

Gene Gragg

Work proceeds on the COMA (Cushitic-Omotc Morphological Archive) project, whose two goals have been:

- A compilation of *all* available morphological information on the Cushitic-Omotc languages in their Afroasiatic context.
- Development of a user interface to the archive which would be in effect a tool for the organization, manipulation, and contrastive and analytical display of paradigmatic data, both within and among these languages.

On the data-entry front all the Cushitic data which will be contained in the initial publication of the archive have been entered as of spring 2009: forty-plus languages with, at this point, more than 2,500 formatted paradigms — and more to come! At this stage the work of new data entry has been shifted to the Afroasiatic context of Cushitic and is being done by two advanced graduate students in NELC. Maegara Lorenz, a student in Egyptology, has finished entering the basic paradigmatic information from Sahidic Coptic; she will go on in the coming year to include the parallel information in Demotic, Middle Egyptian, and Old Egyptian. Sam Boyd, a student in comparative Semitic, will enter corresponding information in the major Semitic languages (Ethiopic is already in the archive; he will be doing Akkadian, Arabic, Syriac, Hebrew, Old South Arabian, and, time permitting, the best-attested varieties of Modern South Arabian).

Thanks to continued support from the Mellon Foundation, the project was able to engage a programmer from NORC. He has produced the initial version of a drag-and-drop, JavaScript-powered, tool for manipulation and combination of paradigms. We are now working on integrating this into the archive interface and elaborating procedures for making very general queries crossing divisions of language, language family, and morphological category (e.g., “How is the category ‘feminine’ marked in Afroasiatic?”). This latter aspect of the archive intersects with a number of converging projects on linguistic documentation and typology and the development of electronic tools to explore questions in this domain.

In the fall **Gene Gragg** gave a paper at the third meeting of the International Association of Comparative Semitic, held in Turin, Italy, October 2–5, 2008. The paper, “Morphological Expression of Verbal Negation in Cushitic,” uses data gathered for the COMA project to survey

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the very complex integration of verbal negation into the verbal paradigm in all major branches of Cushitic. An earlier conference paper describing the linguistic bases of the morphology project appeared as an article, “An Approach to Describing Afroasiatic Templatic Morphologies” (*Aula Orientalis* 26 [2008]: 61–89). The paper from last year’s 5th International Conference on Cushitic and Omotic, in Paris, “Cushitic Verb Inflectional Classes Revisited,” is being prepared for publication in *Proceedings of the 5th Conference on Cushitic and Omotic Languages*, edited by Marie-Claude Simeone-Senelle and Martine Vanhove (Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2009).
