

Excerpts from Hadiyya Folklore¹

Notes on Phonetics - 'A Little bit of Hadiyya Grammar'

The intent of this note is to provide the reader with some very basic information on phonetics and other aspects of *Hadiyyisa* (Hadiyya language) grammar. The reader may not just be interested in what the meaning of a word or expression could be. There can also be a justifiable need to understand the orthography and phonology of the word not only from a research point of view but in general. The thought behind putting together this note is thus providing users with some guidance on what the basic orthographic and phonetic rules are in order to write and pronounce words in the Hadiyya language. However, the information being provided here is very limited. Consequently, further reference to additional linguistic study or literary sources, if any, is advised. Other possible resources could include studies conducted for other similar languages. Similar languages and studies done on them may contain information, which may help deduce basic underlying facts about the nature and linguistic building blocks of Hadiyyisa.

In the Hadiyya language most words or word syllables involve some unique ways of manipulating speech organs for pronunciation with the result that the same word can have a different meaning depending on how it is pronounced. The Hadiyya language may share some similarities in this respect with some other, especially Cushitic languages. This is to say that variations in pronunciation of a word and thereby also difference in meaning exist depending on how a given word is pronounced in many other languages. As such this characteristic is not unique to this language. So, certain words or word syllables containing the same alphabet letters can be pronounced in two different ways to convey two different meanings. One way this can take place is by simply lengthening the pronunciation or speech sound of a given word or syllable. Another way is to stress different syllables in a variety of ways by firmly tightening or loosening the speech organs: tongue, lips, teeth, etc. The same word (though not the case with every word) can have, thus, more ways of pronunciation and more than one meaning².

¹ For the most part the content in this note is taken out of or based on the previous publication entitled: Praise and Teasing: Narrative Songs of Hadiyya... (*By Tilahun Mishago & Ulrich Braukaemper*)

² Compare also pp. 5-10 in the report from the research made on the choice of alphabets for the Hadiyya language by an education committee in 1984. However, a few of the stated examples and rules in the committee's work cannot be adhered to largely because there are a few misleading items that warrant some suggestion for corrections. Nevertheless, the efforts made by the committee should be considered a major and ground-breaking contribution to the usage and methodology of the transcription of this language. The committee's work must be commended since it was the very first work, which attempted to suggest a workable solution and methodology for Hadiyya transcription and it has been the basis for this effort as well. Hopefully, similar studies and publications will be seen in the near future to confirm or improve the methodology and approaches that have been suggested so far by these and any other literary sources not mentioned here. It seems almost like one has to have a lot of courage to step in and do something to document a bit about a dying language like this one. Unfortunately, there has been a complete disregard when it comes to any sort of attempts to preserve linguistic and cultural inheritance from minorities like this. One can only hope that this may change soon and something will be done in this regard to document more historical accounts about this language, culture as a whole, and traditional songs in particular. As has been observed, the very few traditional songs of this ethnic group known to exist few decades ago have been in the verge of extinction. It can be noted that currently no traditional songs are heard being sung or ritual dances being practiced anywhere to the extent that there might only be few people who can actually sing or still remember how to sing even very few wedding songs that were common at some point before or know how to dance to/perform some of the previously known rituals.

The unique orthographic and phonetic nature of this language required creating a methodology that specifies certain groupings of usages to address variations in meaning and pronunciation. Certain rules had to be developed to group and characterize certain grammatical usages that appear to be peculiar to this language. As can be observed, the descriptions of such grammatical peculiarities below indicate an attempt to do just that, i.e. certain phonetic/grammatical rules for each characterized scenario have been proposed and devised to achieve this goal. So the fact that there is the difference in pronouncing a word that can have different meanings by simply alternating the level of stress being applied to it could constitute a rule. But the fact that there are plenty of words in a given text that may exhibit such characteristic requires some means to identify and explain the words or syllables involved. One way to do that is to label those peculiar grammatical incidents in the text with something like a symbol. Certain symbols are randomly selected just for this purpose and each symbol is assigned a rule that is described next to the symbol. In addition to symbols or signs such as the apostrophe (’), double letters are used to indicate specific grammatical/phonetic or transcription rules.

Rule (1). The symbol (’) represents a syllable or any part of a word that is pronounced with a strong emphasis, e.g. in the case of a diphthong where two different vowels are pronounced following one another /like a’e as in "aa’eena" or "e’i" as in „te’im“/ and when two similar vowels are pronounced separately in short and with strong emphasis followed by one another /e.g. "a’a" as in „Guuda’a“ or "e’e" as in edde’e/. Phonologically, a diphthong in the Hadiyya language, by the way, is not the same as the one in English. The change from the sound "a" to "e" in „aa’eena“, for example, is easily perceptible, since there is a slight stop in between the two vowels. This is not the case in English, e.g. in 'paid (peɪd)', as the change from "e" to "i" flows without any stop.

Moreover, it denotes a diphthong that is a bit shorter pronounced than the one exemplified above, e.g. "’ll" as in „bii’ll“ or "’mm" as in „lugu’mm“. Here the symbol should follow one, more or doubled consonants. This should show the change of a sound during transition from one vowel to another without the need to write the second or the whole vowels. The sound represented by the sign is produced in all cases uvularly.

The above sign is also used as a phonetic symbol when defining the phonology of a strong plosive speech sounds. It indicates the plosive nature of pronunciation for certain letters. So for instance to describe the phonology for pronouncing the letters "ph" as in „maraphhi“ /a genitive form of the word „marabo“ (meaning honey)/ we use the sign placing it write before the letter P, but without the second letter h. This is to indicate that the sound being generated from ‘ph’ (written doubled like ...phph...)is strong plosive compared to pronunciation perceived in or usage associated with letters Ph or just the letter P in English. The combination of the Ph letters and doubling them in this language will help differentiate among: the mere English p sound, inter alia, (non-existent in the Hadiyya language – see rule #4 below), ph sound (no comparable usage in Hadiyyisa either), and the strong plosive sound ‘p in this language as stated.

From the phonology perspective, the speech sound represented by "ph" is bilabial voiceless and is produced by sudden pressing out of air between tightly closed lips.

The same is also applicable to palatal sounds of the consonants: C (dental uvular), Q (uvular) and X (dental, plosive and alveolar) in the Hadiyya language, thus their pronunciation is labeled with this sign (’) to distinguish them from that of their pronunciation in English, etc. Therefore, sounds produced from the letters "**ph, c, q, and x**" are completely different from what can be perceived in pronouncing the English counter parts or letters P, C, Q and X.

Rule (2). Words and syllables in Hadiyyisa which consist of sounds represented by consonants that are emphasized and pronounced by pressing lips, tongue, etc. usually appear with doubled letters, e.g. yy as in „beyyo“ or nn as in „manna“. But if a word consists of any two consonants in a consecutive position (following one after another), where any of the two letters is to be stressed and, therefore, needs to follow the normal doubling rule, the number of consecutive consonants will increase thereby making the word

cumbersome and awkward for the reader. There is no need to double any two different consecutive consonants. This is an exception to the above rule and the intention is to avoid redundancy of consonants being written next each other. A good example for this is: "nt", so for instance, instead of "ntt" as in "anttitte", we use "anttitte" even if the "t" after the "n" is emphasized. However, there is a further exception for the latter, where two consecutive consonants will have to be doubled in limited situations, not individually, but both at the same time. This is the case in words with plosive like 'aphphe, maraphph, daaphphe' where 'ph' is doubled although both letters are consonants that are written/appear in the words consecutively.

Rule (3). A vowel written doubled in any position of a word indicates that the sound it represents is pronounced longer /very similar to German usage in words like *saat, See, Moos*, etc. or to certain extent also in English (a:) as in father/. There are about five vowels that follow the same pattern: aa, ee, ii, oo and uu, and there plenty of words like 'waare, liite, moo'e, kiire, etc.' which use such doubled vowels to form long pronunciation. The duration or length of sound for Hadiyya word pronunciation is indicated by doubling vowels in contrast to, e.g. English, where in some cases, as shown above, a word with even only one vowel can have a longer sound.

Rule (4). English sounds and their corresponding letters like p, v and z do not exist in the Hadiyya language except where they are directly inherited from other languages or used with respect to words taken from other languages like Amharic, e.g. "zinnaara" from the Amharic „zinar“.

Rule (5). All alphabets (consonants) including the vowel 'a` are pronounced with a long sound 'a:`. The pronunciation of the remaining vowels with the exception of the nasal sound (η) occurs in the same way as normal alphabets.

I. Phonetic definitions of Hadiyyisa Alphabets:

<u>Alphabets & their Pronunciation</u>	<u>Phonetic Symbols and Definitions of the Articulations</u>
A a:	ʌ Half-open (open) back unrounded, strong and short pronounced.
B ba:	b Voiced bilabial plosive, English bad.
C 'tʃa:	'tʃ Voiceless palato-alveolar very strongly affricating.
Ch tʃa:	tʃ Voiceless palato-alveolar affricate, English 'ch'.
D da:	d Voiced bilabial plosive, English 'D'.
E e:	e Half closed and half open unrounded short vowel.
F fa:	f Voiceless labiodental fricative, English 'F'.
G ga:	g Voiced velar plosive, English g as in gain.
H ha:	h Voiceless glottal fricative, English 'H'.
I i:	ɪ Close front unrounded short vowel.
K ka:	k Voiceless velar plosive, English 'K'.
L la:	l Voiced alveolar lateral, English 'L'.
M ma:	m Voiced bilabial nasal, English 'M'.
N na:	n Voiced alveolar nasal, English 'N'.
ŋ ŋ	ŋ Voiced velar nasal, English 'ng'.
O o:	ɔ Half-closed/open back rounded short vowel.
Q 'ka:	'k Voiceless velar articulated extremely plosive.
Ph 'pha:	'p Voiceless bilabial (with lips pressed very tightly together) strong plosive.
R ra:	r Voiced post-alveolar, English red.
S sa:	s Voiceless alveolar fricative, English 'S'.
Sh ʃa:	ʃ Voiceless palato-alveolar fricative, English 'sh'.
T ta:	t Voiceless alveolar plosive, English 'T'.
J dʒa:	dʒ Voiceless palato-alveolar affricative.
U u:	ʊ Lax closed back rounded short vowel.
W wa:	w Voiceless or voiced labial-velar, English 'W'.
Y ja:	j Voiced palatal fricative.
X 'ta:	't Voiceless alveo-dental (with tip of the tongue and upper teeth pressed) and very plosive

II. *Phonetic definitions of long pronounced (tensed) vowels:*

aa	Open front and back unrounded long vowel.
ee	Half-closed unrounded long vowel.
ii	Close front unrounded long vowel.
oo	Half-close back rounded vowel pronounced long.
uu	Close back round long vowel.

III. *Pronunciation Key: Vowels and consonants with unique pronunciation:*

Vowels:

	<u>Phonetic symbol</u>	<u>Example in Hadiyyisa</u>	<u>Its equivalent in English, etc.</u>
a	ʌ	baxo	as in cut
aa	ɑ:	maara	as in heart
e	e	Herego	as in bed
ee	e:	heello	as in „See“ (German)
i	I	mine	as in pretty
ii	i:	liite	as in see or better in „tief“ (German)
o	o	wore	≈ between sounds as in show and pot or better as in "so" (German)
oo	o:	moora	as in „Moos“ (German)
u	u	muta	as in good
uu	u:	buutta	as in shoe, do or better in „Fluß“ (German)

Consonants:

	<u>Phonetic symbol</u>	<u>Example in Hadiyyisa</u>	<u>Its equivalent in English, etc.</u>
C	strong tʃ ('tʃ)	cada	as in "... ³ " (Amharic)
Ch	tʃ	Chaayyo	as in chain
J	dʒ	janna	as in jaw or germ
Ph	strong p ('p)	daphpha	as pronouncing the letter "... " (Amharic)
Q	strong k ('k)	qamara	as in "... " (Amharic)
N	ŋ	hanqa, anga	as in hang
X	strong t ('t)	xare	as in "... " (Amharic)
Y	j	yaayyimma	as in yes

³ It was impossible to convert Amharic text included in the original manuscript to PDF text format thus only dots are visible here.