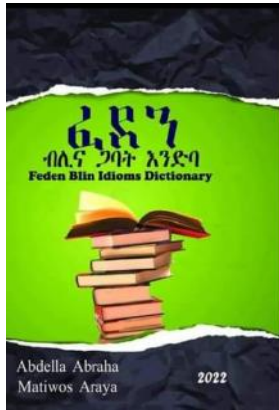


## Books review-ፈደን ብሊና ጋባት እንድባ/Feden Blin Idioms Dictionary by Fitsum Asfaha



Title: ፈደን ብሊና ጋባት እንድባ

Authors: Abdella Abraha and Matiwos

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The pioneer in Blin language literature is Austrian, Leo Simon Reinisch (1832 – 1919), who wrote extensively on Blin language and published the first Blin dictionary (Blin-Germany, bilingual) in 1887. The second Blin dictionary (Blin-Blin, monolingual) was published in 1992 by a group of Blin native speakers, Blin Language Research Group, and edited by Kiflemariam Hamde and Paulos Zeremariam. These two were followed by Categorized Blin-English Dictionary (bilingual) in 2012 by this author. The current book under review “Feden Blin idioms dictionary” is an addition to the list of these Blin wordbooks.

As an author of the book “English- Blin Categorized Dictionary”, which includes some Blin idioms in addition to other terms and phrases, it won't be objective to make a comparative assessment or to critique its linguistic aspects. Thus, my review is primarily to give an overview of the content of the book for Blin speakers, who don't read Blin in Geez scripts (Blin new generation who have been taught in Latin scripts) and to present the book to interested non-Blin speakers.

This is the first book exclusively dealing with Blin idioms as far as I know, although there are collections of idioms as a chapter or section of a book. “ብሊና ክታባትዲ ግብራ ጋብኹዲ”/Blin Language Introductory Phonetics and Grammar by Tekie Alibekit (p.100-106) has 100 entries and “ታከሲታኹ ብሊን-እንግሊዝ ቆላታ እንድባ”/Categorized Blin-English Dictionary (p.106 -118) has about 220 entries. Moreover, a paper by Kiflemariam (1983) “ብሊና ጋባት (Blin Idioms)” with about 160 idiom is posted at [www.daberi.org](http://www.daberi.org). The paper by Kiflemariam (1983), albeit it was written three decades ago, is a recent post.

In 1997, Latin scripts for writing Blin language was imposed in elementary schools in Blin speaking rural areas, but not in urban areas, by the Ministry of education. This policy was implemented without any consultation with the stakeholders and against the more than a century tradition of writing Blin in Geez scripts. The authors are both native Blin speakers and belong to the generation who get education after implementation of this policy. They are 1 graduates from Social Science college in Adi-Keyih, which started after the University of Asmara stopped enrolment of new students in 2003. I don't know whether the authors have been taught in Latin scripts or not in elementary school. However, writing a book in Geez scripts by the Blin young generations, having been taught in Latin scripts or just belonging to the same generation, shows the failure of the policy and infeasibility of Latin scripts for Blin writing.

“Feden Blin Idioms Dictionary” is a monolingual Blin to Blin dictionary written in Geez scripts. The book starts with an introduction (2 pages), where the authors state that the

collection of the idiom took about six years. The authors also clarify what “ጋባት” (idioms) means giving an example in English, “Kick the bucket”. The purpose of the book is to develop and preserve the Blin language, as described in the introduction. And they are at disposal for input and critiques about the book. The introduction is followed by acknowledgement (1 page), where the authors thank all who supported them for making this book to reach the readers.

The main body of the book is the list of idioms and their meaning (101 pages). As stated in the introduction the book includes 1800 entries of idioms. The idioms are arranged in the classical order of Geez letters starting with “ሀ” order and ending with “ፈ” order, albeit a slight rearrange of few letters (may be editorial). The sequence of letters makes it easy to find the idioms of interest.

The meaning of each idiom is provided either with a single corresponding word or with detailed explanation. As stated in the introduction, the meaning of the idioms has been confirmed with elders of Blin speakers, which makes this literary work empirical and gives value to the book. The key informants are listed at the end page of the book.

The book has several new idioms, which are not available in the previous publications. It enriched my vocabulary by adding several new terms such as ለጉዥኝ (p 7)፣ ስንገረባሪብ ጀረብና (p.20)፣ ሻጡጠል አክና (p 25), አልካን አክና (p 50)፣ ከርዲ ሙርዲ (p 63), ጋብዲ ታሮዲ (p.94). Read the book to find the meaning of these and other similar idioms. The book is definitely an invaluable learning aid for those who want to learn Blin. Besides, it will be an asset in preserving and developing the Blin language literature, as the authors pointed out in the introduction. I congratulate the authors for their achievement and contribution for development of the Blin language.

Finally, I would like to make a few comments and suggestions for future publication. To assess if all the entries can be considered as idioms and to validate the meaning is beyond the scope of this review. However, types of porridges such as ካላ ትተዲኸ፣ ካላ ሓፋናታኸ፣ ካላ ማሳኸ (p65), are included in the entries, which I would not consider as idioms.

The authors use third person masculine words/terms which is an unintentional gender bias. For instance, in page 41 - 44, the authors wrote ነለበካ አረባ፣ ነለበካ ጫዕዳኸ....etc. These 2 idioms could have be written as ንርለበካ አረባ፣ ንርለበካ ጫዕዳኸ...etc for a third person feminine or ናለበካ አረባ፣ ናለበካ ጫዕዳኸ... etc for plural. Such gender bias can be avoided by writing the idiom in its root word/idiom form, ለበካ አረባ, ለበካ ጫዕዳኸ ....etc and then writing the different inflections in connection to the root word. Similarly, there are idioms written in second person, for instance, ኩላንቆድ ክርና (p70). This is an inflection of the root idiom ላንቆድ ክርና (p10).

Although the Blin language orthography is far from standardization, it is good to think about the way of writing inflected forms of a word. In Blin literary works, writing of an inflected form of a word differently from its root word, which holds the basic meaning and orthography, is not limited to these authors. It is obvious in the previously published Blin books. For instance, “ቱሲሰና” which means introduction is an inflected form of the root word ትውሩ. During inflection the “ው” glyph is dropped and ት and ው were substituted with the “ቱ” in the book. If the correct orthography has to be followed, it

should be written as “ትውሊድ” not “ቱሊድ”. These are just suggestions in case the authors have other books in the pipeline.

To order the book contact the authors.

Abdella Abraha: [abdellaabrah@gmail.com](mailto:abdellaabrah@gmail.com)

Matiwos Araya: [matiwosar@gmail.com](mailto:matiwosar@gmail.com)