INTRODUCTION

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Research on the Ethiopian Linguistic Area started with works by Leslau (1945, 1952, 1959) and Moreno (1948) who described the influence of Cushitic languages on Ethiosemitic languages. Based mainly on phonological features, Greenberg (1959: 24) was the first to claim the existence of a linguistic area in Ethiopia and Somalia. The idea of such an Ethiopian Linguistic Area was further elaborated by Ferguson (1970, 1976) who discussed eight phonological and eighteen grammatical features of sixteen Ethiopian languages, English and Arabic. He concluded that the "languages of Ethiopia constitute a linguistic area in the sense that they tend to share a number of features which, taken together, distinguish them from any other geographically defined group of languages in the world" (Ferguson 1976: 63f.). However, Ferguson was also aware of the fact that "some of these shared features are due to genetic relationship …, while others result from the process of reciprocal diffusion among languages which have been in contact for many centuries." In addition, Hayward (1991) discussed several patterns of lexicalization shared by three Ethiopian languages: Amharic (Semitic), Oromo (Cushitic), and Gamo (Omotic). Tosco (2000), in contrast to the commonly accepted view, denied the existence of the Ethiopian Linguistic Area because of the genetic relatedness of Ethiosemitic and Cushitic languages, the unilateral diffusion of the features from Cushitic to Ethiosemitic, and the occurrence of features in related languages which do not belong to the Ethiopian Linguistic Area.

The database on Ethiopian languages increased considerably due to the activities within the Collaborative Research Center 295 *Cultural and Linguistics Contacts: Processes of Change of North Eastern Africa and West Asia* (Sonderforschungsbereich 295 *Kulturelle und sprachliche Kontakte: Prozesse des Wandels in historischen Spannungsfeldern Nordostafrikas/Westasiens*) at the Johannes Gutenberg-University, Mainz. This multidisciplinary center was financed by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) from 1997 to 2008. The research within this center was twofold. First, basic research led to the publication of descriptive grammars on K'abeena (Crass 2005), Wolane and Zay (Meyer 2005, 2006). Descriptive grammars on Argobba (Wetter forthc.), Libido (Crass forthc.) and Muher (Meyer forthc.) are currently in preparation. Second, the results were applied to update the status of the Ethiopian

Linguistic Area and to extend its features. Crass (2002) discussed two phonological features in detail and Crass and Bisang (2004) focused on morphosyntactic features such as word order, converbs, and ideophones verbalized by the verb 'to say'. Crass and Meyer (2008) proposed additional morphosyntactic features of the Highland East Cushitic/Gurage sub-area which might have a wider distribution within the entire Ethiopian Language Area (cf. Rapold and Zaugg-Coretti this volume).

Two workshops in 2004 and 2007, organized by Joachim Crass and Ronny Meyer at the University of Mainz, provided an international platform for the assessment of the Ethiopian Linguistic Area. The workshop in 2004 dealt with deictics, copula and focus in several Cushitic, Omotic and Semitic languages (cf. Crass and Meyer 2007). The second workshop, held on December 13-14, 2007, discussed linguistic contact and contact-induced language change in Ethiopia from a broader perspective.

The six contributions in the present volume, which developed out of the second workshop, represent the diversity of current research on linguistic contacts and on language change in Ethiopia.

Binyam Sisay investigates whether the morpheme *-(k)ko* in Koorete and Haro (East Ometo) functions as a copula or as a focus marker. From a synchronic point of view, he concludes that *-(k)ko* must be analyzed as focus marker which diachronically developed out of a copula.

Ronny Meyer discusses distinctive features of the quotative verb in comparison with other verbs of utterance illustrated with data mainly from Amharic, Muher (Ethiosemitic), and Oromo (Lowland East Cushitic). In addition, a recently proposed typology concerning Ethiosemitic phrasal verbs, based on the quotative verb, is critically reviewed.

Ongaye Oda's contribution accounts for the spread of the punctual derivation from Dullay to Konsoid, two distinct sub-groups of Lowland East Cushitic. The punctual derivation denotes that a verbal state of affairs occurs only once. Ongaye assumes intense contact between speakers of Dullay and Konsoid languages yielded the contact-induced emergence of the punctual derivation in Konsoid languages, including its morphological marking by lengthening the root-final consonant.

Christian Rapold and Silvia Zaugg-Coretti present new data from two Omotic languages, Yemsa and Benchnon, regarding the areal features proposed by Crass and Meyer (2008) for the Highland East Cushitic/Gurage sub-area. Yemsa and Benchnon are genetically closely related branches of Omotic. However, Yemsa is geographically adjacent to the Highland East Cushitic/Gurage linguistic sub-area in Central

Ethiopia, whereas Benchnon is located in the southwest of Ethiopia. After some remarks on the sociolinguistic situation of Yemsa and Benchnon, the features identified by Crass and Meyer (2008) are investigated for these two languages. The findings of Rapold and Zaugg-Coretti reveal that three features, namely the formation of the experiential perfect and the grammaticalization from a similative marker to a complementizer, occur in all three branches of Afroasiatic spoken in central Ethiopia. According to Rapold and Zaugg-Coretti, these features are not likely to be of proto-Afroasiatic origin but most probably are the result of language contact.

Sascha Völlmin investigates linguistic differences between Gumer and Chaha, two closely related varieties of Western Gurage (South Ethiosemitic). Gumer, generally considered a variety of Chaha, has not received much attention so far. Völlmin presents phonological and morphological differences between the two varieties. Based on these data, he concludes that, despite some minor phonological and morphological differences, there is no clear linguistic border between Chaha and Gumer. Most likely they form a dialect continuum.

Silvia Zaugg-Coretti's contribution describes the distribution and function of the focus marker =*tu* in Yemsa (Omotic) and compares it with the focus marker -*tu* in Oromo (Cushitic). Focus and copula morphemes have a complex distribution in Omotic languages which, however, does not exclude a genetic origin. Due to several linguistic and sociolinguistic arguments, Zaugg-Coretti is of the opinion that the Yemsa focus marker =*tu* is borrowed from Oromo and not a genetically inherited morpheme.

The present volume offers examples confirming the assumption that Ethiopian languages regardless of their genetic affiliation deliberately display areal patterns by sharing a number of conceptual and structural similarieties. We hope that this volume will enhance the discussion on language-internal vs. contact-induced linguistic change in the Ethiopian Linguistic Area.

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