

**PRACTICAL GRAMMAR
OF THE SOMALI
LANGUAGE WITH A
MANUAL OF SENTENCES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649677719

Practical Grammar of the Somali Language with a Manual of Sentences by Evangeliste de Larajasse & Cyprien de Sampont

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

EVANGELISTE DE LARAJASSE & CYPRIEN DE SAMPONT

**PRACTICAL GRAMMAR
OF THE SOMALI
LANGUAGE WITH A
MANUAL OF SENTENCES**

PRACTICAL GRAMMAR
OF THE
SOMALI LANGUAGE
WITH A
MANUAL OF SENTENCES.

BY

REV. FR. EVANGELISTE DE LARAJASSE,

MISS. APOST., AND

VEN. FR. CYPRIEN DE SAMPONT,

ORD. SS. FRANCISCI CAP. PROVINCIÆ LUGDUNENSIS IN GALLIÀ, ALUMNI.

LONDON:

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., LTD.,
PATERNOSTER HOUSE, CHURCH LANE.

1897

nt

PJ 2532
E8

LONDON:
PRINTED BY GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, LIMITED,
ST. JOHN'S HOUSE, CLERKENWELL, E.C.

P R E F A C E.

IN presenting to the public this work, we have no other intention than to give the first elements of a Practical Grammar of the Somali Language. Therefore we have omitted all philological questions referring to the origin of the Somali language itself or to the formation of the words, as being derived either from the Arabic, Abyssinian, Galla, Suwahili or Indian languages.

All we would say now is that, although a great number of Arabic words are used by the Somali, the construction of the language is quite different from the Arabic, in the inflections of nouns and adjectives, the conjugation of verbs, and the formation of sentences.

On the other hand, the dissimilarity existing between it and the Galla is quite as great; and if in these two languages there is any affinity (which cannot be denied), there is nevertheless much of a very opposite character.

Our complete ignorance of the Abyssinian and Suwahili languages prevents us from making any comparison with them; but, according to the statement of competent persons, no affinity exists between them and the Somali language, although several words are common to all three tongues.

We nevertheless believe that the daily intercourse of the Arabs with the Somalis has given to their language that strong guttural pronunciation which surprises all Europeans when they hear it spoken for the first time, and gives them the impression that such a strange language is difficult, not to say impossible, to master.

If God favour us with life, health and time, in a subsequent study we hope to be able to satisfy the curiosity of philologists and other learned men by presenting to them some historical and philological sketches on the origin and formation of this so characteristic a language, differing as it does so much from others spoken in East Africa.

Several Manuals, either on the Somali people or of their language, have been published already; but the only one we know, having perused it when commencing our study of Somali, is a Grammar published in 1882 by Major Hunter, first Assistant Resident at Aden, and Consul of the Somali Coast. This author, in his Preface, gives the causes of the insufficiency of his work, which was not complete when he was appointed elsewhere. "I prefer," says he, "to present this work, incomplete as it is in the above respects, rather than risk the possibility of anything interfering to prevent its ultimate publication." We sincerely congratulate him on having done so, for with his data, we have been able to succeed more quickly than we expected in our own researches. The mistake of this author, if we may call it a mistake, has been to generalize too much certain principles, instead of simply showing how to speak Somali. It is precisely the insufficiency of Major Hunter's Grammar which has induced us to publish ours.

More recently another work on the Somali language has been published in Berlin by Dr. Schleicher. This, however, is more a study on the Somali language in respect of its affinity with the other languages spoken in East Africa, than a grammar of practical use to anyone wishing to learn the language.

If we know how to form a sentence to express our thoughts in an intelligible manner, we may say that we know the language we speak, that we understand its character. Therefore, in order to facilitate the study of the Somali language to the large number of persons who have been and would be disheartened by its peculiarities, irregularities and even mysteries, we publish without delay this firstfruit of long, constant and persevering labour. Although not as yet perfect, it will be a great help to anyone wishing to learn the Somali language, and the difficulties which at first sight seemed insuperable, will be found not so great as they were thought to be.

In this Practical Grammar, as well as in our Somali Vocabulary, we give the words as they are pronounced and used in Berberah, the chief place of business in Somaliland, at which the different tribes call several times during the year. We treat firstly of the forms and inflections of the words, and afterwards present as clearly as possible the construction of the language as it is spoken all around us.

For us, this work has been the more arduous in that the only literature this language possesses is some prayers translated from the Arabic, besides traditions and stories, and poems orally transmitted in each tribe. Indeed, without the help of some young Somalis brought up and educated in our Mission

at Aden, we should have been unable to publish so soon our researches.

The great desire, not to say the will, of the Propaganda of Rome being that Roman characters should be used for all classical works which Missionaries publish on the languages of the peoples they are sent to, we therefore, for writing Somali phonetically, employ (1) the Roman characters with their Latin pronunciation, (2) some signs used in the Syrian alphabet (S. J. Beyrouth) for the transliteration of Arabic into Roman characters, and (3) the letter *ā*, as explained in the Alphabetical Table.

Now, we hope that our essay, in spite of the inherent imperfections of a first work, will be favourably accepted, and that it will contribute to and encourage a more thorough study of this language, a knowledge of which would be so useful to those travellers and sportsmen who yearly visit the Somali country, either for science or for sport.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PREFACE	v
INTRODUCTION.—Alphabet and Pronunciation	1
THE ARTICLE (CHAP. I.)	7
Singular.—With Masculine Nouns	9
With Feminine Nouns	12
Plural.—With Masculine Nouns	14
With Feminine Nouns	15
Distinctions of —a, —i, —u	15
Use of a and i without Support	19
Article employed alone	21
THE NOUN (CHAP. II.)	22
Of Gender	24
Of Number	27
Of the Cases	29
List of Nouns of Relationship	33
List of Utensils, Tools, &c.	35
Illustrative Sentences	37
THE NUMERALS (CHAP. III.)	44
Cardinal Numbers	44
Distributive Numbers	48
Periodical Numbers	49
Fractions	49
NAMES OF MONEY	50
Ordinal Numbers	52
Indefinite Numerals	53