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Preface

The present volume contains most of my articles on the Ethio-Semitic and Neo-Aramaic languages which were printed in various publications during the last forty years. No papers of mine on other subjects, such as Arabic language and culture, Amharic literature, Ethiopian society, or material for Hebrew teachers of adult immigrants from Ethiopia have been included in the book in order to preserve its purely linguistic character in dealing with the two branches of Semitic in which I specialized.

Since my early years as a student at the Hebrew University I was attracted by the living Ethio-Semitic languages and by the Neo-Aramaic dialects, mainly under the influence of my teacher and mentor Prof. H.-J. Polotsky, and because of the challenge of their complex structure and of the magnitude of scientific tasks still unfulfilled. It should be stressed that the term “peripheral Semitic”, used in some of my papers to designate the two branches of Ethio-Semitic and Neo-Aramaic, has absolutely no derogatory connotations as to their importance for Semitic and general linguistics and should be understood as a purely geographical appellation. This book is dedicated collectively to the two communities of speakers of Ethio-Semitic and Neo-Aramaic in Israel for having enriched its multilingual mosaic with their fascinating languages and dialects from the Semitic family.

The volume holds forty three articles and is divided into three parts: I. Peripheral Semitic. II. Ethio-Semitic. III. Neo-Aramaic. The first part treats subjects common to both branches. In the second part papers on Ethio-Semitic in general come first, then on Gə‘əz, Amharic and finally on Tigrinya. In the third part one article written in Hebrew has been included (pp. 490–506) knowing that many semitists are fluent in that language. The length of the articles varies considerably, according to whether they were intended for publication in periodicals, in commemorative volumes, or for presentation at scientific meetings. Most misprints have been corrected as discreetly as possible. A few articles had to be retyped, with the prior pagination indicated in square brackets.

I wish to express my gratitude to Prof. Issachar Una, head of the Academic Council of the Magnes Press for having initiated the publication of this volume; to Mr. Hay Sabar, director of the Magnes Press for providing all the necessary arrangements; to Mr Ram Goldberg for the editorial work.

Jerusalem, April 2007

Olga Kapeliuk