

**VOCABULARY OF
THE TIGRÉ
LANGUAGE**

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Vocabulary of the Tigré language by Moritz von Beurmann

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MORITZ VON BEURMANN

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OF THE
TIGRÉ LANGUAGE

WRITTEN DOWN BY
MORITZ VON BEURMANN



PUBLISHED
WITH A GRAMMATICAL SKETCH

BY
DR. A. MERY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF JENA.

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TO THE
M E M O R Y
OF
MORITZ VON BEURMANN
THE ZEALOUS BUT UNHAPPY
AFRICAN EXPLORER.

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PREFACE.

When my late friend Moritz v. Beurmann returned from his first journey to Nubia and the North of Abyssinia in the year 1861, he brought with him a Tigré servant, Abu Bekr, whom he had engaged at Massowa, and who had accompanied him already on his travels in the northern boundaries of Abyssinia. During his stay at Neisse he introduced the clever young man to me, and as he spoke besides his native language, Arabic and, if I am not mistaken, Galla, I requested Beurmann to try, whether we might learn from him the general features of Tigré, of which at that time nothing was known in Europe. Our common exertions were not unsuccessful, and as our first questions belonged to some very usual Ethiopic words, we were soon able to state the general changes, which the ancient dialect had suffered in the modern pronunciation. After these first attempts we began a systematical examination, by which we hoped to obtain the outlines of a grammar, but here we had many difficulties to overcome. Not only did the rapidity of the pronunciation and the indistinct and even fluctuating character of the vowels present a great hindrance to an accurate orthography, but also the consonants especially

those of the S-class were spoken in different manners. Besides it was no easy task to obtain certain grammatical forms, especially those of the broken Plurals, for if we addressed a question to Abu Bekr, he often translated it literally in Tigré instead of answering its meaning, or vice versa, and it always required great pains to make him understand, that we wished to hear the different forms of the same word. The results of these our common exertions will be found in the following grammatical sketch.

After having left Neisse M. v. Beurmann did not abandon the idea of collecting a vocabulary of the Tigré language, and so he daily wrote down those words, which he had heard from Abu Bekr, and as he was obliged to speak with him only Arabic he followed Humbert's Guide francais-arabe, asking always the Arabic word of Humbert and writing down the Tigré translation. Though he wished to obtain all those words in Tigré, which that Arabic vocabulary contains, nevertheless the preparation for his second expedition, which alas! had so deplorable an end, required so much time, that even he with all his extraordinary energy and zeal was not able to finish this work. So when he had started again on the day after Christmas 1861 in search of Vogel's remains with the firm intention either to cross the whole African continent from Bengehazi to Chartum and Massowa, or never more to return, the materials he had collected were sent to me to be published.

I immediately prepared them for the press, arranged the vocabulary after the German Alphabet, added the Arabic words of Humbert, in order that mistakes, which scarcely could have been avoided, might more easily be detected, compared the modern words with the ancient, and lastly presented the whole to the German Oriental Society to be printed in their Journal. Though

the publication had been accepted, it was continually delayed, and so finally Munzinger's and d'Abbadie's vocabularies appeared together with Dillmann's Ethiopic dictionary, whilst the collection of Beurmann, who had been the first to prepare a work on the Tigré language, remained six years in the portfolio of the editor.

Under these circumstances, as the collection seemed too small to be published separately, I accepted with the greatest pleasure the kind offer of the Honourable Geographical Society of Leipzig, to whose members M. v. Beurmann had belonged, to receive the little work into their annual report, and this so much the more, as I regarded it as my indispensable duty to publish the only literary remains of the late author. Just at the time when the following vocabulary was about to be printed, the English Abyssinian expedition was being prepared, and by an easy association of ideas I was induced to hope, that such a Vocabulary might possibly be at this moment of practical use, if it came early enough into the hands of the members of the Abyssinian expedition, who would find in it about one thousand very usual words of the most extended Abyssinian dialect. I therefore added the English words to the German series in a separate column, and wrote a more complete grammatical sketch than I had formerly done, to make the whole collection in some degree useful also to those, who have not studied another Semitic language. By the liberality of the Geographical Society I received a number of private copies of the vocabulary, which together with an English Index and the outlines of the grammar form the present volume.

Though nobody can be more convinced of the incompleteness and insufficiency of this first essay, than I myself, I hope, that even an incomplete sketch will do a better service than nothing,