottal fricative: /*ɦ*/. The orthographic representation is <*hh*>.[2] The words which now begin with /*ɦ*/ were written by Toselli without any consonant. For example, Toselli's words <*arku*>, 'feast' (p. 120), and <*at*>, 'now' (p. 123), are now written as <*hhaarku*> and <*hhaat*>.

Toselli presents the verb root <*biya*> as meaning 'to plant' (p. 117). The current root for 'to plant' is <*ash*>.[3] Now the default meaning of the root

1 Cf. Aklilu Yilma, *Sociolinguistic Survey Report of the Nayi Language of Ethiopia* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2001), 13; A.-C. Hellenthal, *A grammar of Sheko* (Utrecht: LOT, 2010), 221.

2 M. Beachy, *A Brief Grammar of Dizin*, 2nd edn (Mizan Teferi: Bench Maji Zone–SIL Ethiopia, 2018), 7.

3 Dontes Baykes and Mekonnen Eyarz, *Inglizin–Diizin–Goln xsaftnki tmrt ipmki dikishinəry. English–Diizin–Amharic School Dictionary*, trial edn (n.p.: SNNPR

<*bia*> is 'to open'.[4] It seems likely that there is a historical connection to the idea of opening a hole in the ground for a plant or seed.

It would be easy to see 'togo' as a typo on page 130, where the currently very common word '*tigo*', 'it/he is', was intended, but it occurs four times, so that suggests that /togo/ was then either *the* way, or one of the ways to say 'it/he is'. Since vowel harmony is a small feature of Dizin, it is worth considering whether this was a case of it at that time.

On page 140 we see that the word /adao/ meant 'he learnt'. That word is not now known by young Dizin speakers, and the word used now for 'he learnt' is [*tamɨro*], which is a borrowing from Amharic.

On page 32 Savà says, '/p/ and /v/ are not phonemic in D. This is well remarked by Toselli.' While this is correct with regard to the original sound system of Dizin, it should be noted that the current orthography uses the letter <p> for /p/ because of regularly used borrowed words like *posta* ('envelope'), *papay* ('papaya'), and so on.[5]

In a number of helpful footnotes (e.g. on p. 72) typing errors in Toselli's book are mentioned, with corrections. In the same spirit, some of the potentially most consequential mistakes in the volume being reviewed are corrected here. On page 4 '1682–1506' was meant to read '1682–1706'. On page 5 '1949' was meant to read '1849'. On page 6 '2001' should be '1901'. In the middle of Table 9, on page 46, the '1Pl' morpheme should be '*ŋ³-*' (high tone), not '*ŋ²-*' (mid tone). On page 108, the last word on the page should be 'sweep', not 'weep'. The current Dizin word for 'month' is [ʔatsɨ̄m]. Page 156 shows that Toselli listed it as '*tsm*'. Sheko has [ʔats͡ʔɨn], 'month',[6] which adds credibility to the theory that Toselli's typist inadvertently missed an initial '*a*'. The '*amu*' at the bottom of page 145 should be '*Tamu*'.

In conclusion, Savà and Tosco have done a big favour for the community that studies Omotic languages by making the work that Toselli and other Italians did in the twentieth century more accessible. Anyone who wants to know more about the history of Dizin, or the question of how Omotic languages should be classified, should get this book, read it carefully, and compare what it presents with related languages.

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Education Bureau, Bench Maji Zone Educational Department–SIL Ethiopia, 2015), 140.

4 Ibid., 130.
5 Ibid., 66, 133.
6 A.-C. Hellenthal, op. cit., 506.