

HARARI IDIOMS *)

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RIASSUNTO. — Elenco di espressioni idiomatiche harari, messe a confronto con quelle dell'amarico, del galla e dell'arabo, lingue con le quali lo harari è a contatto.

RÉSUMÉ. — Une liste d'expressions idiomaticques en harari, comparée avec les expressions idiomaticques en amharique, galla, et arabe, langues avec lesquelles le harari est en contact.

SUMMARY — A list of Harari idioms compared with the idioms of Amharic Galla, and Arabic, languages with which Harari is in contact.

Like any other language Harari has a certain number of idioms that give us an insight into the culture of the country. Some of these idioms undoubtedly originate from Harari itself while others may be either calques or free renderings from languages with which Harari is in contact, namely Galla, Amharic and Arabic. In the investigation of the idioms I was greatly helped by my colleagues Maḥmud Ghūl for Palestinian Arabic, Harun Ḥaddād for Egyptian Arabic, and by Abdurrahman Muzayyin, a student at the University of California, for Galla. I wish to express to them my sincere thanks for their help.

The idioms are presented in the alphabetic order of English.

The abbreviations are: Amh. = Amharic, Ar. = Arabic, Eg. = Egyptian Arabic, Ga. = Galla, Pal. = Palestinian Arabic.

'angry': 'be very angry' *afār qābqāb āša*, lit. 'pour (or shake) the earth'; cf. Ga. *laḡa sosose* 'he was very angry', lit. 'he shook the earth'.

'argument': 'argument back and forth' *aḡadā ko'ōt*, lit. 'one and two'; cf. Amh. *andə hulāt tābabalu* 'they argued back and forth', lit. 'they spoke to one another one and two'.

'bankrupt': 'be bankrupt' *tāsa māḡaḡa*, lit. 'he hit the tin container'. When the spices such as pepper and flour are exhausted one hits the tin container to detach from it whatever remains; cf. perhaps Ar. *'alā l-ḡadīdi* 'he is on the iron'.

*) Per esigenze di uniformità grafica, nelle parole harari il segno *x* del manoscritto è stato sostituito da *ḡ* (N. d. R.).

'beg': 'beg the favor of a person' *usu' fit-be qānāna*, lit. 'stand before a person'.

'bill': 'foot the bill' *čən fātaha*, lit. 'untie the belt that is around the waist'; cf. Eg. *eftah hezāmak* 'open your belt'.

'butterfly': *aḥmāra kitāb*, lit. 'the book of the Amhara'.

'clean': 'person who tries to be always clean in an exaggerated way' *zimbi tāhir*, lit. 'a clean fly'.

'comfortably': 'live comfortably' *šira-be šikiḥ bāya*, lit. 'sit in a valley abundant in water'; cf. Ar. 'amra'a *wādīk* 'may you enjoy prosperity', lit. 'may your valley be fertile'.

'constipation': *kārsi dirqāt*, lit. 'the dryness of the stomach'; cf. Amh. *hode dārraqā* 'I am constipated', lit. 'my stomach is dry'; Ga. *garan nāgoggoge*, lit. 'my stomach is dry'; Eg. *baṭnu našfa*, lit. 'his stomach is dry'.

'cruel': *kārsi ūn*, lit. 'stomach (like) a stone'; cf. Ga. *gara ḡabata* 'he is cruel', lit. 'his stomach is hard'; Eg. 'albu *zayy-el-ḡagar* 'he is cruel', lit. 'his stomach is like a stone'.

'daring': 'be very daring so as to disregard public opinion' *qār-wā qānāwa āča*, lit. 'grow horn and tail'; cf. Amh. *čera awāṭṭa* 'he disregards public opinion', lit. 'he grew a tail'; Pal. *imṭalli' qrūn* 'who lost sense of shame', lit. 'who shows the horns'.

'dirty': *miy zāfāḡubo*, lit. 'one on whom one does not use up all the water'; cf. Eg. *mayyet zemzem matnaḍḍafūs* 'the water of Zemzem does not clean him'.

'evil spirit': 'be affected by an evil spirit' *dūf agāñew*, lit. 'the wind got him'; cf. Ga. *hawa de* 'he became mad', lit. 'the wind hit him'; Pal. *mansūm* 'mad', lit. 'hit by the wind'. See also 'misfortune'.

'fast': 'pretend to fast' *dēra sōman āša*, lit. 'make the fast of the storage room' (eating there so that no one can see him); cf. Eg. *šām fel-mešanna* 'he pretended to fast', lit. 'he fasted in the *mešanna*' (that is, the circular container of wood in which the bread is kept).

'food': *aḡa iḡi*, lit. 'mouth and hand' that is to say, something that one takes with the hand and puts it into the mouth.

'fool': 'let him make a fool of himself' *ūf ṭallāqa āša*, lit. 'let him plunge with his nose'.

'friends': 'make friends' *ḡarāq ḡāza'a*, lit. 'own an arm'; see also 'poor, relatives'.

'go away': *ḡači ūr*, lit. 'show the back'; cf. Eg. *warrīna 'aḡāk* 'go away', lit. 'show us your back!'

'gossip': 'who gossips' *fässow zäqättri*, lit. 'who does not tie his fart'; cf. Pal. *mā bisturš fassuh* 'he gossips', lit. 'he does not hide his fart'.

'hear': 'he pretends not to hear' *uzun-zō-be kassa ārāda*, lit. 'he put fat into his ear'.

'insincere and superficial conversation': *angät-be la'ay hāsāwa*, lit. 'conversation above the neck'; cf. Amh. *kangät bälāy* 'insincere, superficial', lit. 'above the neck' (and not with the heart).

'insult': *aḥ-be zäyūčō*, lit. 'a thing that one does not bring out from the mouth'.

'last child born to a family': *kärsi mälqälāq*, lit. 'the rinsing of the stomach'; cf. Ga. *gara dugūgā* 'the last child', lit. 'the cleanser of the stomach'; Eg. 'āḥir el-an'ūd *yinaddaḥ* 'the last child', lit. 'the last grape cleans'.

'laugh': 'a person who always laughs' *sāsa rāḥīs*, lit. 'cheap of teeth' (he shows them to everybody).

'lazy': *imäyläbso zitfäḡa*, lit. 'that which is destroyed before one puts it on', that is, he who is tired before working.

'lazy': *gädäb gäddāla*, lit. 'he who kills the *gädäb*', that is 'the raised ground serving to keep the water around the plantation'. Indeed, the lazy person always leans against the *gädäb* instead of working and thus destroys it.

'lazy': 'be lazy and inactive' *gilib-be kärsi āša*, lit. 'conceive on the knees', which makes the knees heavy and the person does not work; see also 'strong'.

'luck': 'who brings good luck' *harda ruṭṭa*, lit. 'of a wet (fresh) footprint'; see the following.

'luck': 'who brings bad luck' *harda näčih*, lit. 'of a white (dry) footprint'; see the preceding. I did not find any parallel in the other languages for the footprint connected with luck, a fresh footprint expressing good luck and a dry footprint expressing bad luck.

'mad': 'be mad' *ruhā qälbi ḥāna*, lit. 'be soul and heart'.

'mature man': *mērāq zōḥaṭa*, lit. 'who swallowed his spittle'; cf. Amh. *mēraqun waṭā* 'he is mature', lit. 'he swallowed his spittle'; Eg. *äbla' ri'ak*, lit. 'swallow your spittle'.

'meat': *sən dāwwa*, lit. 'medicine of the tooth', that is, meat makes the teeth strong and is, therefore, considered as medicine.

'merciless': *kūd-zō-be qinčib zibäqāla-bew*, lit. 'a person on whose liver (or 'from whose liver') cactus grows'.

'messenger': *qäčīn igir*, lit. 'slender foot', that is, swift.

'messenger': 'messenger who does not come back or who does not deliver his message' *ün luḥ*, lit. 'messenger of stone'.

' miser ': *qōço gir dām zäywiṭa*, lit. ' even if one cuts him blood does not come out ' ; cf. Eg. *dammu yet'ete' bäsasūr* ' miser ', lit. ' his blood is cut with a chopper ' .

' misfortune ': *qäčīn dūf*, lit. ' thin (light) wind ' ; see ' evil spirit ' above.

' naive ': *duffun qulu*, lit. ' a whole gourd ', that is, you cannot put anything into a whole gourd that has no opening; cf. Amh. *daffan qal* ' naive ', lit. ' a whole gourd ' ; Pal. *rāsuh baṭṭiḥa* ' he is naive ', lit. ' his head is a watermelon ' .

' naked ': *āyzo zolädta-kut-be*, lit. ' the state in which his mother bore him ' ; cf. Amh. *ənnatu əndä wällädäččəw* ' naked ', lit. ' the state in which his mother bore him ' ; Eg. *zayyā ma weldetu ummu*, same meaning.

' night butterfly ': *maḥtūt hirāt*, lit. ' evening meal of the lamp ' that is, the night butterfly flies toward the light and is destroyed by it; cf. Amh. *yäsət ərat* ' night butterfly ' lit. ' the evening meal of the lamp ' ; Gal. *irbata ibas* ' night butterfly ', lit. ' the evening meal of the light ' .

' opportunist ': *dulla häğ*, lit. ' who looks at the whip ' (to avoid the blow).

' poor ': ' he is poor ' *ḥarāq-zo ḥaçir inta*, lit. ' his arm is short ' ; cf. Amh. *əğu attärä* ' he is poor ', lit. ' his hand is short ' ; Pal. *īdu qašira*, Eg. *īdu 'oşayyara* ' he is poor, he is incapable ', lit. ' his hand is short ' .

' proud ': ' be proud ' *angät aqānāna*, lit. ' erect the neck ' .

' relatives ': ' who has no relatives ' *ḥarāq zälēla*, lit. ' who has no arm ' ; cf. Ar. *dirā* ' relative, supporter ', lit. ' arm ' (is used in a war cry). See also ' friend, poor ' .

' restriction ': ' who is without restriction ' *gufur wāçara*, lit. ' a released donkey ' ; cf. Eg. *ḥomār məbartā* ' who does what he wants ', lit. ' a galloping donkey , a donkey going around free and doing whatever he wants ' .

' rich ': ' become rich ' *ūf lähada*, lit. ' hold the nose ' (out of pride).

' roam ': ' who roams about aimlessly ' *dāw qānāwa*, lit. ' the tail of a goat ', the goat roaming around; also *ḥarda-zow zihafäso*, lit. ' a person whose footprints are taken away ', that is, you cannot follow his footprints since he roams about everywhere.

' rude ': *in çigär-zo zišēläda*, lit. ' who shaved his eyelashes ', that is, something that is usually not done; cf. Ga. *ñara haddäte* ' he is rude ', lit. ' he shaved his eyelashes ' ; Eg. *mäntūf* ' rude ', lit. ' who plucked his eyelashes ' .

' rude ': *zälärō'o qulu* lit. ' a gourd that one did not prepare for usage by rinsing it with water or with pebbles ' ; cf. Aymellel *yalgabbärä šäkla* ' rude ', lit. ' a clay pot that one did not prepare for usage ' .

'shrewd': 'be shrewd and do impossible things' *mī qala*, lit. 'roast water', something that is impossible to do, but apparently a shrewd person can do it.

'split hair': *tumtum-be çiqāy āça*, lit. 'take out the eggs of a louse from the armband'; the eggs of the louse are, of course, very small, and they cannot be removed from the armband that is made of many pieces.

'strong but lazy': *afār wānāg*, lit. 'a lion made of earth'. This idiom, however, means perhaps 'who has the appearance of a strong man, but who in reality is weak'.

'talkative': *dāw arrāt zōla'a*, lit. 'who ate the tongue of the goat'; cf. Amh. *yäfəyyäl məlas yäbälla* 'talkative', lit. 'who ate the tongue of the goat'. Since the goat bleats incessantly, the talkative person is described as having eaten the tongue of the goat.

'talkative': *zälattāy-zow zinädälo*, lit. 'he who made a hole outside of the (appropriate) place', that is, instead of using only his mouth he seems to have holes everywhere through which he speaks; cf. Pal. *biħki min foq umin taħt* 'he speaks from above and behind'.

'talkativeness': *säbah arrāt*, lit. 'fat tongue'.

'time': 'a very short time' *in-gäläbä käfät*, lit. 'the closing and the opening of the eye'; cf. Pal. *gammid 'aynak wüftaħha* 'a very short time', lit. 'close your eye and open it'.

'tongue': 'who has a bad tongue' *arrāt mäšaħ*, lit. 'a tongue (like) a knife'; cf. Eg. *lisānu zayyes-sekkīn* (or *zayyel-mūs*) 'who has a bad tongue', lit. 'his tongue is like a knife (or a razor)'; Pal. *lisānu zayyi l-maqaşş* 'he has a bad tongue', lit. 'his tongue is like a knife'.

'troublesome': *inā uzun zälēla*, lit. 'who has no eyes nor ears', that is, he pays no attention to anyone as if he did not have eyes nor ears; cf. Ga. *gurra hinqabu* 'wild, heedless', lit. 'he has no ear'.

'understand': 'does he understand the language we are talking?' *gār yäkü'inäl*, lit. 'does the house leak?'; cf. Ga. *manni ura qaba*, same meaning.

'voracious': *gān gälbət*, lit. 'who turns the jar upside down'.

'wealth': 'a person who obtains his wealth illegally' *yäwem al-ħamīs yōm zägāñew*, lit. 'that what he obtained on Thursday'. This refers to the Italian invasion of Harar on a Thursday when people started to loot.

'whirlwind': *ğin düf*, lit. 'wind of spirit'; cf. Eg. *rīħ el-gənn* 'strong wind', lit. 'wind of spirit'; Pal. *zoba'at iblīs*, same meaning.