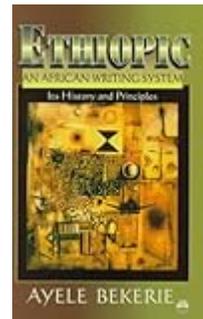


# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



**Ayele Bekerie.** *Ethiopic, An African Writing System: Its History and Principles.* Lawrenceville, N.J., and Asmara, Eritrea: Red Sea Press, 1997. xiv + 176 pp. \$18.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-56902-021-0; \$59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-56902-020-3.



**Reviewed by** Peter T. Daniels (H-Africa)

**Published on** H-Africa (March, 1999)

I approach this book as a linguist specializing in Semitic languages and in the study of writing systems. Ayele Bekerie (AB) does neither: his two master's degrees from Cornell University are in Agronomy (M.Sc.) and in Africana Studies (M.P.S.); the book under review corresponds to his Ph.D. dissertation from Temple University's famed African American Department. Accordingly, it represents the application of Afrocentrist dogma to questions of historical fact, and on the matter of Ethiopia's indigenous writing system, these two realms of knowledge conflict.

The first time I read the book, I could not make head nor tail of it. It is a congeries of apodictic statements on historiography, especially African historiography; a handful of observations on the Ethiopic script, many of them factually incorrect; an overview of classical Ethiopian literature and esthetics; and personal attacks on certain European scholars. I then came upon Stephen Howe's *Afrocentrism: Mythical Past and Imagined Homes* (1998), a survey of the background, claims, and practices of that discipline, and on a second reading, various aspects of AB's *Ethiopic* were clearer. Howe's work also reintroduced me to a number of Afrocentric dogmas that I had first encountered in the same place where I first encountered AB, viz., the Athena Discussion List established by the publisher HarperCollins a

few years ago ostensibly to foster discussion of Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* (1987, 1991) via structured debate between Bernal and Mary Lefkowitz, whose own screed against Afrocentrism, *Not Out of Africa*, had just been published, not coincidentally, by HarperCollins (1996). However, alleged electronic glitches prevented Bernal's fourth contribution from appearing, and Lefkowitz apparently took this as a personal snub and declined further participation. The Athena List thereupon became a stew of vicious and racist name-calling into which an occasional serious Afrocentrist would contribute assertions about ancient Egypt based on Herodotus and other ancient authors, and an occasional serious Classicist would attempt to explain critical method and contextual interpretation of sources; others would put forward claims about historical connections between Egyptian and other African languages, and an occasional serious linguist (including this one) would attempt to explain historical linguistics methodology and to reveal the flaws in the language-oriented publications of Cheikh Anta Diop and Thophile Obenga. From time to time, a posting by AB would appear, making odd-seeming claims about the Ethiopic script. Requests for elucidation were met with the statement that a book was in preparation; the editor of H-Africa, who sometimes contributed to the discussion, said he would ask me to review it. When I espied *Ethiopic* in a bookstore, I reminded him of his offer, and

here is the result.

From Howe, I learned that the dogmas I had earlier been exposed to have been common coin in some (mainly American) circles for well over a century, and that they have been handed down ever since, uninfluenced by more recent research and scholarship, often complete with the original century-old attributions, often without. I learned that the concept of a critical approach to sources does not exist in Afrocentrist teaching—that appeal to authority is decisive: that the writings of Diop in particular are sacrosanct, and that a particularly authoritarian figure is Temple University’s Molefi K. Asante, whose edited volumes and journals virtually never carry any contributions challenging any Afrocentrist teaching. In the intellectual realm, I learned that guiding principles of Afrocentrism include hyperdiffusionism, indigeneity, and an ethnology grounded firmly in the now completely discredited racial science of nineteenth-century Europe. These three principles in particular find expression in AB’s book.

There are an Introduction (pp. 1-30) and five chapters: “The Arabian Peninsula in Ethiopian Historiography” (pp. 31-60), “The History and Principles of the Ethiopic Writing System” (pp. 61-103), “*The Book of Hnok* and African Historiography” (pp. 105-18), “*Se’en: Aesthetics and Literary Traditions of Ethiopia*” (pp. 119-39), and a Conclusion (pp. 141-49). Each chapter includes bibliographic endnotes, though many of their entries are not repeated in the Bibliography (pp. 151-64) and many of the entries in the Bibliography are not cited in the book. At the end is a detailed Index (pp. 165-76).

Specific difficulties with AB’s book can be grouped in four categories: theory of writing, Semitic languages, Ethiopic writing systems, and conduct of scholarship.

#### 1. Theory of writing

Although my concern here is not Afrocentrist theory per se, I note that within the Introduction, sections on a “Locational Theoretical Model” (pp. 12-18) give evidence of a schism, with AB defending the position of his teacher C. T. Keto against an assault by Samir Amin. This passage is sandwiched within the initial characterizations of writing systems, to which I now direct my attention, and I do not think that the obscurities of the following extracts can be attributed to Afrocentrism:

“Signs, symbols, syllographs, and writing systems are mechanisms of knowledge systems, which may be shown at various stages of knowledge creations, conceptions,

development and transmissions.” (pp. 1-2)

“What is writing? What is a writing system? Writing systems are components of knowledge systems. Writing is a means by which people record, objectify, and organize their activities and thoughts through polygraphs in order to facilitate and ensure existence, growth, nurturing, creativity and continuity from generation to generation. Writing could also be simply defined as a representation of speech and thoughts through various forms of sound graphs. A writing system then is a conventional and principled way of actualizing activities and thoughts, such as languages, natural science, theology, commerce and aesthetics, through polygraphs depicting polysounds and meanings.” (p. 2)

“Close and careful examination of writing systems ... reveals layers of knowledge beyond language and linguistics. It could be argued that the study of writing systems may help us to understand thought patterns or how people organize their thoughts. It may also enable us to probe the scope of human liberty that permits the creation of ways and means to improve and enhance ‘beingness’ and togetherness. Writing is a way of transforming our sensual perceptions into recognizable imagery. It is a means to describe phenomena.” (p. 3)

(“Syllograph” is AB’s word for what in English is called a syllabograph; he writes “syllabry” for “syllabary,” even injecting the spelling into quotes from other authors, e.g. p. 91.)

These quotations show at least that AB is not familiar with the literature on the history and nature of writing systems, and at best that his approach is mystical rather than scientific, and that he has not found the words to express this mystical approach in such a way that others can grasp his viewpoint. In the absence of explanations of many of the terms used, I am at a loss to understand how AB’s view fits into or contrasts with mainstream interpretations. The last quote says that a particular suggestion “could be argued”—but it is not argued anywhere in the book.

(Compare my definition of writing, published e.g. in *The World’s Writing Systems*, p. 3: “A system of more or less permanent marks used to represent an utterance in such a way that it can be recovered more or less exactly without the intervention of the utterer.”)

#### 2. Semitic languages

There is one major point where Afrocentric dogma seriously impacts AB’s investigation of Ethiopic writing,

and that is the insistence on total autonomy of African culture and civilization. From the moment the Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic) language came to the attention of European scholars, in the sixteenth century, there was no doubt of its similarity to Arabic, Hebrew, and the other languages that would later (1781) be dubbed "Semitic." Whatever sort of color prejudice there may have been in Europe at the time, it was never suggested that the language of "black" people was disqualified from relation to these other, better known languages.

The similarity is patently obvious to anyone with the most superficial familiarity with any of the languages concerned, and the data may be examined in any number of standard reference sources on Semitic comparative grammar (e.g. Moscati 1964, Bennett 1998). Yet AB writes (p. 49), "The Kibr Ngst [and other Ethiopian classics] classifies Ge'ez as a language of the house of Ham. ... Ge'ez sources are clear on that score. If Ge'ez is not a Semitic language, then much less so would be the other Ethiopian 'Semitic' languages like Tigr, Tigrinya, Amarinya, Harari, Gurag. The classification of Ge'ez as a Semitic language is a rather arbitrary and recent European one." (There is a close-quote quotation mark at this point, with a footnote referring to an "unpublished manuscript" by one Haile Habtu of the City College of New York. This ms. is heavily relied on by AB, but the numerous quotations give the impression that it cannot have been anything more than an undergraduate term paper, since they are wildly inaccurate.) I do not see that there is any conflict between Ge'ez being a Semitic language (which is a matter of an arbitrary label for a language family and simple observation of the characteristics of the languages assigned to that family) and a traditional label for it as "of the house of Ham," which is hardly the result of linguistic or philological examination.

Similarly, AB writes (p. 44) "Hamitic/Semitic divide, of course was nothing but a means to keep the Ethiopian people divided." This is complete nonsense. "Hamitic," like "Semitic," in linguistics is an arbitrary label, taken from the genealogies in Genesis 10 but implying nothing as to the historicity of the Biblical account of tribal relationships nor especially of its pertinence to the genetic relationships of languages (which are independent of ethnic and even cultural relations between peoples). "Hamitic" was applied to the set of language families that are known to be genetically related to the Semitic languages: Semitic is one of six branches of what is now called the Afroasiatic phylum of languages, as has been recognized since the second half of the nineteenth century; the other branches are Egyptian (an-

cient Egyptian and Coptic), Berber (spoken by millions in North Africa), Cushitic and Omotic (found in the Horn of Africa, from northern Sudan to Tanzania), and Chadic (mostly in and around northern Nigeria, the best known Chadic language being Hausa). The name "Hamitic" for the other five has been abandoned because the compound "Hamito-Semitic" incorrectly suggests that the other five are more closely related to each other than to Semitic. The Hamitic/Semitic divide, then, is nothing but a recognition that Ge'ez, Amharic, Tigrinya, and so on are much more distantly related to languages like Oromo and Somali than they are to Hebrew, Arabic, and so on.

### 3. Ethiopic script

AB makes a number of assertions about the history of the Ethiopic script that are less than accurate. In his zeal to deny any South Arabian influence on the beginnings of Ethiopian (Aksumite) civilization, he makes the claim that the monumental South Arabian script is a development from (an early form of?) the Ethiopic. At the same time, he claims that one of the "issues" of Ethiopic studies "for future scholarly investigation" is, "What is the significance of having more than one syllograph for some of the phonemes in the Ethiopic writing system?" (p. 148). This is not at all an issue requiring investigation; it is a simple fact that the script underlying the Ethiopic was devised for a language richer in consonants than Ge'ez; when some of the consonantal phonemes (laryngeals, sibilants) merged in Ge'ez, the letters for them were retained in the script even though the scribes could not know from the sound of a word which letter to write it with. Only the investigation of Semitic etymologies makes it possible for lexicographers to catalogue words with the historically appropriate spellings. If, conversely, the South Arabian script derived from the Ethiopic, there is no way the homophonous letters could have been consistently assigned to the etymologically appropriate sounds.

AB suggests that the ultimate origin of the Ethiopic script is the so-called "Proto-Sinaitic," which dates to some time in the first half of the second millennium BCE and was found on some votive objects near mines in the Sinai (in this he reflects mainstream scholarship of the history of the alphabet, although many scholars are no longer certain that the "decipherment" of the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions published by W. F. Albright is successful). He seems, though, to have the impression that but a single such inscription exists, and that it is on a sphinx (p. 70); in fact, about twenty inscriptions have been found, on a variety of items that seem to have been

dedicated to the Egyptian goddess Hathor. But, departing from the usual understanding (Daniels 1997) whereby Proto-Sinaitic represents the earliest attested state of the West Semitic script, from which or from something similar to which two descendants developed—one in the northern Semitic-speaking realm, which through Proto-Canaanite led to Phoenician, Aramaic, and eventually the Greek and Latin alphabets, and the other in the southern Semitic-speaking realm, which through the Old North Arabic inscriptions (Safaitic, Thamudic, Lihyanic)—led to the script of the South Arabian inscriptions, which was brought into the Aksumite region and developed into the Ge'ez script (others prefer to derive this from Thamudic, references and discussion in Bernal 1990:63), AB would have Ge'ez script somehow come directly from Proto-Sinaitic, somehow passing through the Nile Valley without leaving a trace. Somehow, moreover, it crossed with hieroglyphs and took on pictographic properties.

The one piece of evidence offered by AB in support of his notion of the Egypt-mediated background of Ethiopic script comes from letter-order. The northern Semitic scripts exhibit the familiar letter-order:

' b g x d h w z H T y k S l m V n Z s ' p c q r F G t

(where capital letters are an Internet expedient corresponding with a variety of diacritics; "V" and "F" represent the interdentials, equivalent to English *th* in "thy" and "thigh" respectively, which are found in Ugaritic, Arabic, and South Arabian but merged with other consonants in the other Semitic languages)

but the Ethiopic order is different:

h l H m S r s q b t x n ' k w ' z y d g T P c D f p

AB claims that the first and last letters in Ethiopic correspond to Egyptian words *ha* 'the beginning' and *peh* 'the end'; the shape of the first letter—like the roman letter U—is said to correspond both with the horns of a bull and with a man's arms upraised to heaven (p. 82). No explanation is given for the shape of the last letter—like the roman letter T. These two letters are also (p. 83) associated with hieroglyphs representing the forequarters and hindquarters of a lion respectively. In fact, according to the standard signlist in Gardiner's *Egyptian Grammar* (1957), the former (sign no. F4) represents the word *H't* 'front' and not the sound H (note, moreover, H, not h); the latter (sign no. F22) represents the word *pHwy* 'hindquarters, end' and hence the sound sequence pH (not p alone).

AB's only other suggestion for a connection with hi-

eroglyphs concerns the letter S—shaped like a rounded roman letter W—which he compares with the hieroglyph he describes as "a garden or farm ..., a sign representation of alternate rows of papyrus and lotus" (p. 83), presumably (there is no illustration) 'pool with lotus flowers' (sign no. M8), which represents both the word S 'lotus pool' and the sound sequence S. In isolation this one case is useless for showing dependence or relation of Ethiopic on Egyptian hieroglyphs. Instead, the shape of Ethiopic S relates to the shape of the corresponding letter in South Arabian in ways similar to those seen with the other letters of the two scripts.

AB offers no suggestions as to the order of the rest of the letters between the first and last.

The Ethiopic order does, though, find at least a partial explanation in the ancient order of the South Arabian letters, which was discovered about twenty years ago (summary in Ryckmans 1985) and is now known to have been in use well before 1000 BCE (Bordreuil and Pardee 1995):

h l H m q w C r b t S k n x c s f ' ' D g d G T z V y F Z

(where C stands for the consonant corresponding to Hebrew sin)

What has not yet been explained is the divergence between the ancient South Arabian and the modern Ethiopic letter-orders. Moreover, the letter p is unique to Ethiopic script; it corresponds to no letter in any other Semitic script (including Proto-Sinaitic, South Arabian, and Thamudic) and is placed at the end, as is usual for letters added to a standard inventory after its adoption.

AB is aware of the most striking difference between Ethiopic writing and all other West Semitic writing—the incorporation of explicit vowel indication into the letters, so that there are  $7 \times 26 = 182$  syllabograms (and not just 26 consonant letters) in the basic script—but his only allusion to the origin of this unusual practice is to pooh-pooh the theory that it represents influence from India (where vowels had been notated similarly for about six hundred years by the time Ethiopic script took on vowel notation—took it on along with Christianity). AB politicizes the suggestion: "The South Arabian paradigm, found difficult to defend, has been conveniently replaced by the Indian paradigm, for the purpose is to assert the non-African origin of the Ethiopic writing system. The presence of a close relationship between the Ethiopian and the Indian does not automatically mean the latter is a source to the former" (p. 19). If only the caution of the last sentence were observed in connection with other hyperdiffusion-

ist Afrocentric claims. Of course the suggestion of Indic inspiration for the Ethiopic vocalization system has no bearing on the South Arabian origin of the consonant shapes. Nor is it shameful for one civilization to make use of an innovation of another!

AB's discussion of the history of Ethiopic script does nothing to displace the accepted understanding that it is a development from a form of the South Arabian, or Sabeian, script. This accounts for the apparent duplication of letters for the same sound and for the idiosyncratic letter order. Any pictographic background of the letters (that may or may not have played a part in the origin of the script) has long since been obscured by millennia of gradual calligraphic alterations to their shapes.

#### 4. Conduct of scholarship

AB takes a number of pages to discuss a topic that seems to have little bearing on the history and principles of the Ethiopic writing system: the book of Enoch. In Western Christianity, this work (which has survived complete only in a Ge'ez translation; fragments in Aramaic were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and some portions are known in Greek as well) forms part of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament. In Ethiopia, the book is canonical.

With what sadly looks like paranoiac nativism, AB insists that Enoch must have been composed in Ge'ez, that it cannot have been translated from Greek or Aramaic. Without considering their evidence for the languages underlying the Ge'ez, he condemns the scholars who have discussed it: Knibb, Milik, Ullendorff, Charles. AB seems to think that it is necessary to have a complete original-language text in order to demonstrate that a book has been translated: "The fact that *The Ethiopian Book of Hnok* is found in very fragmentary forms in the Aramaic and Greek languages has raised the issue regarding its original language" (p. 112). This is utterly untrue; it was obvious when the book first became known in Europe (1773) that it was a translation, and the Greek fragments did not become known for another century, the Aramaic more than a half century later than that. "It is hard to agree with Knibb's suggestion of Aramaic being the original language of [Enoch] given the above statement" [that the DSS Aramaic fragments relate to just 196 of the 1,062 verses of the complete book] (p. 114). But the fact of a translation can be determined even in the absence of the slightest shred of original text.

AB makes his assertions without the least familiarity with the philological methods that demonstrate the

fact of translation. This one example from M. A. Knibb's ten-page discussion of the problem (*The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, vol. 2, pp. 37-46) may illustrate the thinking: "In 101:4 the Ethiopic text reads 'do you not see the kings of the ships [Ge'ez text given]?' where the context requires rather 'the sailors of the ships'. Halvy long ago suggested that the rendering 'kings' derived from a misreading of [Aramaic] *mlHy* as *mlky*, and this explanation was generally adopted" (p. 39). Knibb, like Edward Ullendorff, sees the Ge'ez as translated directly from Aramaic, with, apparently, consultation of a Greek version. Ullendorff gives this example (*Ethiopia and the Bible*, p. 61) showing a Greek background: "One need only think of the misreading in Enoch 22:2 where the context seems to require 'hollow places' and where the Ethiopic version is likely to have mistaken [Greek] *koloi* for *kalo* ([Ge'ez] *Sanayat*)."

R. H. Charles, writing nearly a century ago (thus long before the discovery of any Aramaic fragments of Enoch), discussed the relationship between the two main Greek fragments known to him and the Ethiopic: "Even the most superficial study makes it clear that E and Gg are more closely related than E and Gs or Gs and Gg. Indeed the evidence makes it clear that *E was translated from a MS. which was also the parent or ancestor of Gg. This follows from the fact that the same corruptions appear in GgE over against true readings in Gs where this exists*" (*The Book of Enoch*, p. xviii). He deduces that there was an "Original Greek Translation from the Semitic" from which were copied Gs and a lost copy; and from this lost copy were made both Gg and the Ethiopic version (p. xix). Much later in his introduction he discusses at length what the original Semitic language might have been (pp. lvii-lxx), concluding that Enoch chapters 6-36 were written in Aramaic and chapters 1-5, 37-104 were written in Hebrew.

AB reserves special scorn for J. T. Milik, who edited the Aramaic fragments of Enoch found among the Dead Sea Scrolls: "Milik, perhaps, has no parallel in his contempt of *The Ethiopic Book of Hnok*. Milik used unscholarly and unscientific methods in his long and quite dormant effort to establish the Aramaic fragments of Qumranic Enoch as the original source of the Book. Just a glance at his Aramaic-Greek Ethiopic Glossary clearly shows his brutal contempt and, perhaps, ignorance of Ge'ez. While the Aramaic and Greek words are written in their respective scripts, Milik used the Roman or English script for the Ethiopic words, as if the Ethiopic is devoid of its own script. This is actually the case throughout the text. To a lay reader, the absence of the Ethiopic writing

system may suggest that the Ethiopic is an oral language” (p. 116). This is the most specious claim of all. Had AB read even just a few pages of Milik’s book, he would have seen that the only non-Roman type used is Hebrew (for the Aramaic text itself), Greek, and (curiously) Coptic. More than twenty other languages are cited (see Milik’s indexes, pp. 408-26), and not one of them—not even Syriac or Arabic—is printed in its own non-Roman script.

From Milik’s conclusion (not quite accurately quoted) that “collation of [the Aramaic fragments] with existing witnesses of Enochic Books reveal the very secondary, periphrastic, and often confusing nature of the Ethiopic text. One should never trust any given detail of the version” (p. 116, quoting p. 88), AB draws the inferences that “Milik, who cannot even read Ge’ez, reached a conclusion that is more a reflection of his bias than a product of his unfermented experience. [The last quoted sentence] is nothing but a good example of hegemonic scholarship” (p. 117). Milik’s knowledge of Ge’ez is certainly not nonexistent, but as was brought out by his reviewers—Ullendorff and Knibb—twenty years before AB was writing, it was not adequate to studying the relation between the Aramaic fragments and the Ethiopic text; whereas they pay due respect to his “profound attainments in Aramaic” and conclude “If only he could have been persuaded to restrict the quite gratuitously wide compass of his disquisition! Had he given us less, it would have been infinitely more.”

AB thus rejects all modern scholarship not only on the history of Ethiopic writing, but also on the book of Enoch. In so doing, he impoverishes his own understanding of this document that is so vital for Ethiopian civilization.

#### 5. Ethiopian civilization

Several chapters of the book are devoted to subjects even more distant from the study of the history and principles of the script. The passages on philosophy and esthetics are quite interesting; the passages on numerology merit a comment. AB describes an equivalent to Hebrew gematria, where a numerical value is assigned to each character and calculations are made based on the letters with which a word or name is written. According to the diagram on p. 88, each simple letter (consonant plus a) represents a number (h = 1, l = 2, ..., p = 800) and the vowel variations represent multipliers (hu = 2, lu = 4, ..., pu = 1600, ..., ho = 7, lo = 14, ..., po = 5600); but in all the examples of numerological calculations, the vowel variations are not taken into account.

Not surprisingly, AB denies the obvious fact that the Ethiopic numerals are taken directly from the Greek numerals (i.e., the letters of the Greek alphabet). Instead, he attempts (p. 89f.) to match the numerals to Ethiopic letters (and actually gets one of the correspondences right: 3 < gamma = g). He shows 12 of the 19 different numerals, and assigns letters to 8 of them. Not only is no principle suggested for which letter is assigned to which numeral, and not only are four (or eleven) of the numerals unassigned, but the letter g is assigned to three of them, and h to two!

#### 6. Conclusion

I could have quoted many additional outrageous statements concerning facts of the history of Ethiopic writing and the conduct of scholarship by Europeans. The whole book is so confused that even if there were an Afrocentric case to be made for a revision of our understanding of the history of Ethiopia, it cannot be found here. If this is simply a transcript of AB’s Temple University dissertation—still more if it is a revision of it—it casts more of a pall than even Stephen Howe imagined on intellectual life in its Department of African American Studies.

#### Acknowledgments

I am grateful for assistance and comments to Martin Bernal, Gene Gragg, Grover Hudson, and M. O’Connor.

#### References

Albright, William Foxwell. 1966. *The Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions and Their Decipherment* (Harvard Theological Studies 22). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bennett, Patrick R. 1998. *Comparative Semitic Linguistics: A Manual*. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns.

Bernal, Martin. 1987-91. *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*. 2 vols. to date. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

—. 1990. *Cadmean Letters: The Transmission of the Alphabet to the Aegean and Further West before 1400 B.C.* Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns.

Bordreuil, Pierre, and Dennis Pardee. 1995 [pub. 1997]. “Un abcdaire du type sud-smitique decouvert en 1988 dans les fouilles archologiques francaises de Ras Shamra-Ougarit.” *Comptes Rendus de l’Academie des Inscriptions & Belles Lettres* 855-60.

Charles, R. H. 1912. *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch*.

Oxford: Clarendon.

Daniels, Peter T. 1997. "Scripts of Semitic Languages." In *The Semitic Languages*, edited by Robert Hetzron, 16-45. London: Routledge.

Daniels, Peter T., and William Bright, eds. 1996. *The World's Writing Systems*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gardiner, Alan H. 1957. *Egyptian Grammar*, 3d ed. Oxford: Griffith Institute.

Howe, Stephen. 1998. *Afrocentrism: Mythical Past and Imagined Homes*. London: Verso.

Knibb, Michael A., in consultation with Edward Ullendorff. 1978. *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch: A New Edition in the Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon.

Lefkowitz, Mary. 1996. *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History*. San Francisco: HarperCollins.

Milik, J. T., with the collaboration of Matthew Black.

1976. *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Moscatti, Sabatino, et al. 1964. *Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Porta Linguarum Orientalium N.S. 6). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Ryckmans, Jacques. 1985. "L'ordre alphabétique sud-sémitique et ses origines." In *Melanges linguistiques offerts Maxime Rodinson*, edited by Christian Robin, 343-59. Paris: Geuthner.

Ullendorff, Edward. 1968. *Ethiopia and the Bible* (Schweich Lectures 1967). Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy.

Ullendorff, Edward, and Michael Knibb. 1977. "Review of Milik 1976." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 40: 601-2.

Copyright (c) 1999 by H-Net, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for non-profit educational use if proper credit is given to the author and the list. For other permission, please contact H-Net@H-Net.MSU.EDU.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-africa>

**Citation:** Peter T. Daniels. Review of Bekerie, Ayele, *Ethiopic, An African Writing System: Its History and Principles*. H-Africa, H-Net Reviews. March, 1999.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=2854>

Copyright © 1999 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at [hbooks@mail.h-net.org](mailto:hbooks@mail.h-net.org).