

To make a difference, let us learn a reformed Tigriyna

Eritrea: Call Change Ringing and to adapt yourself to the change quickly is a grace

It is imperative to crash the old habits, accept change and march towards progress. To make this happen we must let change drops rain on our aged mindsets founded on the principles of [Hamitic](#) and [Semitic](#) tribes that gave rise to [Habesha](#). This history stretches back for thousands of years that makes not easy to touch its peg. Nevertheless, the foundation of its history, culture, tradition, custom, etc. that have never passed through any sieve, are still living and playing in shaping our behaviours and trends.

A sieve is a tool used to separate something from something. Thanks to this tool we always drink the desired tea, *swwa* (local drink), etc. This helps us to think about our culture and our tradition that are devoid of any old or modern sieve that removes negative and strengthens positive effects. So, no wonder when we are now with female genital cutting tradition, traditional authoritarian regimes, egoism (ፍቅር ምእንቲ ባዕሊ), lack of developing the habit of honesty ...

Here it must be highlighted that our values (generosity, heroism, perseverance, pity, belief, traditional democracy, ...), what we stand for, are fading away owing to all mentioned and unmentioned unacceptable behaviours.

The Semitics brought civilization with them and they built port city (like Adulis), roads, towns (like Debarwa, Aksum ...), dams (like of Qohaito), temples (like of Metera, Aksum), etc. And they extended their activities at sea. And there is a reason to believe that they were notable ship builders.) Today we can find sites that shine of this glory. Of this we are always proud and thank to this we can say that we are different from others.

And when we think of manuscripts, here is what Budge says:

“Abyssinia has in fact no native literature, and the literature it has consists of works composed by Semites and Greeks and of adaptations and translations made by Syrians and Arabs of books which were first written in some Indian languages and Pehlevi. In spite of Dillmann’s assertion that the Abyssinians invented the system of vowel signs which they added to the Sabaean alphabet, the statement still remains to be proved.” (1)

And when we think about Geez sentence structure it is s + v + o: that is, subject + verb + object.
e.g.

ወረደ: ታሕተ: ወተቆልቆለ

He went down and rushed

Thanks to the adapted sentence structure, geez society’s main literature work, the translation process from Greek into Geez, was direct, smooth and successful. In addition to Holly books, there were also other subjects from different sources but to a lesser extent, for example lawbook: The Law of kings/አቲ ፍትሐ ንገስቲ from Arabic into Geez.

And the three living sister’s languages, Amharic, Tigryna and Tigre are well connected to Semitic through their mother Geez. They are both cultural legacy. According several authors Tigre and Tigriyna are not languages (like Geez, Latin, English ...) but language forms called dialects that is, according to my study of Tigriyna Tongue, **they cannot stand by themselves**. For example, to say at least, they are without a **standardized** grammar or spelling. This is discussed below.

Of this phenomenon, focusing on Tigriyna, Wallis Budge says "It seems to have come into being in the 15th century, and through used in letters and other documents is not, properly speaking, **a literary language**" (2). And C. Conti Rossini adds "il tigrino ha una costruzione contorta (The Tigriyna has a contorted construction እቲ ትግርይና አልለዎ እቲ ቀናን ወይ ቁናን ህንጻ)" (3).

But my work, a reformed Modern Tigriyna Dictionary, of course by introducing new sentence structure s + v + o order as Geez, puts Tigriyna in better position. For me it is a fortune to see Tigriyna reinforced with the rules of grammar. With this change we can translate simple English book into Tigriyna effectively. Here examples follow of how English and Tigriyna infinitives match to form a correct sentence.

All with infinitive forms

To learn to read and to write
ተማህረ (መሀረ) ናብ እንበብ እውን ናብ ጸሐፊ.

let + verb

Let mi go! ግደፈ/ ሐደገ/ፈንገወ/ ለቐቐ + ቫርብ
Let him write! ግደፎ/ ሕደገ/ ፈንገወ/ ለቐቐ ጸሐፊ!

This is a breaking news for Tigriyna literature and thanks to this, Tigriyna seems in its resurrection.

We said that the Semitics introduced civilization, but lacked an essential thing: namely, democracy. But the worst was that they were very far away from adapting the native democracy of Baria and Kunma. This is also true with latecomers Rashida in 1840. This makes you understand that nothing is changed, in terms of politics, Saudi Arabia is with its autocracy and Cunama and Baria are with their traditional democracy. We are learning that there is a climate change but the politics of Red Sea no. I wonder why democracy never prevails!

Semitic non-democratic method is remembered today in Eritrea by I Isaias' dictatorial regime. But in modern Ethiopia it is downgraded. The downgrading process is young but without any doubt Semitic autocracy is marching towards extinction.

In addition to the unchanged Semitic Eritrean politics, there is also this. Semitic land policy is not closed yet because, as an example, the ጉልቲ (ጉልለቲ) in Akkeleguzai and ርሱቲ (ተረሱተ) in Seraye possessions are still active. And they will be there as long as the Semitic politics is there.

We know that Tigre and Tigriyna families are consisted of the union of the Hamitic and Semitic races. And their cultures, traditions, customs, etc. are embedded in this union. But we already knew that native democracy was not adapted. Also, native a matriarchal society, family, or system (the rule of mother እታ ጉይትንነት ናይ አድደ) had the same sort. In other words, Tigre and Tigriyna families followed patriarchal (the rule of father እታ ጉይትንነት ናይ አብቦ) system of Semitic and they are still with it. But for sure Cunama are still holding a matriarchal family.

These two systems have different politics. To know how the differences, play in minds of communities, let take this example. In family making decision, for Tigre or Tigriyna young guy virginity comes first, then family. But for a Cunama young guy first comes family. For this reason, he is happy to marry a pregnant woman not by himself because the pregnancy assures him that the woman is not sterile.

Does language determine thought? እታ ቋንቋ ትውስስን እቲ ሐሳብ?

"Many psychologists believe that language dictates the way we think. Others say that it actually determines our ideas themselves - not only how we think but what we think."

"በዙላት psicologi ይከምኑ ዝ እታ ቋንቋ (መልሐስ ወይ ልሳን) dictates ኣቲ ናትና ስርዓት ናይ ሐሰቢ ካልኣት ይብሉ ዝ ርግጽ ትውስን እተን ናታን ኢዲኦ idee ባዕለን - ኣይኮንን በይኑ ከመይ ንሐሰብ ግን ከዓ እንታይ ንሐሰብ ".

If this is true, a Tigriyna man has to account with his way of thinking and seeing. He must realize that things do not stand by the favor of his interest. Tigriyna is established not for the use of literature but for the use of agriculture. I believe that the tongue can go well with local peasant who depends on the plot of his land. But this poor guy has opened a school for his child to make a difference in thinking.

Here is an example to learn.

"ፕሬዚዳንት ኢሳይያስ፡ ናብ መራሕቲ ኣባል ሃገራት ባይቶ ጸጥታ መልእኽቲ ሰዲዩ" (4)

President sent a letter to UN security council
ፕሬዚዳንት ኢሳያስ ለኢኹ ሐንቲ ደብዳቤ ናብ UN ርግጽንነት (ኣረግገጸ) ምኽሪ

"ንነዊሕ እዎን ናይ ጸምዶ ስትራተጂ "Engagement strategy" ሒዝና ኢና ክንሰርሕ ጸኒሕና።" (5)

We were working with X strategy since ... up to know
ንሕና ነበርና ንሰርሕ ምስ X ስትራተጂ ካብ ኣቲ ... ናብ ሕጅጂ

Here I am not to say or to tell that Isayas and his journal do not have the ability to build a scientific sentence in Tigriyna because as we know Tigriyna literature is devoid of grammar rule. If we took a close look at Isayas build sentence it ends with 4 verb forms and 4 points [ሒዝና ኢና ክንሰርሕ ጸኒሕና።]. Here we find no rule grammar. It is just one of non-scientific sentences for not to call it ጥጥቕ (ጠጠቕ) ናይ ቃላት. This proves that what C. Conti Rossini said about Tigriyan, that it has a contorted construction, is right without any shadow of doubt.

We must not make a mistake. Conti Rossini remarks concerns native Tigriyna tongue that was before Isayas Efewerki comes to power. The rise of this guy to power has created more or less Tigriyna dialytic that serves as the language of his rule. So, we have two Tigriyna native and not languages. All two are deprived of the grammar rule but the second is the worst in all senses. I strongly believe that the second Tigriyna fits well to the mind of the Eritrean dictator who has no clue of native Tigriyna parts of speech e.g. Tigriyna infinitives, part participles. adverbs, modal verbs ...

Few examples that shed some light on how Isaias Efewerqi second Tigriyna is formed:

- a) By changing the true Tigriyna word meaning: e.g.
መስፍን prince; prince's era *ዘመን መሳፍንቲ*, but according to the doctrine of Isayas lead group: መስፍን **menas feudal**, መስፍንንነት **feudalism**
ኩናት concrete word, means "spear" it synonyms are ሕልላስ, ጭማራ, ... but according to the mentioned group it means **war**
ጭሆ goatskin leather up to keep the money, cereals, eggs ... (*pl.ለቕቱ*) means **cell**
- b) By words formed from English wrong translation, for example we learned the translation of security is ጸጥታ instead of ርግጽንነት (ኣረግገጸ); of defence ምክልኻል (ክልከለ to prohibit) instead of ሕልቆ (ሐልለቐ to defend); of sanction እገዳ instead of ሳንክቶን sanction ወይ ሳንዝዮን sanzione ወይ ውስሳኔ (ሳንዝዮናሪ sanzionare, to sanction)
- c) Good example of how the dictator matches English abstract word to Tigrizna concrete word: the translation of the Tigriyna word መጀምመርያ or መጀምመርታ (ጀምመረ to begin or to start) into English is "principle". And when we compose a sentence with it reads:

አብ መጀምመርያ, ነቡሩ ናይ ስምምምቦ ዝ ሓደ ትውልዲ ኣይይከእል? ወሰደ እታ ረስፖንሲቢሊታ ናይ ሓንቲ ሀገር ብዘይካ ትምህርቲ. In principle, they were agreed that a generation cannot take responsibility of a nation without education.

But the dictionary of our dictator teaches that *principle* = መትከል (ተኸለ) (means a peg and its synonyms is ሸኸል (ሸኸለ)). As we see it, metkel/መትከል is a concrete word while "principle" not. But it makes no difference for the mind of the Eritrean dictator.

d) By list of translation mistakes of international organizations, agencies, institutions ... names: e.g. African Organization (now African Unity) ውድብ ኣፍሪቃ instead of ኣፍሪቃዊ ኣርጋኒዛትዮን ወይ ኣርጋኒዘዛዝዮን (ግን ሕጅጂ ኣፍሪቃዊ ሕብረት); Central Intelligence Agency, the ruler taught us to say መርበብ ስለላ but the real translation of CIA into Tigriyna is ማእኸል Intelligence ገባሪ ወይ ኣገንዘያ (Intelligence = the collection of information of military or political value)

In process of forming the new language Isaias always throws spears against the native Tigriyna. Here is an example.

"ማይንድ ሰት ናይ ስርዓት ሃይለስላሴ ከመይ ነይሩ? እንታይ ነይሩ? እንታይ ኣይገበረን? ድሕሪኡ ስርዓት መንግስቱ መጸኢ።" (6)

I guess the intention of the dictator is to say how was (እንታይ ነቡሩ) and what did (እንታይ ገቡሩ)?

We are with "to be, to do English and ነቢ ኣውን ገበረ Tigriyna infinitives. In this case there is clear abuse of words. The words ነቢ ኣውን ገበረ are misrepresented. When it happens like this we must stand up against the abuse to defend our cultural legacy for our common benefits. And to be fair, almost all Tigriyna writers do not have a different approach to that of the Eritrean dictator. It's something unacceptable.

Dear reader, if it is true that a knowledge is a power, without a doubt Tigriyan boy is without it because he is not yet able to write a scientific sentence in his mother tongue. The article attempts to go not only to know and evaluate what kind of knowledge the Tigriyna boy has but also suggest the way out. So, it is time to stand up against a thing that makes the people weak and dependent.

Eyob Ghebreziabhier Bein
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Note

- (1) Sir E.A. Wallis Budge, A History of Ethiopia Nubia And Abyssinia, vol. II, Netherlands, 1970, p. 562]
- (2) [Sir E.A. Wallis Budge, A History of Ethiopia Nubia And Abyssinia, vol. II, Netherlands, 1970, p. 578.]
- (3) C. Conti Rossini, in introduzione di libro di P. Mauro Da Leonessa, "Grammatica Analatica Della Lingua Tigray", Roma, 1928, p. XI.
- (4) መበል 26 ዓመት ቁ.238 ሰሉስ 6 ሰነ 2017 ገጻት 12 ዋጋ 2.00 ናቕፋ.
- (5) "ቃለ-መጠይቕ ፕረዚደንት ኢሳይያስ ኣፈወርቂ ...", ሓዳስ ኤርትራ 23 ግንቦት 2017 - ገጽ 3 - ገጽ 4 መበል 26 ዓመት ቁ.226
- (6) "ቃለ-መጠይቕ ፕረዚደንት ኢሳይያስ ኣፈወርቂ ..." ሓዳስ ኤርትራ 24 ግንቦት 2017 - ገጽ 3 መበል 26 ዓመት ቁ.227, 5th column, line 27]