A short summary of *Eine Grammatik des Burunge*

This monograph is a synchronic description of Burunge, a Southern Cushitic language spoken in the Dodoma district, Tanzania, by approximately 20000 people. Except for wordlists nothing has been published on Burunge yet. The main issue of the present work is neither the theoretical application of a certain model of grammar nor the historical reconstruction, but the adequate description of the Burunge language as it is spoken today. Where comparison seems to be useful parallels are drawn to Iraqw, a closely related and fairly well documented language.

The introduction (chapter 2) gives a short sketch of the geographical whereabouts, the economic and sociolinguistic situation of the Burunge people.

The phonological structure of Burunge is dealt with in chapter 3. Burunge has 31 consonant phonemes, among them pharyngeal fricatives, laryngealized and ejective consonants and a set of lateral phonemes. The vowel system comprises of five fully voiced vowel phonemes plus distinctive quantity (opposition of long and short vowels) and an additional set of three phonemic whispered vowels. The opposition of high versus low tone has no lexical, but grammatical function. Morphological tone overruns the tonal pattern that can be predicted on the basis of the syllable structure and the position of the main stress.

>From the end of chapter 3 on instead of the International Phonetic Alphabet an orthography that follows the example of the Iraqw orthography (cf. Nordbustad 1988: 18) is used for transcribing the data.

After the morphophonological and sandhi rules in chapter 4 the main part follows: the description of the morphology. It is devided into four major chunks: noun morphology (chapter 5), verbal derivational morphology (chapter 6), verbal inflectional morphology (chapter 7) and the morphology of other word classes such as adjectives and adverbs (chapter 8).

On the basis of concord with dependent words Burunge recognizes three morphological noun classes, i.e. masculine, feminine and neuter. Quite often neuter nouns are associated with plurality, but nevertheless morphological class and semantic number are distinct from each other. There are lots of suffixes (and infixes) used for deriving plural forms from singular bases and, vice versa, singulative forms from collective bases. Many of these affixes are no longer productive, they are lexically conditioned. But to some extent gender and final vowel of the singular determine the plural form. There is a similarly broad system of morphemes for deriving nouns from verbs and adjectives. Many suffixes are fossilized and highly specialized semantically, e.g. there is a suffix deriving nouns for body excretions.

In the pronominal system Burunge has gender distinction in both the second and the third person singular.

The verbal derivational system has prefixes as well as suffixes. There are also morphemes that seem to be infixes at first glance, but turn out to be secondary suffixes. A verbal base may be modified by two or more affixes at the same time to derive a complex verb stem. Very frequently, the combination of a verbal root with a certain derivational affix is lexicalized on synchronic level, but in the course of further derivation this archaic morpheme boundary could break up again.

Two seperate syntactic constituents are involved in the verbal inflection. On the one hand the verb stem is modified by suffixes for aspect, mood, person and number of the subject. But most of the inflectional categories are marked on the preverbal inflectional complex (or: preverbal clitic cluster) that corresponds to the selector of Iraqw and the indicator particles of Somali from a functional point of view. In fact it turns out to be a syntactic slot where lots of monophonemic and monosyllabic morphemes of different origins melt down to form a single phonological word. Contrary to Iraqw, the individual morphemes in this morphological melting-pot can easily be isolated. They mark different syntactic cases, the personal features of subject and object, focal state, several tenses and aktionsarten as well as different clause types.

A very salient typological feature that Burunge shares with East Cushitic languages like Somali is the preverbal case marking. Case relations are not marked on the noun itself, but rather on the verb, i.e. by case indicators within the preverbal inflectional complex. Inflectional and derivational mechanisms overlap for the concept of verbal plurality. Plurality, on the one hand, is indicated by plural suffixes on the verbal stem which are part of the inflectional system. But under certain "plural" conditions the verbal stem has to be in a special derived form, in the frequentative, the durative, the continuative, the intensive or the progressive. Among these conditions that trigger the derivation of the plural stem are the semantic plurality of subject or object, the transitivity of the verb and its derivational status. Chapter 9 and 10 deal with syntax and pragmatics. The most interesting feature from a comparative point of view is a peripheral erosion that functionalizes a set of morphophonological alternations of the final segments in noun phrases and the verbal complex as a vehicle for the morphosyntactic opposition of interrogative versus declarative. Pragmatical shadings such as thematic prominence, contrast focus and completive background information are expressed by syntactic permutations as well as by morphology. The final section offers as a text sample the story of Mandooya in interlinear translation.