Bertha

ENGLISH - AMHARIC - ARABIC

DICTIONARY

2006 EC / 2014

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Second Edition

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Education Bureau, Bureau of Culture & Tourism, Benishangul-Gumuz National Regional State, P.O. Box 64, Assosa, and

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By: Susanne Neudorf et al.

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Preface

History of this dictionary

This dictionary has been put together over a period of about 5 years. The main focus of this work is the Mayu dialect of the Bertha people around the regional capital Assosa, Ethiopia.

The data has been collected in many different ways. Some has been elicited during language and dialect surveys, using a standard list from the SIL Ethiopia survey department. Other data was taken from oral stories, recorded from acknowledged story tellers of the Bertha Mayu society. Other data resulted from every day conversations and also out of a collection of word lists made by some Bertha speakers working with us. It is far from exhaustive, but rather just a beginning of recording this language, which, until five years ago, had only been in oral use.

Aims of the dictionary

First of all, this dictionary should be a monument for the Bertha people to show the richness, the variety and importance of their own language. We hope to get people interested in continuing this work of compiling more and more entries and thus deepen the respect for and acknowledgement of this language.

Secondly, this dictionary can be used as a help for learning the Bertha language. Those wanting to work with this people group, such as elementary school teachers, development or government workers, would benefit from the use of this dictionary.

Thirdly, it is our hope that it will be a helpful tool to the educational system for teaching Bertha to the children in school. It can be referred to as a help for consistent spelling of words and spelling rules, thus speeding up the process of creating a standard writing system, which can be used in all the dialects.

It will also be a resource for the Bertha people to learn English, Arabic and Amharic, by using either the main part of the dictionary or a reversal list.

Acknowledgements

Introduction

About the language

Bertha (Funj) is a Nilo-Saharan language spoken south of the Blue Nile, on both sides of the border between Ethiopia and Sudan. It is spoken by a people group called Beni-Shangul (Bela-Shangul) or Bertha (Barta, Burta). Other names for the people (Wetawit, Jebelawi) are used less frequently.

On the Ethiopian side, the language is mainly called *Bertha* or *ndú Berthú* 'mouth of Bertha', although occasionally it is referred to as *Rut'ana* by the people themselves, which is the Arabic term for a non-religious, non-Arabic language.

On the Sudanese side, the language is called *Bertha* as well as *Funj*, which has derived from the large Funj kingdom of the 16th to 19th centuries. Working in Ethiopia with Sudanese refugees who call themselves *Funj*, we could not find a difference in language between Bertha Mayu and Funj, neither structural nor lexical. Still, the topic about dialectal and other differences of the language in Sudan deserves further investigation.

As we are working in Ethiopia only, the input for this dictionary has come almost exclusively from the Bertha spoken there.

The language has about 130,000 speakers in Ethiopia, and about as many in Sudan (although we do not have any official figures available).

Dialect variants

Four main dialects of Bertha have been identified so far: Mayu, Fadqashi, Undulu, Beleje Gonfoye.

<u>*Mayu*</u> is the one that has been chosen as the reference dialect. It seems to be the most prestigious one, as all the kings and rulers of the Bertha society came from this sub-group. The Mayu people are often lighter skinned, as they are descendents from Arab men who married Bertha women. The name Mayu is said to derive from the words *ma íyu*, (literally: 'have inside'), meaning it has something else inside, some other blood lineage. Mayu is spoken in Assosa and its surroundings, as well as towards the Nile in the north of Assosa. Nowadays, Mayu has lost many original Bertha words and replaced them with Arabic loan words.

Fadqashi is spoken east of Assosa, from Bambesi on to the south towards Tongo. It is very similar to Mayu, but uses more original Bertha words. Also, some words are the same as in Mayu, but pronounced differently, with slightly different vowels:

  afoñforos'(F) – *afañfaras'*(M)   'lung'

  asqúúnduyú (F) – *asqúúndiyú* (M)   'breakfast'

  ñgó ga (F) – *ñgó gia* (M)   'you make'

Other difference in sounds (not constant, though):

  thiñá 'eat' (M)

  niñá 'eat' (F)

This field is still a vast one to be explored.

Undulu is named after the area it is spoken in, namely around the town Undulu. Like Fadqashi, it has less Arabic influence than Mayu. The pronunciation of words seems to be the same as in Mayu.

Beleje Gonfoye is the dialect of a group of Bertha people who have moved away into the Didessa valley, 250 km east of the other Bertha speakers, more than 100 years ago. Their language has no influence from Arabic at all, only from Oromo or Gumuz, amongst which they live. But compared to the other three dialects, this is probably the best preserved one. There are many differences between Beleje Gonfoye and the other three dialects, both grammatical and lexical. It is difficult, but not impossible, for this dialect and the others to understand each other.

Matahara is the name of the place where the dialect is spoken, namely in Matahara, a town about 200 km east of Addis Ababa. Approximately 100 years ago, many Bertha speakers were deported from the main Bertha area to this place. Their language is so close to Mayu, that is may not even be justified to call it a dialect, still they should be mentioned.

Previous Works on the language:

Although Bertha was not written until five years ago, several works had been published about the people, their history and their language. These publications should be referred to for more detailed information on the respective areas:

Trulzi et al (1976) show a detailed history of the people group, with a brief investigation of the sound inventory of the language.

Torben Andersen has written at least three essays on different aspects of Bertha Grammar.

In the book *The Non-Semitic Languages of Ethiopia,* L.M. Bender has given an overview of the classification of the Bertha language.

These are the main works on the Bertha people and their language that are available to us, but there are many more, which will not be mentioned in this dictionary.

How to use this dictionary:

There are more than 1500 entries, some of which are minor entries, dialectal variants or loan words. They are sorted alphabetically.

Bertha has had an official writing system for less than ten years. As there are several dialects and pronunciation variations of words, some decisions had to be made as to which is a standard spelling of these words. So it may happen that someone is looking for a word heard spoken in one way, but may not find it. In this case, the user has to be a bit flexible and try to look for the word under a different letter. For example, words starting with /h/ often have other variant form of pronouncing, and the /h/ might actually not be in the standard form. As 'hisqía' is only a pronunciation form of the word 'sqisqía', you will not find it in the dictionary as an entry, only as a variant under the entry 'sqisqia'.

Other common sound pairs are:

/d/ and /tq/ ; /b/ and /pq/;

/a/ and /e/ (mashergeñ or meshergeñ);
words with the Arabic article /al/ in front of it or not. Sometimes, a noun spoken with an initial /a/ might not have the /a/ in the standard spelling.

Alphabetical order

The dictionary is sorted by the alphabtical order as shown in the following table. This table shows Bertha example words in the second column and example words of English sound equivalents, where possible, in the third column.

Finally, it shows if the sound can carry a tone and gives some additional comments.

	examples	pronunciation	comments
A, a	*abadqí* *maré*	car **a**pple	word initially spoken like an open /a/, word medially and finally, its quality can change to a more fronted vowel; tone carrier
B, b	*ababa* *buli*	**b**all, ro**b**e **p**i**p**e	voiced and voiceless labial plosives are in free variation
D, d	*duudu* *dísha*	**d**own **t**oddler lou**d**	voiced and voiceless alveolar plosives are in free variation
Dq dq	*dquutha* *fédqi*	---	implosive /d/, air is sucked in instead of blown out
E, e	*esho, féédqa* *mééra*	**e**lephant b**e**d	tone carrier
F, f	*fuudqa, thúf* *muufa*	**f**aith o**f**	no variation between voiced and voiceless noticed.
G, g	*gadi* *gia* *nagútha*	**g**ood **k**ind be**gg**ar	in front of front vowels (e, i,) it becomes palatalized and sounds closer to /j/ like in /jingle/; voiced and voiceless variant are in free variation
H, h	*hofi, ahátha* *afutháh*	**h**ouse a**h**ead	word finally mostly in Arabic loan words, may sound like a fricative, voiced or voiceless
I, i	*bia, ir* *ile*	**i**nk, f**i**t r**ee**d	in front of /r/ or nasals it is more centralized (less fronted); tone carrier
J, j	*jelabia* *alkajam*	**j**oy **j**udge	only in Arabic loan words
K, k	*kataba* *alkajam*	**k**ind o**k**ay	only in Arabic loan words to differentiate from voiced sound

	examples	pronunciation	comments
Kq, kq	*kqisqa* *shukqa*	----	ejective; in front of front vowels (e, i,) it becomes palatalized
L, l	*lúúba* *ali*	**l**ife, oi**l** o**l**d	
M, m	*maaba* *amma*	**m**an roo**m**	word initially in front of other nasals or plosives it can be a tone carrier
N, n	*nooba* *abune*	**n**orth u**n**kind	
Ñ, ñ	*ñine* *ñonshó abeñ ñgó*	si**ng**	This nasal as pronounced as a velar nasal [ŋ] in all environments but in front of front vowels, where it is pronounced as a palatal nasal [ɲ].
O, o	*oqó* *hódodó*	l**o**rd	tone carrier;
Pq pq	*pqaalí* *pqípqíó*	----	ejective bilabial plosive; there seems to be a variation between /b/ and /pq/ in some words only, which gives rise to the speculation that there may have been a sound / bq/ (bilabial implosive), which still exists in Sudanese Bertha dialects.
q	*uqûñ* *oqó*	Glottal stop, beginning sound of a vowel in a vowel initi-al word	is written mainly between two vowels to distinguish from long vowel; not written word initially. Also used as second component of any digraph that represent an ejective or implosive consonant.
R, r	*rô, fir,* *ñeera*		the /r/ is rolled, a vibrant, not an approximant like in English

	examples	pronunciation	comments
S, s	*assána* *súúgu*	sing also glass	only in Arabic loan words, to differentiate from voiced variant
Sq sq	*sqarí* *busqikqe*	---	ejective alveolar fricative
Sh, sh	*shafa* *ashatha* *kqosh*	shoe ashes fish	
T, t	*attábula* **talata**	table little	only in Arabic loan words to differentiate from voiced variants
Tq tq	*tqokqoló* *Atqeib*	---	ejective alveolar plosive
Th, th	**thúf** *ashatha*	thunder, loath this, leather	dental fricative
U, u	**uqûñ marú**	you bush	tone carrier
W, w	*waqu* *dúwosh* **waza**	water always	normally in front of central vowels, but also to show labialisation of preceding consonant
Y, y	*yamuth íyá*	yes	mainly word initially
Z, z	*zozo* *almoz*	sound lazy eraser	voiced and voiceless in free variation

In this second table, all additional characters of the Bertha orthography can be found.

	name	example	comment
aa*	double vowel	*maaba*	Two vowels are usually pronounced like one long vowel.
tt, rr	double consonant	*wólla* *wóssala*	Double consonants occur mostly at morpheme boundaries (agudin-né) and appear in words of Arabic origin (wólla)
ñalú-	hyphen at the end or beginning of	*ñalú-*	Shows this entry as not existing as an isolated word, but is part of another word in order to be
á, é ḿ	tone on vowel or nasal	*thíña* *ḿaané*	A character with acute signifies a high tone. No tone marking signifies low tone.

*Double vowels are to be considered as one sound, so the entry **aagu** should be looked for between 'af-' and 'ah-' , not between 'aa-' and 'ab-'.

Lexical main entry's explanation

Bertha words are written **bold**, while English translations are in normal font. A basic main entry normally contains the following information:

gáádqo *n* ስ. locust አንበጣ الجراد *Gáádqo thiñi ñera.* Locusts eat grass. አንበጣ ሳር ይበላል። يأكل الجراد الحشائش

gáádqo

    is the head word, usually an isolated noun form or a verb in imperative. It is always in bold letters.

n ስ.

    shows the grammatical category of the head word, both in English and Amharic

locust **ኣንበጣ** الجراد [1]

the head word's translation or definition in English, Amharic and Arabic. Ideally, there follows an example sentence using the head word in context, then the English, Amharic and Arabic translation of that sentence.

Possible additional information in an entry:

dôr From: Arabic (Dual: doréén; Free Variant: addór) *n* **ስ**. **1)** week **ሳምንት** اسبوع*Alqarbaqá addórá múshélá ábbá tháñ né maané.* On Wednesday, it is a week since my father died. **እሮብ እለት አባቴ ከሞተ ሳምንት ይሆነዋል።** يوم الأربعاء يكون الأسبوع لوفاة والدى *Syn:* izbu . **2)** turn **ተራ** دور *Addorálé ali shíñiñ ádí!* This is my turn! **የእኔ ተራ ነው።** هذا دورى

(From: Arabic)

is a reference that this word is a loan word that entered the Bertha language from Arabic (or another respective language).

(Dual: doréén; Free Variant: addór)

This information tells different kinds of variants of the headword. Other possible variants are:

'Dual'	means two in number
'Free Variant'	is equally used in both spoken and written language and both accepted as standard.
'Spell. Variant'	is an equally accepted spelling of the word, both accepted as standard.
'Pronun. Variant'	is a possible spoken variant of the head word which is NOT permitted as standard writing.
'Irreg. Infl', 'Pl',	show grammatically unusual forms of the head word.
'Belej.' 'Fadq.'	show a dialectal variant. If not otherwise noted, the head word is from the Mayu dialect.

1) . **2)**

Shows different senses or translations of the head word.

Syn: izbu ; *See:* abasho

This information refers to another entry in the dictionary that is related with the head word in different ways.

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[1] As we do not know Arabic and rules for Arabic dictionaries, we ask to forgive any mistakes and that may occur in this area of the dictionary.

Lexical minor entry's explanation

lebena (Pronun. Variant: nebemsha) *v* ግ. send ላከ أرسل   *Fadq. for* ágena

lebena

> is the head word, usually an isolated noun form or a verb in imperative. It is always in bold letters

Fadq. for ágena

> Reference to the head word's main entry. This also shows what kind of variant this word is. In this case here it is the Fadqashi dialect word for the Mayu word 'ágena'.

Other Lables

ma[1]

> Lexical entry with homonym number. It is the first word of two that sound exactly the same, but have no connection to each other.

{for men only}, {only with /ma/}

> This shows a restriction in the usage of the headword.

Citing Form of Verbs

The citing form has four different forms (endings), depending on the semantics of the verb.

1. ending in *-a/-á:* This is the imperative form, from which the other tenses can be derived, as this form shows the tone and vowel length of the verb root.

> Example: *thíña* 'eat', *adá* 'go', *fia* 'hit', *shíbila* 'buy', *háára* 'sing'

2. ending in *-u:* This form is also an imperative, but a reciprocal. This means that the subject must be plural and the action goes in both directions between the agents.

> Example: *bashu* 'fight', *dqafaru* 'differ', *hulu* 'meet', *ithigu -qi* 'be neighbor'

3. ending in *-i:* This is the present tense form, which is used for verbs that have no imperative attested in normal speech, and where putting an imperative as citing form would be very unnatural. Still, the imperative -where available- is shown in brackets, to help figure out the tone behaviour of the verb

> Example: *galazí* 'be green', *pqúsqí* 'be wet', *bidí* 'rain'

4. ending in -*o:* this form is a centripetal imperative form, meaning that the action is directed towards or for the benefit of the speaker. This form is only used as citing form when the centripetal form has an additional meaning which cannot be derived from the imperative or other basic form and its meaning.

Example: *adô* 'come', *pahô* 'invite'

Note that the citation form of Amharic verbs is the past tense third person-masculin-singular, from which form all other tenses can be deducted.

Citing form of nouns

A noun is cited in its isolated form, the basic form which is also the form for a subject or object in an unmarked declarative sentence. According to Anderson, this is called the "absolutive" form.

Loan Words

Most loan words in this dictionary are from Arabic. Regardless of their pronunciation, they are spelled according to their Arabic origin with the letters existing in Bertha and a few additional letters introduced for that purpose only. Often, an originally Arabic noun is found both with and without the article in the dictionary as variants.

Verbs: As Arabic is not a tone language like Bertha, the tone of loan words has typically the same pattern, adjusted to the stress pattern: HLL in imperative (H meaning high tone, L meaning low tone).

Nouns: Arabic nouns usually have the article al- (or its assimilated form) attached to the citing/isolated form.

Examples:

almadina 'town'

alkqálatq 'mistake'

assáma 'sky': /l/ assimilated to following consonant

ashukqúl 'work': /l/ completely disappeared

Depending on the sentence structure, the article may disappear.

However, through the process of adaptation into Bertha, some articles have

become part of the noun and can no longer be split from it, regardless of the sentence structure.

addáwa 'medicine'

alfil   'elephant'

The field of loan words from Arabic still needs to be further investigated to achieve greater consistency.

Dialect differences

Mayu, which has been chosen as the reference dialect for this dictionary, has lost many original Bertha words and substituted them with Arabic loan words. In those cases, we have tried to keep the entries of the dialect variants of Fadqashi, Undulu or Beleje Gonfoye as informative as possible, with example sentences, part of speech, variants and so on. But for consistency, we still referred to the Arabic loan word as the main entry, as this is the word used by the Mayu dialect. There, all dialect variants are stated, as far as they are known to us.

Still, we wish to point out that we consider no dialect as inferior nor superior to the others. We hope that in the future the dialects will gain from each other in richness of words and in mutual understanding.

Abbreviations

In lexical entries:

1.pl	1. person plural ('we', *hatháñ*)
2.sg	2. person singular ('you', *ñgó*)
3.pl	3. person plural ('they', *maré*)
adj	adjective
adv	adverb
conn	connector
comp	compound word, one word made out of two
cop	copula
def	definite article
dem	demonstrative pronoun
der	derived word

det	determiner
fut	future
Habit	habitual aspect
id	idiomatic expression
Imp	imperative
inf	infinitive
infl	inflectional affix; inflection
interj	interjection
interrog	interrogative word, a word related to a question
Irreg Infl	irregular inflection
Juss	jussive pronoun
lit	literal meaning
n	noun
num	numeral
Partial Syn	partial synonym (=similar meaning)
Past	past tense
pfcv	perfective
pers pron	personal pronoun
phrasal v	phrasal verb
pl	plural
poss	possessive
post	postposition
prep	preposition
pro	pronoun
prt	particle
quant	quantifier
quest	question marker
refl	reflexive pronoun
relpro	relative pronoun
sg	singular

s.o	someone
s.th	Something
Syn	synonym (= same meaning)
v	verb

Dialects and Languages:

Belej.	Beleje Gonfoye
F / Fadq.	Fadqashi
M / Ma.	Mayu
U / Und.	Undulu

Amharic Abbreviations for parts of speech:

ግ.	ግስ
ስ.	ስም
ቅ.	ቅፅል
መስ.	መስተፃምር, መስተዋድድ
መጢ.ት.ስ.	መጠይቅ ተውላጠ ስም
ማ.ግ.	ማያያዣ ግስ
ምድ.ተ.ስ.	ምድብ ተውላጠ ስም
ተቃ.	ተቃራኒ
ተ.ግ.	ተውሳከ ግስ
ተ.ስ.	ተውላጠ ስም
ነ.ቁ.	ነጠላ ቁጥር
የብ.ቁ.	የብዙ ቁጥር
የአ.ጊ.	የአሁን ጊዜ
የት.ጊ.	የትንቢት ጊዜ
የህ.ጊ.	የህላፊ ጊዜ
ጥ.ት.	ጥሬ ትርጉም
ረ.ግ.	ረዳት ግስ
አገ.	አገናዛቢ
ኢ.	አመልካች
ቃ.ኢ.	ቃል አጋኖ
ቁ.	ቁጥር

In Grammar Sketch ²

ABS	absolute case
Adv	adverb
COP	copula
DAB	benefactive/dative case
GEN	genitive case
H	high tone
IMP	imperative
INTR	intransitive marker
L	low tone
MOD	modified noun form
N	nasal sound, where the air flow is passing through the nose: n/m/ñ
NEG	negative particle
NP	noun phrase
NOM	nominative case
mod	modal verb
OBJ	object of transitive verb
PAST	past tense suffix
PFCV	perfective tense marker
PL	plural
Plos	a plosive sound, where the air flow is blocked for a short time: t/tq/d/dq/g/k/kq/b/pq…
POSS	possessive pronoun
PrepP	prepositional phrase
PRES	present tense marker
PRTC	participle
QUEST.PART	question particle, it marks a sentence as a question.

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² Case names and definitions are mostly taken from Torben Andersen, except for Modified Case (MOD), which is called AntiGenitive (AG) in his articles.

RECIP	reciprocal verbform
REDUPL	reduplicated affix
REL	relative pronoun
REP	repetative affix
S	Subject of a verb
SG	singular
subju	subjunctive / jussive
VP	verb phrase