

The Amharic Language Academy: A Long Overdue Project

Anbessa Teferra

teferra@tauex.tau.ac.il

Department of Hebrew Language & Semitic Linguistics
The Lester & Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities
Tel Aviv University, Israel

Amharic is probably the largest Ethiopian language with millions of native and second-language speakers. Amongst the multitude of Ethiopian languages and dialects, it is a highly developed language with vast amount of written literature. Due to historical, political, social and other factors it emerged as an Ethiopian *lingua franca*, i.e., a 'national thread' that united speakers of different languages. It is continuing to do so in spite of the adverse environment of the last three decades.

Despite the above reasons, currently Amharic does not have a language academy. To be precise, Amharic actually had one in 1972. However, this academy has only a short existence because of the then socialist military regime (*Derg*) that assumed power in 1974. The *Derg* regime suspended the activities of the *Amharic Language Academy* and eventually established the *Academy of Ethiopian Languages* in 1979. Since then, there were efforts to establish a pseudo-Amharic language academy but to no avail.

Hence, the aim of this paper is to propose the establishment of the *Amharic Language Academy* at Bahr Dar University. It will represent a strong and dynamic research center that will be involved in preparation of textbooks, dictionaries, and grammar books; creation of neologisms and their adaptation, regulation of language use, etc. It will also be responsible in offering regular training related to standardization and modernization of Amharic.

In this respect, it will be beneficial for the Amharic Language Academy to cooperate with the Hebrew Language Academy of Israel that has a very rich experience in utilizing language-related technology. Hence, it will be very vital for the envisaged Amharic Language Academy to integrate internet, language technology, AI, etc. in its activities in order to adapt to the fast-changing world and to be meaningful for the younger generation.