

3. Structural Sketch: Phonology

The variety of Berta (berθa) described here is that of Undu (U) with references to Mayu (M), Fadashi (F),²⁸ and other varieties where appropriate. The differences (at least among the first three varieties) are mainly surface phonological and lexical, and the grammatical structures seem not to be significantly different.

The systematic phonemes of Berta are as follows (at our present state of knowledge):

<u>Consonants</u>					
p'			k'		?
b	d	j	g		
ⁿ b	ⁿ d		^ŋ g		(M): Mayu only
	D				
f	θ	s	š		(U, F): Undu and Fadashi
		z (M)			
		s'			
m	n	ɲ (M)	ŋ (U, F)		
	l,r				
w		y			
				h	

There is no "plain" voiceless stop series. However, the ejectives /p', k'/ are weakly glottalized and often approach [p, k] in realization. The fricative /θ/ seems to fill the position of the missing t' in the stop series.

Mayu /j/, /ɲ/ correspond to Undu /g/, /ŋ/ respectively before palatal vowels; also Mayu has /z/ corresponding to Undu /s/ or /s'/ in some cases. However, Mayu retains ŋ in word-final -ŋV.

Undu /ŋ/ tends to be palatalized [ŋ^y] before palatal vowels.

Geminate consonants occur.

/f/ is often realized as bilabial [ɸ], and as voiced bilabial [β] intervocalically, and sometimes approaches [w].

The voiced allophone [ð] of /θ/ occurs intervocalically.

The purported phonemes /x/ and /ç/ reported by Cerulli, and /B/ and /G/ reported by Reidhead (for both, see Tucker and Bryan 1966: 348)

Monograph No. 5
Occasional Papers Series
Committee on Ethiopian Studies

The [Non-Semitic Languages of Ethiopia]

Edited by M. Lionel Bender
Acting Series Editor, John Hinnant

Please send two copies of your review to
the African Studies Center, MSU, E.
Lansing, Mi. 48824

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 76-42008

Printed in the United States of America

Published by the
African Studies Center
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824

In cooperation with
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, Illinois