

IN ALTRE LINGUE

An Oromo folktale (Ethiopia)

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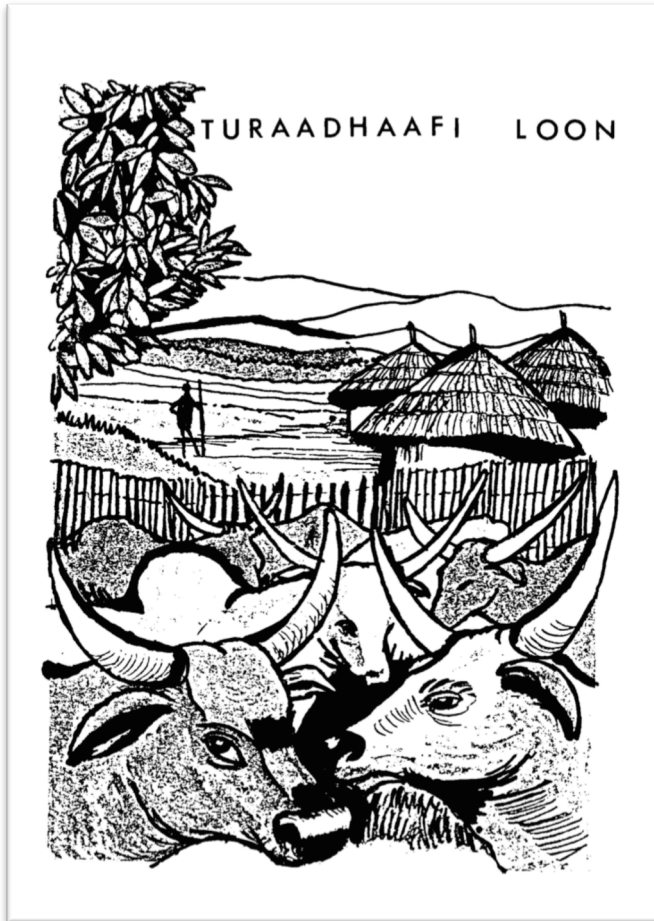
Oromo is an East Cushitic Language that belongs to the Afroasiatic phylum. It is spoken by more than 17.000.000 native speakers in Ethiopia, Kenya and south-western Somalia, from eastern Tigray to the Kenyan coast south of Malindi, and from Wollegga to the region of Harar. It is now called *Oromiffaa* or *Afaan Oromoo* by its speakers, and *Oromiñña* or *Galliñña* in Amharic, the most widely spoken language in Ethiopia. It has been written both in Ethiopian, Arabic and Latin scripts in the past, but in the '70s and '80s, during the Derg government, the Oromo opposition movements opted for the so-called *qubee*, a Latin orthography without diacritics, and introduced it among the diaspora and in some areas of Ethiopia. After 1991, when Ethiopia replaced its previous centralized organization with its new system of “ethnic federalism”, Oromo written in *qubee* was introduced in the administration and the elementary schools of the Oromo Region. As a consequence, Oromo is thus now a well established written language, with several published periodicals, novels, essays, dictionaries and collections of traditional oral literature. There are different regional varieties of Oromo, but the present-day language written in Ethiopia is based essentially upon Western and Shewan varieties, with a few elements from the East.

The Oromo tale in the following pages was published together with two other Oromo narratives in the booklet *Quluu bareedaa* “The beautiful gourd” (pp. 19-42) in 1980, i.e., more than ten years before the fall of the Derg government. Although it bears no indications concerning its author or its place of publication, it was probably published in Germany as a reading book to be used together with the *qubee* literacy booklets prepared and distributed by the Oromo opposition movement. Some features of written Oromo that became more widespread in later publications are still absent in this text, e.g., spellings like *-ootni* for *-oonni*, or *dha* spelt as a separate copula-like word when it marks the last word of a predicate noun phrase that ends in a long vowel (*saree darreedha* ‘it is a cowardly dog’ not *saree darree dha*). It belongs to a particular subgenre of traditional tales, that has been called “rescue” or “*filastrocca*” in some studies on Oromo oral literature: typically, one or more troubled characters successively address different humans, animals or even objects looking for help or offering something in order to get help in exchange. The narrative reaches its turning point when one of the addressees finally accepts to provide help, and the conclusion is arrived at through a reverse sequence where all those who were addressed previously appear again and are given what they wanted. The narrative thus displays a structure that can be characterized as ABCDEF-G-FEDCBA. This particular subgenre of tales seems to be particularly frequent among the Oromo’s, even though it also occurs in other oral literatures from the Horn of Africa.

To the knowledge of the present author, this particular tale has not been translated till now. Its text is reproduced here in the *qubee* orthography of the booklet where it was published in 1980. The main peculiarities of *qubee* are: ' for the glottal stop, *dh* for a retroflex implosive, *ph*, *x* and *q* for the bilabial, alveolar and velar ejectives respectively, *ch* for the plain voiceless palatal affricate, and *c* for its ejective counterpart, *ny* for a palatal nasal, double vowels for long vowels. Although Oromo displays tonal alternations, especially in its morphology, that have been described as a system of pitch accent, *qubee* does not make use of tone marks. (Indeed, marking tone in an Oromo standard orthography would entail several problems because of regional tonal differences and of the occurrence of complex phenomena of tone sandhi.)

In a few cases, possible misprints are pointed out in a note.

Turaadhaafi loon



Bara baayyee dura gurbaa dargageessa Turaa jedhamu tokkotu ture. Innis jeyna, gamnaafi jabaa ture. Turaan ganda tokko keessa jiraachuu ture. Dargaggoota baayyeetu ganda kana keessa jiraachuu turani. Turaan isaan hundarra jeyna, gamnaafi jabaa ture. Kanaaf duree isaanii ture.

Ganduma kana keessa intala Caaltuu jedhamtu takkatu jiraachuu turte. Caaltuun baayyee bareedduu turte, kanaaf dargaggoonni hundi isii fuudhuu fedhuu turani. Caaltuun tokkoon isaaniilee¹ fuudhuu hinbarbaanne. Dubrooniifi dargaggoonni ogguu tokko tokko sirbuu turani. Waan isiin bareedduu taateef dargaggoonni hundi Caaltuutti sirbuu fedhuu turani. Garuu Caaltuun waan isaan hinjaallanneef tokkoon isaanii wajjin sirbuu hinfeetu turte.

Turaan Caaltuutti sirbuu fedhe. "Caaltuu natti sirbitaa?" jedheen. Caaltuunis, "Lakkii, ani sirbuu hinfedhu. Ani sitti sirbuu hinfedhu," jetteen. Turaan baayyee rifate.

¹ Probably to be corrected into *isaaniillee*.

Ummanni biraas baayyeetu ganda san keessa jiraachuu turani. Jaarsotoofi jaartotatu turani. Dubrootaafi dardaratu turani. Ijoolleenis hedduu hinturani. Ummanni ganda sanii loon hedduu qabaachuu turani. Ijoollonni guyyaa guutuu loon kana tiksani. Galgala isaan hundi manatti galani. Dubartoonni loon elmanii mooraatti galchani. Hirbaatas hintolchani. Ummanni hundi hinnyaatani. San booda hinhaasawan. Ijoolleen hintaphatani. San booda isaan hundinuu hinrafani.

Halkan tokko, ogguu ummanni hundi rafuutti jiranu, hattoonni ganda san dhufani. Hattoonni loon hatani. Sa'a dullattii takka qofa mooraatti dhiisani. Kaan hundaa hatani ooffatani. Ummanni hundi rafuutti turani. Hattoonni waan baayyee qaxxisaniif ummanni hindammaqne. Sareen hindunne. Halkanichi baayyee dukkana ture, ummanni hundi hinrafani.

Ogguu barihe, ummanni hundi hinka'ani. Mana isaanii keessaa gadi babbahani. Dubartoonni loon elmuu dhaqan. Sa'a takka qofatu mooraa keessa jira. Takkuma qofa! Loon eessa jirani? "U! U! Loon eessa jiru? Loon essa jiru?" jedhanii iyyani dubartoonni.

Dhiirti iyya dubartootaa dhagayani. Gara mooraatti fiigani. "Maaltu maal tahe? Loon eessa jiru?" jedhani. Dubartoonis, "Loon hinjiranu. Booqee dullatti qofatu mooraa keessa jira. U! U! Loon eessa jiru? Loon eessa jiru?" jedhani. Oggus jaarsonni akkas jedhani, "Hattootatu halkan dhufe. Loon hatuu dhufani. Ogguu nuti rafuu dhufani. Baayyee waan qaxxisaniif nuti dhagayuu hindandeenye. Sareen hindunne. Sareen maaliif hindutini? Sarichi eessa jira?"

"Dhuguma, sareen sun eessa jira?" jette Caaltuun. "Maaliif hindutini? Saree darreedha. Rafuu ture. Hattoota hindhageenye. Hattoota loon keenya fudhachiise. Ani saree san nantuma". Oggus jaarsonni akkas jedhani, "Lakkii, yaa Caaltuu. Saree hintumin. Deemii dargaggoota barbaadi. Kootta jedhiin. Dargaggoonni loon faana dhawanii hattoota qabuu qabani. Turaatu deemuunii qaba. Turaan eessa jira?"

"Asin jira", jedhe Turaan. "Loon faana dhawuu hinbarbaadu. Caaltuutti sirbuun barbaada. Yoo kan Caaltuun natti sirbitu tahe loon fana² nandhawa". Oggus jaarsonni akkas jedhani, "Caaltuu, Turaatti sirbuu qabda. Yoo ati isaatti sirbite, inni loon faana dhawa". "Turaatti hinsirbu", jette Caaltuun. "Saree tumuu waan na dhowwitaniif itti hinsirbu. Yoo isin saree tumuu natti dhiifan, Turaatti nan sirba".

Akkasitti jaarsonni saree waamani. Akkas jedhan, "Saree, adaraa Caaltuun si hatumtu. Yoo ati tumamteef, Turaatti sirbitii. Turaanis oggu loon faana dhawa". Sareenis akkas jedhe, "Caaltuuf hintumamu. Waan isin aannan naaf hinkennineef hintumamuuf. Yoo isin aannan naa kennitan nantumamaaf".

Akkasitti jaarsonni sa'a bira dhaqani. Akkas jedhaniin, "Booqee, adaraa aannan nuu kenni. Yoo ati aannan nuu kennite, sareef kennina. Yoo sareef aannan kennine, Caaltuuf tumama. Caaltuun yoo saree tumte, Turaatti sirbiti. San booda Turaan loon faana dhawa". Saanis akkas jette, "Aannan isinii hinkennu. Waan isin marga naaf

² Probably to be corrected into *faana*.

hinkennineef, aannan isinii hinkennu. Yoo isin marga naa kennitan, aannan isiniifin kenna”. Oggus jaarsonni akkas jedhani, “Margi hinjiru. Roobni waan hinjirreef margi hinjiru. Rooba roobsisuu qabna. Risaa bira dhaqna”.

Akkasitti jaarsonni risaa bira dhaqani. Akkas jedhani, “Risaa! Roobsisi! Waaqatti ol barariitii baqaqsi. Oggus roobaa. Yoo roobni roobe, margi hinbiqila. Oggus sa’aaf marga kennuu dandeenya. Yoo sa’aaf marga kennine aannan nuu kenniti. Oggus sareef aannan kennuu dandeenya. Yoo sareef aannan kennine, Caaltuuf tumama. Caaltuun yoo saree tumte, Turaatti sirbiti. San booda Turaan loon faana dhawa”. Risaan akkas jedhe, “Ol bararee waaqa hinbaqaqsu. Waan isin hantuuta naa hinfidiniif, ol bararee waaqa hinbaqaqsu. Yoo hantuuta naa fiddan, ol barareetin waaqa baqaqsa. Oggus hinrooba”.



Akkasitti jaarsonni hantuuta bira dhaqani. Akkas jedhaniin, “Hantuuta, adaraa hantuuta xiqqoo nuu kenni. Yoo ati hantuuta xiqqoo nuu kennite, risaaf kennina. Yoo risaaf hantuuta xiqqoo kennine, waaqatti ol bararee baqaqsa. Oggus hinrooba. Yoo roobe, margi hinmarga. Oggus sa’aaf marga kennu³ dandeenya. Yoo sa’aaf marge⁴ kennine, aannan nuu kenniti. Oggus aannan saree kennuu dandeenya. Yoo saree aannan kennine, Caaltuuf tumama. Caaltuun yoo saree tumte, Turaatti sirbite. San booda Turaan loon faana dhawa”. Hantunni akkas jette, “Hantuuta xiqqoo isiniif hinkennu. Waan isin boqqolloo naaf hinfidiniif, hantuuta xiqqoo isinii hinkennu Yoo isin boqqolloo naa fiddan, isiniifin kenna”.

Akkasitti jaarsonni qottuu bira dhaqani. Akkas jedhani, “Qottuu! Adaraa boqqolloo nuu kenni. Akka hantuutaa kennuu dandeenyutti. Yoo hantuutaa boqqolloo kennine, hantuuta xiqqoo nuu kennaa. Akka risaa kennuu dandeenyutti. Yoo hantuuta xiqqoo risaa kennine, ol barareetu waaqatti baqaqsa. Akka roobni roobe margi

³ Probably to be corrected into *kennuu*.

⁴ Probably to be corrected into *marga*.

marguu dandayutti. Oggus sa'aaf marga kennuu dandeenya. Yoo sa'aaf marga kennine, aannan nuu kenniti. Akka saree kennuu dandeenyutti. Yoo saree aannan kennine, Caaltuuf tumama. Caaltuun yoo saree tumte, Turaatti sirbiti. San booda Turaan loon faana dhawa". Qottichi akkas jedhe, "Boqqolloo isiniif hinkennu. Waan albee naaf hinfediniif⁵, boqqolloo isinii hinkennu. Yoo albee naa fiddan, boqqolloo isiniifin kenna".

Akkasitti jaarsonni tumtuu bira dhaqani. Akkas jedhani, "Tumtuu! Adaraa albee nuu kenni. Akka qottuu kennuu dandeenyutti. Yoo qottuu albee kennine, boqqolloo nuu kenna. Oggus hantuutaa boqqolloo kennuu dandeenya. Yoo hantuutaa boqqolloo kennine, hantuuta xiqqoo nuu kenna. Oggus hantuuta xiqqoo risaaf kennu⁶ dandeenya. Yoo hantuuta xiqqoo risaaf kennine, waaqatti ol bararee baqaqsa. Oggus roobni roobee margi marga. Oggus sa'aa marga kennuu dandeenya. Yoo sa'aa marga kennine, aannan nuu kenniti. Oggus saree aannan kennuu dandeenya. Yoo saree aannan kennine, Caaltuuf tumama. Caaltuun yoo saree tumte, Turaatti sirbiti. San booda Turaan loon faana dhawa".

Tumtichi nama gaarii ture. Albee tokko jaarsootaa kenne.

Jaarsonni albee qottichaa kennani. Oggus qottichi boqqolloo kenneef. Boqqolloo hantuutaa kennani. Oggus hantuunni hantuuta xiqqoo kenniteef. Hantuuta xiqqoo risaaf kennani. Oggus risaan waaqatti ol bararee baqaqse. Oggus roobni roobee margi marge. Jaarsonni marga haamanii sa'aa kennani. Oggus saan aannan kenniteef. Aannan sareef kennan. Oggus sareen Caaltuu tumame. Oggus Caaltuun Turaatti sirbite. San booda Turaan loon faana dhawe. Hattoota hinqabe. Looniin galee ummata hunda gammachiise.

Translation

Tura and the cows

Many years ago there was a young man called Tura. He was brave, clever, and strong. Tura lived in a certain village. Many other young men lived in that village. Tura was the most brave, clever, and strong of them all. For this reason he was their leader.

In the same village there lived a girl called Chaltu. Chaltu was very beautiful, and for this reason all the young men wanted to marry her. Chaltu didn't want to marry any of them. The young women and men used to dance from time to time. All the young men wanted to dance with Chaltu because she was beautiful. But Chaltu didn't want to dance with any of them, because she didn't like them.

⁵ Probably to be corrected into *hinfidiniif*.

⁶ Probably to be corrected into *kennuu*.

Tura wanted to dance with Chaltu. “Chaltu, will you dance with me?” he asked her. But Chaltu answered him, “No, I don’t want to dance. I don’t want to dance with you”. Tura was very disappointed.

Many other people lived in that village. There were old men and women. There were younger women and men. There also were many children. The people of that village had many cows. The children grazed those cows for the whole day. In the evening they came all back home. The women milked the cows and led them to their kraal. They prepared the evening meal. All the people ate. After that they talked to each other. The children played. After that they all slept.

One night, when all the people were sleeping, some thieves came to that village. The thieves stole the cattle. They left just an old cow in the kraal. All the others they stole and drove away. All the people were sleeping. Since the thieves moved very silently the people didn’t wake up. The dog didn’t bark. The night was very dark, and all the people kept sleeping.

When the day dawned, all the people woke up. They came out of their houses. The girls went to milk the cows. There was only one cow in the kraal. Just one! Where are the cows? “Oh! Oh! Where are the cows? Where are the cows?” cried the girls.

The men heard the cries of the girls. They ran to the kraal. “What happened? Where are the cows?” they asked. And the girls, “There are no cows. There is only an old cow in the kraal. Oh! Oh! Where are the cows? Where are the cows?” they said. Then the elders said, “Thieves came this night. They came to steal our cows. They came while we were sleeping. We couldn’t hear them because they moved silently. The dog didn’t bark. Why didn’t the dog bark? Where is the dog?”

“Right, where is that dog?” asked Chaltu. “Why didn’t it bark? It is a cowardly dog. It slept. It didn’t hear the thieves. The thieves that took away our cows. I will give that dog a beating”. Then the elders said, “No, Chaltu. Don’t give the dog a beating. Go and look for the young men. Tell them to come. The young men will follow the tracks of the cows and catch the thieves. Tura must do that. Where is Tura?”

“Here I am”, said Tura. “I don’t want to follow the tracks of the cows. I want to dance with Chaltu. If Chaltu will dance with me, I will follow the tracks of the cows”. Then the elders said, “Chaltu, you have to dance with Tura. If you dance with him, he will follow the tracks of the cows”. “I will not dance with Tura”, replied Chaltu. “Since you prevented me from giving the dog a beating, I will not dance with him. If you let me give the dog a beating, I will dance with Tura”.

So the elders called the dog. They told it, “Dog, please let Chaltu give you a beating. If you shall get a beating, she will dance with Tura. Then Tura will follow the tracks of the cows”. But the dog replied, “I will not let Chaltu give me a beating. Since you didn’t give me any milk, I will not let her give me a beating. If you will give me some milk, I will let her give me a beating”.

So the elders approached the cow. They told it, “Cow, please give us some milk. If you will give us some milk, we will give it to the dog. If we will give the dog some milk, it will let Chaltu give it a beating. If Chaltu will give a beating to the dog, she will dance with Tura. After that Tura will follow the tracks of the cows”. But the cow replied, “I won’t give you any milk. Since you didn’t give me any grass, I won’t give you any milk. If you bring me some grass, I will give you some milk.” Then the elders said, “There is no grass. Since there has been no rain, there is no grass. We must cause rain to fall. Let us go to the *risaa*-bird.”

So the elders went to the *risaa*-bird. They told it, “*Risaa*-bird! Cause the rain to fall! Fly up to the sky and tear it open. Thus it will rain. If rain will fall, grass will sprout. Then we will be able to bring some grass to the cow. If we will bring some grass to the cow, it will give us some milk. Then we will be able to give it to the dog. If we will give the dog some milk, it will let Chaltu give it a beating. If Chaltu will give the dog a beating, she will dance with Tura. After that Tura will follow the tracks of the cows”. But the *risaa*-bird replied, “I will not fly up to tear the sky open. Since you didn’t bring me any mouse, I will not fly up to tear the sky open. But if you will bring me a mouse, I will fly up to tear the sky open. Then it will rain”.

So the elders went to the mouse. They told it, “Mouse, please, give us a small mouse. If you will give us a small mouse, we will bring it to the *risaa*-bird. If we will bring the *risaa*-bird a small mouse, it will fly up to the sky and tear it open. Thus it will rain. If rain will fall, grass will sprout. Then we will be able to bring some grass to the cow. If we will bring some grass to the cow, it will give us some milk. Then we will be able to give it to the dog. If we will give the dog some milk, it will let Chaltu give it a beating. If Chaltu will give the dog a beating, she will dance with Tura. After that Tura will follow the tracks of the cows”. But the mouse replied, “I won’t give you a small mouse. Since you didn’t bring me any corn, I will not give you a small mouse. But if you will bring me some corn, I will give it to you”.

So the elders went to the farmer. They told him, “Farmer, please, give us some corn. So that we may bring it to the mouse. If we will bring the mouse some corn, it will give us a small mouse. So that we may bring it to the *risaa*-bird. If we will bring the *risaa*-bird a small mouse, it will fly up to the sky and tear it open. So that it will rain and grass will be able to sprout. Then we will be able to bring some grass to the cow. If we will bring some grass to the cow, it will give us some milk. So that we may give it to the dog. If we will give the dog some milk, it will let Chaltu give it a beating. If Chaltu will give the dog a beating, she will dance with Tura. After that Tura will follow the tracks of the cows”. But the farmer replied, “I won’t give you any corn. Since you didn’t bring me a knife, I will not give you any corn. But if you will bring me a knife, I will give you some corn”.

So the elders went to the blacksmith. They told him, “Blacksmith, please, give us a knife. So that we may bring it to the farmer. If we will bring the farmer a knife, he will give us some corn. Then we will be able to give the mouse some corn. If we will give the mouse some corn, it will give us a small mouse. Then we will be able to bring

the small mouse to the *risaa*-bird. If we will bring the *risaa*-bird a small mouse, it will fly up to the sky and tear it open. Then it will rain and grass will sprout. Then we will be able to bring some grass to the cow. If we will bring some grass to the cow, it will give us some milk. Then we will be able to give it to the dog. If we will give the dog some milk, it will let Chaltu give it a beating. If Chaltu will give the dog a beating, she will dance with Tura. After that Tura will follow the tracks of the cows”.

The blacksmith was a good man. He gave a knife to the elders.

The elders gave the knife to the farmer. Then the farmer gave them some corn. They gave the mouse the corn. Then the mouse gave them a small mouse. They brought the small mouse to the *risaa*-bird. Then the *risaa*-bird flew up to the sky and tore it open. Then it rained and grass sprouted. The elders harvested the grass and brought it to the cow. Then the cow gave them some milk. They gave it to the dog. Then the dog let Chaltu give it a beating. Then Chaltu danced with Tura. After that Tura followed the tracks of the cows. He caught the thieves. He came back with the cows and made all the people happy.