

**Research Note**

# Documentation of the Masqän Language (1): A Folktale\*

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## Abstract

I videotaped dialogues between two native speakers of Masqän. Among them was a folktale about baboons and bees. This paper is to publish the content of the folktale with some linguistic notes and remarks. Video clips of the original dialogue will be available from the website of the Japan Association for Ethiopian Linguistics.

## 1 Preface

As a part of my field surveys of the Masqän language, I videotaped dialogues between two native speakers of Masqän (AH and MA) in December 2015 at Masqän Heritage Center in Butajira. Among them was a folktale about baboons and bees. This paper is to publish the content of the folktale with some linguistic notes and remarks as a modest contribution to the documentation of the language<sup>1</sup>. For overall linguistic traits of Gurage languages including Masqän, their position in Ethiosemitic languages and preceding literature on them, see Fekede (2013) and Meyer (2011).

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Special characters used for transcription in this paper: ə [ə], ä [ɐ], ñ [ɲ], š [ʃ], ž [ʒ], č [tʃ], ģ [dʒ], x [x], q [kʰ] (ejective k), ṭ [tʰ] (ejective t), č̣ [tʃʰ] (ejective tʃ), w [w] (labialization), ' [j] (palatalization).

Abbreviations used in this paper: -& = enclitic conjunction; 1 = first person; 2 = second person; 3 = third person; acc. = accusative; dat. = dative; def. = definite; impf. = imperfect;imps. = impersonal; impv. = imperative; juss. = jussive; m = masculine; neg. = negation; p = plural; pf. = perfective; s = singular.

<sup>1</sup> Alemayehu (2011) is a more important contribution to documentation of the Masqän language.

## 2 Text of the Folktale

In the original dialogue, AH asked MA to tell a story, and MA told a story while AH was listening and giving feedback. In this paper, I extracted the story itself, which has been divided into 42 blocks for the ease of reference. Each block consists of the transcription (first line), glosses (second line) and translation (third line). Video clips of the original dialogue will be available from the website of the Japan Association for Ethiopian Linguistics.

- (1) *b-att-gäñ*      *yänäbäro*      *säb*  
 in-one-country   live(impf.3mp)      man  
 In a country lived men.
- (2) *sost*      *säbočč*      *banno*  
 three      men      be(pf.3mp)  
 They were three men.
- (3) *əqqub*<sup>2</sup>    *nəbranä*      *baro*      *əqqub*      *yəsättoye*<sup>3</sup>  
 feast      eat(juss.1p)    say(pf.3mp)    feast      drinking  
 They said, “Let us have feasts, feasts (and) drinking.”
- (4) *əqqub*    *yəsättoye*      *yəsmammo*      *zang’äram*    *wa*    *nəb*  
 feast      drinking      agree(impf.3mp)    baboon-&    and    bee  
 Baboons and bees agreed (to have) feasts (and) drinking.
- (5) *əqqub*    *nəsättenä*      *nəbranä*      *baro*  
 feast      drink(juss.1p)    eat(juss.1p)    say(pf.3mp)  
 “Let us drink and eat feasts,” they said.
- (6) *bä-märet*    *bä-märet*    *əqqub*    *yəsätw-i*      *baro*  
 in-month    in-month    feast    drink(impf.imps.)-3ms(acc.)      say(pf.3mp)  
 “One drinks a feast monthly,” they said.
- (7) *bä-m<sup>w</sup>a*      *yəsätw-i*      *baro*  
 with-whom      drink(impf.imps.)-3ms(acc.)      say(pf.3mp)  
 “With whom should one start (lit. drink) it,” they said.

<sup>2</sup> *əqqub* is Gurage style “cooperative banking in which each member gets his sharer by drawing lots” (Leslau 1979: 761). Here it is used in the sense of feast by turn in which each member prepares the feast by rotation. In the glosses and translation of this paper, it is simply given as “feast”.

<sup>3</sup> -ye turns impfect 3ms forms into a gerund.

- (8) *nəb əyyə nədäggəs barä-m deggäsä*  
 bee me prepare(juss.1p) say(pf.3ms)-#<sup>4</sup> prepare(pf.3ms)  
 The bee has said, “Let me prepare,” and he prepared.
- (9) *deggäsä dəggəs-äwta-m deggäsä*  
 prepare(pf.3ms) preparation-3ms-& prepare(pf.3ms)  
 He prepared. He made his preparation.
- (10) *zi kako<sup>5</sup> wəčä<sup>6</sup>-yi zərägg<sup>w</sup>a-n*  
 this honey honey-def. scatter(pf.imps.)-3ms(acc.)  
*bä-meda awätta-n*  
 in-field issue(pf.3ms)-3ms  
 It scattered this honey (and) honey and issued it (to) the field.
- (11) *zang'ära bä-mulu zang'ära gän-i čänñä*  
 baboon in-full baboon country-def. come(pf.3ms)  
 All the baboons of the country came.
- (12) *zang'ära tam<sup>w</sup>anəm<sup>7</sup> yəbära bänna*  
 baboon sweet eat(impf.3ms) eat(pf.3ms)  
 The baboon ate sweets. He ate.
- (13) *bä-hi bä-toffä ge zi muqar-u yəbun<sup>8</sup>*  
 after-that in-satiate(pf.3ms) time this what-3ms say(impf.3ms)  
 After that, when he was satiated, he says, “What is this?”
- (14) *zi səmat-annä-u b<sup>w</sup>arän*  
 this urine-1p-3ms say(pf.imps.)  
 “This is our urine,” they said.
- (15) *näw ənde səmat-ahä-u*  
 it-is so urine-2ms-3ms  
 “Is is so? Is it your urine?”

<sup>4</sup> # stands for ‘a **present perfect** formed of “Perfect + -m ...”. Its exact value remains to be investigated.’ (Hetzron 1977: 84)

<sup>5</sup> Honey surface before separation (AH). Dry cell of the honeycomb (Leslau 1979: 790).

<sup>6</sup> Honey liquid before separation (AH).

<sup>7</sup> This word seems to be a cognate of *yätäm* “sweet” (442), but its internal composition remains to be clarified.

<sup>8</sup> A by-form of *yəbur* “he says”.

(16) *səmat-ahä-u*      *əkka*      *yətäm*  
 urine-2ms-3ms      like\_this      sweet  
 Is your urine sweet like this?

(17) *bäqqa*      *y-äkk<sup>w</sup>a*      *maret*      *y-əya-ye<sup>9</sup>*      *nehu*  
 suffice(pf.3ms)      of-today      month      to-me      come(impv.mp)  
*barä*  
 say(pf.3ms)  
 “It is enough. A month from today, come to me!” they said.

(18) *zang'ära*      *ənnəm*      *zär-äwta*      *ezzäzä-m*      *səbässäbä-m*  
 baboon      all      species-3ms      order(pf.3ms)-#      gather(pf.3ms)-#  
 The baboon has ordered all his species and (they) have gathered.

(19) *səmət*      *yəsmät*      *häma*      *ezzäzä*  
 urine      urinate(impf.3ms)      so\_that      order(pf.3ms)  
*meda*      *wätta-m*      *ewwädä*  
 field      go\_out(impf.3ms)-&      tell(pf.3ms)  
 He ordered so that he release urine. He told to go out (to) the filed.

(20) *q<sup>w</sup>ažžä*      *tiq<sup>w</sup>až<sup>10</sup>*      *q<sup>w</sup>ažžä*  
 defecate(pf.3ms)      defecate(t+impf.3ms)      defecate(pf.3ms)  
*tiq<sup>w</sup>až*  
 defecate(t+impf.3ms)  
 He defecated, while defecating. He defecated, while defecating.

(21) *nəb*      *čänñä*      *madar-i*      *činnət*      *e-yawäna*  
 bee      come(pf.3ms)      place-def.      stinky      neg.-sit(impf.3ms)  
 The bee came. The place is stinky. It cannot sit.

(22) *zi*      *muqar-u*      *təšäktö-nä*      *innə*      *yətam*      *qaru*  
 this      what-3ms      do(impf.2mp)-1p(acc.)      we      sweat      thing  
 What is this? (What) are you doing to us? We (fed you) a sweat thing.

<sup>9</sup> *y-X-ye* means “to X”, e.g. *y-ädde-ye* “to the river”, *yə-nəšä-ye* “to the mountain”, *y-ahä-ye* “to you”.

<sup>10</sup> *t+*imperfect = temporal form “when, while” (Hetzron 1977: 101)

- (23) *ahu yəčəyə qarū ahu abbəlašāhu-bnəm*<sup>11</sup>  
 you stinky thing you spoil(pf.2mp)-1p  
 You (fed us) stinky thing. You spoiled.
- (24) *innə wəyə abännäna-kum yətam qarū*  
 we honey feed(pf.1p)-2mp sweat thing  
 We fed you (with) honey, a sweet thing.
- (25) *ahu zi činnət tabäro-nä qar muqar*  
 you this stinky feed(impf.2mp)-1p(acc.) thing what.  
 You fed us (with) this stinky (thing). What is this thing?
- (26) *ahu quzan-ähu abännahu-nä innə-m*  
 you excrement-2mp feed(pf.2mp)-1p(acc.) we-also  
*quzan-ənnə abännanä-kum*  
 excrement-1p feed(pf.1p)-2mp(acc.)  
 You fed us (with) your excrement. (With) our excrement we also feed you.
- (27) *bäyə tor täq'äbbäronnä baro-yo*  
 OK war accept(pf.1p) say(pf.3mp)-3mp(dat.)  
 “OK. We accept the war,” they said to them.
- (28) *tor täq'äbbäronnä e yähən*  
 war accept(pf.1p) yes OK  
 “We accept the war?” Yes! OK!
- (29) *zang'ära ənnəm mäsäna*<sup>12</sup> *näffäqä-m təbbätä*  
 baboon all mäsäna-tree break(pf.3ms)-# hold(pf.3ms)  
 All the baboons have broken (a branch of) *mäsäna*-trees and held.
- (30) *dulla təbto-m nehu mənə-ab<sup>w</sup>a-hənnə*  
 club hold(impv.mp) come(impv.ms) what-fathers-their<sup>13</sup>  
 “Hold a club!” “Come, sons-of-a-bitch!”

<sup>11</sup> *b-* is a malefactive marker.

<sup>12</sup> A kind of tree, which has many branches. (AH)

<sup>13</sup> This is a cursing idiom.

- (31) *zi zənb zənb yahäro hənno yəq'ämu-nä*  
 this fly fly be\_equal(pf.3mp) they  
 defeat(impf.3mp)-1p(acc.)  
 “This is as small as flies. Do they defeat us?”
- (32) *zahənno qäl wädä huya tor täggaṭä-mo*  
 those small around 20 war wage(pf.3ms)-3mp(acc.)  
 Those small twenty waged a war against them.
- (33) *abbəlašähu-bnəm tor täqäbbäro baro-yo*  
 spoil(pf.2mp)-1p war accept(juss.2p) say(pf.3mp)-3mp(dat.)  
 “You spoiled. You should accept a war,” they said to them.
- (34) *b<sup>w</sup>ar bäyə əšši asər huya wätaddär bəčča*  
 say(pf.imps.) OK OK 10 20 soldier only  
*namo-nna baro*  
 give(impv.mp)-1p say(pf.3mp)  
 They said, “OK, OK.” “Give us just 10 to 20 soldiers,” they said.
- (35) *zahənno dəbbe näffäqo näffäqo-m qəro-m*  
 those stick break(pf.3mp) break(pf.3mp)-# wait(pf.3mp)-#  
 They broke those sticks. They have broken and waited.
- (36) *čänno-m b-en-ähənno b-anfunna-hənno*  
 come(pf.3mp)-# in-eye-3mp in-nose-3mp  
 They have come in their eyes, (and) in their nose.
- (37) *tibru-yo<sup>14</sup> bäqqa bä-zi mädär*  
 say(temporal)-3mp(dat.) suffice(pf.3ms) in-this place  
*tinäkuš<sup>15</sup>. zəmmu zi mädär quṭṭərr*  
 bite(temporal) behold this place kill(impv.ms)  
 “Flying” to them, enough, they bit in this place. Here! This place. Kill (them)!
- (38) *zi qəṭṭərr<sup>16</sup>-ənni tibun*  
 this kill(impv.ms)-1s say(temporal)  
 “Kill this for me!” they said.

<sup>14</sup> Lit. They said to them (*barä*), but it expresses the movement of the bees. (AH)

<sup>15</sup> The reason for *s ~ š* alternation is unknown to me.

<sup>16</sup> *u* turns to *ə* in this form. (AH)

- (39) *bä-dulla täfaqqo-m alläqo näbs*  
 by-club be\_split(pf.3mp)-# be\_finished(pf.3mp) self  
*bä-näsä-hänno*  
 in-self-3mp

They have been wounded by clubs and were finished one another.

- (40) *b-anq'ä ge nəb äqäṭṭärnä tibro*  
 in-later time bee kill(impf.1p) say(temporal)

Later, they said, "We kill the bee."

- (41) *b-anzən yačonna nəb äqäṭṭärnä<sup>17</sup> tibro*  
 in-ear sit(imp.3ms) bee kill(impf.1p) say(temporal)

It sat on the ear. They said, "We kill the bee."

- (42) *näbs bä-näbsä-hänno alläqo*  
 self in-self-3mp be\_finished(pf.3mp)

They were finished one another.

### 3 Linguistic Remarks

The basic word order is SOV (see 12, 18, 29, etc.). The modifier precedes the modified as in (18), (22), (23), (32). The subordinate clause precedes the main clause as in (5), (6), (7).

The text attests to many kinds of verbal forms. The following is my provisional analysis of them sorted by their forms<sup>18</sup>:

<u>block</u>	<u>data</u>	<u>meaning</u>	<u>form</u>	<u>no.</u> <sup>19</sup>
(40)	<i>äqäṭṭärnä</i>	kill	impf. 1p	349
(41)	<i>äqäṭṭärnä</i>	kill	impf. 1p	349
(22)	<i>təšäktö-nä</i>	do	impf. 2mp	419
(25)	<i>tabäro-na</i>	feed	impf. 2mp	328
(1)	<i>yänäbäro</i>	live	impf. 3mp	365
(4)	<i>yəsmammo</i>	agree	impf. 3mp	-

<sup>17</sup> *äqäṭṭärnä* is a by-form of *nəqäṭṭärnä*. (AH).

<sup>18</sup> I plan to provide a more comprehensive analysis of Masqän verbal morphology in a separate paper.

<sup>19</sup> This corresponds to the number given to 1000 words listed in Ikeda (2016).

(31)	<i>yəq<sup>y</sup>ämu-nä</i>	defeat	impf.	3mp	404
(40)	<i>tibro</i>	say	impf.	3mp	280
(41)	<i>tibro</i>	say	impf.	3mp	280
(12)	<i>yəbära</i>	eat	impf.	3ms	328
(13)	<i>yəbun</i>	say	impf.	3ms	280
(19)	<i>yəsmät</i>	urinate	impf.	3ms	-
(20)	<i>tiq<sup>w</sup>az</i>	defecate	impf.	3ms	-
(21)	<i>e-yawäna</i>	sit	impf.	3ms	408
(41)	<i>yəčonna</i>	sit	impf.	3ms	322
(37)	<i>tibru-yo</i>	say	impf.	3ms	280
(37)	<i>tinäkuš</i>	bite	impf.	3ms	290
(38)	<i>tibun</i>	say	impf.	3ms	280
(6)	<i>yəstäw-i</i>	drink	impf.	imps.	329
(7)	<i>yəstäw-i</i>	drink	impf.	imps.	329
(17)	<i>nehu</i>	come	impv.	mp	-
(30)	<i>təbto-m</i>	hold	impv.	mp	790
(34)	<i>namo-nna</i>	give	impv.	mp	-
(37)	<i>quṭṭərr</i>	kill	impv.	ms	349
(38)	<i>quṭṭərr-ənni</i>	kill	impv.	ms	349
(19)	<i>wätta-m</i>	go out	inf.		410
(3)	<i>nəbranä</i>	eat	juss.	1p	328
(5)	<i>nəsəṭṭenä</i>	drink	juss.	1p	329
(5)	<i>nəbranä</i>	eat	juss.	1p	328
(8)	<i>nädäggəs</i>	prepare	juss.	1p	-
(33)	<i>täqäbbäro</i>	accept	juss.	2p	852
(24)	<i>abännäna-kum</i>	feed	pf.	1p	328
(26)	<i>abännanä-kum</i>	feed	pf.	1p	328
(27)	<i>täq<sup>y</sup>äbbäronnä</i>	accept	pf.	1p	852
(28)	<i>täq<sup>y</sup>äbbäronnä</i>	accept	pf.	1p	852



(23)	<i>abbəlašähu-bnəm</i>	spoil	pf.	2mp	-
(26)	<i>abännahu-nä</i>	feed	pf.	2mp	328
(33)	<i>abbəlašähu-bnəm</i>	spoil	pf.	2mp	-
(2)	<i>banno</i>	be	pf.	3mp	-
(3)	<i>baro</i>	say	pf.	3mp	280
(5)	<i>baro</i>	say	pf.	3mp	280
(6)	<i>baro</i>	say	pf.	3mp	280
(7)	<i>baro</i>	say	pf.	3mp	280
(27)	<i>baro-yo</i>	say	pf.	3mp	280
(31)	<i>yahäro</i>	be equal	pf.	3mp	-
(33)	<i>baro-yo</i>	say	pf.	3mp	280
(34)	<i>baro</i>	say	pf.	3mp	280
(35)	<i>näffäqo</i>	break	pf.	3mp	-
(35)	<i>näffäqo-m</i>	break	pf.	3mp	-
(35)	<i>qərom</i>	wait	pf.	3mp	401
(36)	<i>čänno-m</i>	come	pf.	3mp	412
(39)	<i>täfaqqo-m</i>	be split	pf.	3mp	-
(39)	<i>alläqo</i>	be finished	pf.	3mp	-
(42)	<i>alläqo</i>	be finished	pf.	3mp	-
(8)	<i>barä-m</i>	say	pf.	3ms	280
(8)	<i>deggäsä</i>	prepare	pf.	3ms	-
(10)	<i>awätta-n</i>	take out	pf.	3ms	841
(11)	<i>čänñä</i>	come	pf.	3ms	412
(12)	<i>bänna</i>	eat	pf.	3ms	328
(13)	<i>toffä</i>	satiate	pf.	3ms	-
(17)	<i>bäqqa</i>	suffice	pf.	3ms	-
(17)	<i>barä</i>	say	pf.	3ms	280
(18)	<i>ezzäzä-m</i>	order	pf.	3ms	768
(18)	<i>səbässäbä-m</i>	gather	pf.	3ms	414

(19)	<i>ezzäzä</i>	order	pf.	3ms	768
(19)	<i>ewwädä</i>	tell	pf.	3ms	286
(20)	<i>q<sup>w</sup>ažžä</i>	defecate	pf.	3ms	-
(21)	<i>čäññä</i>	come	pf.	3ms	412
(29)	<i>näffäqä-m</i>	break	pf.	3ms	-
(29)	<i>ṭäbbätä</i>	hold	pf.	3ms	790
(32)	<i>ṭäggaṭä-mo</i>	wage	pf.	3ms	-
(37)	<i>bäqqa</i>	suffice	pf.	3ms	-
(10)	<i>zərägg<sup>w</sup>a-n</i>	scatter	pf.	imps.	-
(14)	<i>b<sup>w</sup>arä-n</i>	say	pf.	imps.	280
(34)	<i>b<sup>w</sup>ar</i>	say	pf.	imps.	280

Some Amharic words intruded sporadically, e.g. *mulu* “full” (11), *näw* “it-is” (15), *meda* “field” (19), *ṭor* “war” (27), *wädä* “around” (32), *əšši* “OK” (34), *bəčča* “only” (34).

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