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The papers published in this important book are a selection from those discussed during the 14<sup>th</sup> Italian Meeting of Afroasiatic Linguistics (IMAL), held in Turin on June 15-18, 2011. After the editor's, i.e., Mauro Tosco's introduction, eight papers cover different Semitic topics, three papers Berber ones, one paper a Chadic one, and one a comparative Proto-Afroasiatic one. A similar sort of imbalance already stood out during the original meeting, where papers on Semitic languages greatly outnumbered those on other language groups of this phylum, even though there also were several papers on Cushitic, and a few on Ancient Egyptian. Unfortunately, Omotic linguistics was little visible, and indeed there are quite few people around the world who study this particular group of languages. Obviously, this is not a criticism of the organizers of the 14<sup>th</sup> IMAL, or of the book's editor, who cannot force other people to study a particular set of topics, or to write a certain paper. Rather, it is a remark about a generally unsatisfactory scenery in Afroasiatic linguistics, where too many languages, language groups, and historical and comparative topics are still insufficiently studied.

The first contribution is by Helmut Satzinger, an Egyptologist, who addresses the complex issue of reconstructing the case system and alignment typology of the hypothetical common proto-language from which the different historically attested Afroasiatic languages evolved. He already discussed this issue in several papers that were published in the past decades, also taking in consideration the features of ergativity that some authors have glimpsed in this phylum. In this paper, he strongly considers reconstructing a marked nominative system, and concludes that "the nominative-absolutive alignment of Afroasiatic may be as old as Proto-Afroasiatic, or it may have evolved from an ergative-absolutive alignment ... Semitic nominative-accusative alignment has obviously developed from the Afroasiatic nominative-absolutive alignment, as it contains conspicuous remnants of it" (p. 21).

Petr Zemánek addresses instead the issue of subclassifying the Semitic group, and of the higher *vs.* lower degree of relatedness of individual languages or subgroups to each other. It is an issue that has attracted even an excessive attention by some Semitic linguists in the past, e.g., Hetzron (1972, 1977), trying to establish the exact position of individual dialects on family trees. In some other traditions of historical linguistics, e.g., Romance or Germanic studies, an attempt to establish the exact position of the

dialect of Pozzuoli (near Naples) or of Hamburg in the genetic trees of the Romance and, respectively, the Germanic languages would be rightly regarded as a highly arbitrary and fictitious endeavour. Petr Zemánek's attempt is interesting because he takes into account different sets of grammatical features rather than lexical ones, since they are known to be less open to borrowing and thus better cues of genetic relatedness than lexical items are. He concludes that "it seems that the construction of a phylogenetic tree is not very suitable for the Semitic languages" (p. 37). Instead, he uses the NeighborNet method, clearly identifying three major clusters: (i.) Syro-Palestinian languages including Arabic, (ii.) old Mesopotamian languages, and (iii.) Ethiosemitic languages. Sayhadic, i.e., ancient South Arabian languages and Modern South Arabian (MSA) ones do not form a separate cluster, but also do not seem to go with any of the other three clusters.

In his paper, Grover Hudson uses the "250-word comparative wordlist of Ethiopian-Eritrean Semitic (ES) languages" he published in Hudson (2013). The 250 meanings are listed on p. 42 f., but not all the full comparison sets, which also include Proto-Semitic, Proto-Agaw and Proto-East Cushitic forms when they are available. Cognation percentages are carefully evaluated, and confirm a broad subdivision of ES into five subgroups: (a.) a northern one, (b.) Gafat, (c.) Gurage without Silt'e and Zay, (d.) Amharic and Argobba, and (e.) Harari together with the above-mentioned Silt'e and Zay. Interestingly, the highest number of Agaw loanwords occur in Ge'ez (45/250) and Tigrinya (41/250), while Amharic, Tigre and Argobba are lower: 36/250, 35/250 and 32/250 respectively. East Cushitic loanwords are markedly more present in all subgroups; the highest ones are Silt'e (68/250), Harari (64/250), Zay (62/250) and Tigrinya (60/250), while the lowest one is Tigre (49/250).

The functional oppositions in the Classical Arabic verbal system are studied in Michael Marmorstein's contribution, showing that it cannot be seen as just a temporal or aspectual opposition between the so-called perfect (*fā'ala*) and the so-called imperfect (*yaf'alu*). Based on a rich textual corpus he maintains that different syntactic environments and text levels show that there is "a division between *fā'ala* on the one hand and *yaf'alu*, *qad fā'ala* and the participle on the other" (p. 81). Furthermore, clause types and co-occurrence restrictions with modifying particles and auxiliaries display a much more complex system, where the so-called perfect and imperfect cannot be reduced to invariant temporal or aspectual meanings.

Mena Lafkioui also studies the verbal system in her contribution, but her focus is Berber. Indeed, "the current Berber verbal system is based on a fundamental morphological opposition of perfective versus imperfective for the positive aspects, and perfective versus negative perfective for the negative aspects... Tuareg ... and Tarifit ... differ considerably from this basic system in that they have developed a series of secondary morphological verbal opposition which mark distinctive semantic values" (p. 86). After excluding contacts between Tuareg and Tarifit because of their geographical distance, as well as contacts with other non-related languages of the area as causes for the development of these new forms, the author argues that they "have for the most part been functionally determined" (p. 101).

The second paper on Berber also has a comparative approach, and analyses the different particles used in the so-called *if*-clause or protasis of conditional constructions. Cetherine Taine-Cheikh exploits her rich knowledge of the family of Berber showing that one can identify five regions, each of which prefers one variant or group of variants:

- *ad* in Mauritania,
- *is* in southern Morocco,
- *ma*, *(a)k/ka* and *maka* in the north of Morocco and Algeria,
- *kan* in the eastern dialects, and
- *kud* in the southern ones.

The etymology of these particles shows that they have developed through different grammaticalization paths, e.g., out of yes-no question markers and of temporal clause markers.

Amina Mettouchi is the author of the third contribution on Berber, focused on the interaction of the marking of grammatical relations and information structure in Kabyle or Kabylean Berber (KB). It is based on a corpus of field recordings that were transcribed and annotated with Praat and Elan-CorpA: sequences containing a verb were systematically retrieved, “looking for the presence of a noun (and its inflection) within the prosodic group of the utterance, or outside, as well as studying the linear order involved” (p. 262). She shows how KB “nominal subjects and objects can only be unambiguously computed within the prosodic group of the verb” (p. 282). In that context:

- a.) a noun is the nominal subject (a.i.) if it precedes the verb, is in the absolute state (*aka* case) and the verb only has the subject affix, or (a.ii.) if it follows the verb and is in the so-called annexed state;
- b.) a noun is the nominal object if it follows the verb and is in the so-called absolute state.

Quite interestingly, these three different constructions are shown (p. 273 f.) to correlate with different basic information structure (IS) patterns and discourse contexts:

- (a.i.) is a topic-comment pattern, where the comment “goes against a presupposition about the topic that was built in the preceding context” (p. 274);
- (a.ii.) is used “to present situations or events as a whole as new, regardless of the activation status of the referents themselves”, i.e., it is a sort ofthetic sentence. (p. 274); while
- (b.) “marks (sub-)topic continuation ... realized as sequences of verbs with their obligatory person affixes, possibly complemented by nominal direct objects” (p. 273).

Five further papers discuss different issues of Semitic grammar. In particular, Stefano Manfredi deals with the semantics of modal items in Kordofanian Baggara Arabic (KBA), a Sub-Saharan variety of Arabic he brought to the attention of interested scholars with his 2010 PhD thesis. It should be noticed that, even though the history of KBA is complex and still poorly understood, it is not a pidgin or creole like Juba Arabic or kiNubi, but a Bedouin Arabic dialect spoken by semi-nomadic cattle herders scattered from Lake Chad to the White Nile. Modal functions are expressed by the *b(i)*-less imperfective or other finite verbal forms, in association with:

- fully inflected lexical verbs,
- pseudo-verbs like *dāyir* ‘want, need’,
- particles like *ille* ‘except’,
- adverbs like *lāzim* ‘it is necessary’, or
- complex adverbial constructions like *min la buddi* ‘it is likely’.

This syntactic classification may need some revising. For instance, it is not wholly clear to the present reviewer why should *lāzim* be considered as an adverb and not just

as an invariable pseudo-verb. After a detailed examination of how nine modal items of the above five types behave, the author takes into consideration their grammaticalization paths through different types of possibility and of necessity, and the impact of dialect levelling towards Sudanese Arabic.

A typologically interesting feature shared by Modern South Arabian and Ethiosemitic (ES) is discussed by Olga Kapeliuk: insubordination, i.e., the independent use of constructions exhibiting characteristics of subordinate clauses, or main clause verbal forms originating from subordinate forms. In her short paper, she develops an idea already suggested by the late Fabrizio Pennacchietti, Aaron Rubin and others, that the use of MSA relative verbs with the relative particle *ḏ-* as main clause verbal forms implies the presence of a zero copula. Such constructions have not been found in Ancient South Arabian up to now, but instances of relative verbal forms followed by an explicit copula are well known for modern ES languages, with the exclusion of Ge'ez. The author points out that some, but not all, of these constructions are close to cleft sentences, and that this kind of insubordination also has parallels in Agaw, even though their parallels in other subgroups of Cushitic still have to be identified clearly.

Dahālik (DK), is studied by its major expert, Marie-Claude Simeone Senelle. (One should remember that the status of D, like that of many spoken varieties, is controversial in so far as some scholars regard it as a dialect of Tigre rather than as a separate language.) In this contribution, she describes its two major types of possessive and genitive constructions, i.e., the less used synthetic one or construct state, and the more frequent analytic one with the determiner noun or pronoun preceded by *na-*. The two constructions have different functions: “The synthetic construction marks a definite and specific relationship of possession, the determiner referring to something or someone considered as belonging to the personal sphere of the determined noun. The analytic construction, on the other hand, marks an alienable relationship” (p. 182). The paper also offers several comparative examples, showing how DK is closely related to northern Ethiosemitic on the morphological level (the linker *na-*), but with the Modern South Arabian group on the syntactic level (the order head noun – determiner *aka* genitive noun). Surprisingly, even though Yemeni Arabic dialects behave like most of Modern South Arabian in this sub-area of syntactic typology, the author doesn't take them into account in her comparisons, even though it is safe to assume that there have been frequent contacts between the DK-speaking community and speakers of Yemeni Arabic.

Eran Cohen provides a cogent synchronic description of a paratactic conditional construction with the *if*-clause or protasis marked by the connective particle *-ma* in Old Babylonian, the classical phase of Akkadian. This construction seems to be a peculiar stylistic pattern, characterized by the following features:

- 1.) a directive with the same semantics as the protasis but having the opposite polarity often precedes the construction;
- 2.) negative polarity, e.g., specific verbal expressions, occurs only in the protasis;
- 3.) the connective particle *-ma* occurs in the protasis, but may additionally occur in the directive that precedes the construction;
- 4.) the negative preterite *UL IPRUS* has the functional value of a future perfect;
- 5.) combinations of tenses and moods that conflict with the so-called strict modal congruence allow for special combinations;
- 6.) specific sets of forms make up the protasis;
- 7.) the preterite *IPRUS* never features in the apodosis (p. 200 f.).

This type of conditional construction is contrasted with syntactic patterns that involve the so-called interconnected circumstantial clause. In these, e.g., the preterite *IPRUS* often features in the main clause.

In a challenging paper on unipartite clauses, Shlomo Izre'el shows how holophrastic utterances are very much alive and frequent also in adult speech, and not only in the early stages of language development in human infants. Indeed, drawing his examples from the spontaneous speech recordings of the Corpus of Spoken Israeli Hebrew (CoSIH), he points out that a high number of utterances formed by “syntactic units consisting of only a predicate domain, i.e., a nuclear or an extended predicate” can be identified in adult spontaneous speech through their prosody, information structure and syntax (p. 255). Such predicates carry “the information load of the clause, the ‘new’ element in the discourse and the focused component of the clause” (p. 256). Similar structures have also been identified in Akkadian, written Israeli Hebrew and other languages. Dickins (2010) called them ‘monopartite’ clauses in Sudanese Arabic. Izre'el also provides a broad and preliminary classification of unipartite clauses in Hebrew based on “whether or not the predicate can be seen as anchored in referential expressions beyond the clause domain, and where it does – where that anchor will be located in the discourse structure” (p. 245). Unipartite clauses are thus a full-fledged and autonomous clause class, rather than elliptical or reduced forms of the better known bipartite clauses.

Finally, the only contribution on Chadic in this volume is by Zygmunt Frajzngier, and develops a complex theory on locative predications, arguing that it is a phenomenon that has been inherited in the three sub-branches of Chadic directly from the Proto-Chadic stage. He defines locative predications as predications that have “a general locative meaning that may subsume much narrower characteristics such as presence at a place, movement toward a place, or movement from a place” (p. 204). His analysis aims at explaining in a unified way why, e.g., “some locative expressions have prepositions and others do not, ... some languages have only one locative preposition, ... some languages have serial verb constructions coding locative relations, and others do not, ... some languages have verbal extensions coding locative relations and others do not” (p. 204). Indeed, his detailed discussion of the facts that can be observed in nine languages from all the sub-branches of Chadic appears to account satisfactorily for the different types of locative expressions they have, and provides plausible hypotheses on how they have evolved through time.

To wrap up, this well edited volume provides important insights both on particular sets of phenomena that occur in single Afroasiatic languages or in some of its subgroups, and on wider issues of comparative reconstruction and of general features of human language. The sound methodology of most of its contributions is an interesting read also for specialists of other languages families.

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Giorgio Banti (Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”)