The booklet contains 58 riddles of the Masa people who occupy today both riversides of the Logone river. They live on the right Cameroonian bank, and spread towards the Chari river on the Chadic bank. They speak the Masa language, viùn màsàna, known also as Massa, Masana and Banana: there are some 109,000 speakers in the Republic of Chad and 103,000 speakers in the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

In an introductory part (pp. 11-26) the author refers, in a concise way, to the language name, presents the geographical situation of the Masa people and that of their neighbours, and gives an outline of the Masa history. Few paragraphs deal with the Masa language and reflect a long-lasting discussion on its classification as belonging to a group of languages in the Biu-Mandara branch or constituting a separate branch of the Chadic languages. Sergio Baldi proposes a classification of the northern sub-group of the Masa languages but the question of their status on a higher level seems to remain unsettled. In the further part of the introduction the reader will find some superficial information on the syllabic structure, vowels, consonants and tons of Masa.

The riddles occupy an important place in African oral literature. This is also the case of Masa, although one is rather surprised when learning that in this language there is no special word designating this literary genre: the riddles are recognised by some initial formulae. All the riddles presented in the booklet have been gathered by the author in Cameroon. He was assisted by a number of native speakers: their names and professions are indicated on p. 20f. but the dates of interviews are not given. One can guess that it was in 2005: this date is mentioned in avant-propos on p. 9. The introductory part closes with an exhaustive bibliography (pp. 21-26).

The essential part of the work contains 59 riddles recorded in Yagoua. The Masa version of each riddle is followed by an interlinear word-to-word translation into French and then by its literary version. The proverbs which are deeply plunged in the Masa meta-
phoric thought are given cultural explications. Peculiarities of the Masa environment, the local species of flora and fauna, customs and social institution of the people are explained in the footnotes. They are both the author’s observations as well as knowledge coming form the earlier works on Masa.

The booklet is provided with an index of key-words (p. 72-74), a Masa-French index (p. 75-80), a French-Masa index (p. 81-86), and an index of scientific names for plants and animals (p. 87). In an easy way it allows the reader to make acquaintance with the elements of Masa culture and their life style.

Stanisław Piłaszewicz


The *Pount* is a new yearly periodical specializing in humanities issued in France in cooperation with l’Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (INALCO) which focuses on the cultures of the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia) and Southern Arabia (Oman, Yemen). It is a seemingly new publication; however, its publishers Les Éthiopisants Associés claim continuity with the periodical of the same title founded by Robert Ferry which circulated in Djibouti in 1966-1986. Les Éthiopisants Associés itself is a non-profit association founded in 1992 in Debre Markos, Ethiopia, to promote the scientific knowledge of the countries situated in the Red Sea basin. It encourages publications in the field of human science such as archeology, art, biography, ethnology, geography, history, linguistics, literature, philology, religion and sociology. Apart from the *Pount* it publishes a gazette *La Lorgnette du Bab el-Mandeb* where one can find news about interesting books and other publications that focus on this part of the world.

The first issue of the *Pount* appeared in 2007 and was fully dedicated to the history of Djibouti and in particular that of Robert Ferry. In the second issue bearing the intriguing title “Eros en mer Rouge” all articles concern the subject of love, affection and sexuality in the Red Sea basin seen from various perspectives.