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Review of
Olga Kapeliuk, Selected Papers in Ethio-Semitic and Neo-Aramaic Linguistics

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The book is a welcome reprint of a large part of the linguistic production that Olga Kapeliuk, at present Professor Emeritus at the Department of Linguistics and of African Studies of the Hebrew University, has displayed during the last 40 years on the “peripheral Semitic” domains of Ethio-Semitic and Neo-Aramaic languages.

Belonging to the linguistic school grown up at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem around Hans Jakob Polotsky, like other pupils of the former of the caliber of Gideon Goldenberg and Ariel Shisha Halevy, Olga Kapeliuk has developed an original production in the footsteps of her Master and beyond, in her case especially focusing on Ethio-Semitic and Neo-Aramaic syntax (the latter subject having also been touched upon by Polotsky, as well as several others, such as, e.g., typological parallelism between Amharic and Turkish). Far from being an accidental and fortuitous coexistence, the interest for Ethio-Semitic and Neo-Aramaic languages answers to one and the same interest for morphological and especially syntactical phenomena in the so-called “Neo-Semitic” and “peripheral” areas as viewed in their typological peculiarities.

Four out of the 43 contributions reprinted in the thick volume (either in English or French, only one in Hebrew) focus on “Peripheral Semitic” in general (chapter 1, pp. 3–90); 32, i.e. the overwhelming majority, on Ethio-Semitic (chapter 2, pp. 91–481), and seven on “Neo-Aramaic” (chapter 3, pp. 483–579). As the author states, “Most misprints have been corrected as discreetly as possible. A few articles had to be retyped, with the prior pagination indicated in square brackets” (p. ix).

The book does not include author’s contributions on “Arabic language and culture, Amharic literature, Etiopean society, or material for Hebrew teachers of adult immigrants from Ethiopia … in order to preserve its purely linguistic character in dealing with the two branches of Semitic” in which the author specialized. The reprint volume is not to be understood as encompassing the whole of Kapeliuk’s scientific production on the subjects either, because it obviously does neither include the main monographs (*Nominalization in Amharic* = Äthiopistische Forschungen 23, Stuttgart: Steiner, 1988; *Syntax of the Noun in Amharic*, Äthiopistische Forschungen 37, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), nor the numerous reviews, which are all omitted with the exception of two (on Josef Hartmann, *Amharische Grammatik*, 1980, and Rainer M. Voigt, *Das tigrinische Verbalsystem*, 1977). Also not included are short articles later developed in longer contributions (“Les noms amhariques à fi-
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The range of the themes approached in the contributions of Kapeliuk on Ethio-Semitic is impressive: broad, as well as consistent and rigorous, stretching along a continuum of interrelated problems spanning from typological convergence versus inherited features to sociolinguistics; from noun, pronoun and verbal pattern and morphology, e.g., of the Go'az gerund, to redundant verbs and auxiliaries, and synthetic verbal forms; from definiteness and indefiniteness, treatment of body and soul, to focus and topicalization; from tenses system to expressivity, evidentiality and factivity. However, if one, more specific area of prominent interest has to be singled out in Kapeliuk’s contributions, this is probably that of nominalization and relativization, as these subjects have been approached in their most extensive range: from the morphology of the relative pronouns to the syntax of the Go‘az cleft sentence, from the relative verb in areal perspective, to the general question of relative constructions, from the nominalization of the verb in Amharic to the transformation of the copula sentences. It is also to be remarked that few authors have such a deep and first-hand knowledge of
Amharic and Təgrənña modern literatures as Kapeliuk: and precisely these sources she has often used.

Like the reprint volumes of Polotsky’s (Collected Papers, 1971) and Goldenberg’s (Studies in Semitic Linguistics. Selected Writings, 1998) writings, this one is also published by Magnes Press. One can only regret that, unlike the preceding volumes, no detailed index of subjects has been provided, which would have greatly helped the reader and made the use of the volume easier and more fruitful; the print quality is also not as good. All this notwithstanding, like the aforementioned volumes and few others (e.g., the Nouvelles études d’éthiopien méridionale by Marcel Cohen, 1939, Edward Ullendorff’s The Semitic languages of Ethiopia, 1955, or Robert Hetzron’s Ethiopian Semitic, 1972), this book is deemed to become an indispensable companion for those who intend to approach the study of Ethio-Semitic (and “Peripheral Semitic”) languages according to proper and rigorous linguistic principles.

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La precedente edizione italiana di Lorenzo Mazzoni (2007) discende dalla non impeccabile traduzione inglese di E.A. Wallis Budge (1932), e con ciò Osvaldo Raineri giustifica la sua nuova traduzione italiana, che è condotta direttamente sul go’az. La traduzione è senz’altro generalmente buona, ma