

GRAMMAR OF THE LAKHER OR MARA LANGUAGE

PART I.—ORTHOGRAPHY

Lakher Alphabet and Pronunciation

The Mara alphabet consists of the following twenty-five letters and sounds broken up into

13 Consonants

10 Vowels, viz :—

a, aw, y, e, i, o, ô, u, ao, yu,

Two Sounds, viz :—

ch and ng

The two vowels *ao* and *yu* are diphthongs.

The two vowels *o* and *ô* are also sounds not letters.

Note.—All syllables in the Mara language end in a vowel never in a consonant and if this be remembered it will greatly aid in quickly mastering the pronunciation of the words, they are as follows :—

<i>A</i>	<i>a</i>	like ar in the English word ark
<i>Aw</i>	<i>aw</i>	like au in the English word maul
<i>F</i>	<i>y</i>	like ur in the English word cur, murmur, (but this sound must be spoken more in the throat). In some villages it is pronounced like the eu in the French word feu—fire, but this becomes more pure on learning to read. It is also pronounced like Swedish ö as in ö—land.
<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>	as in English
<i>Ch</i>	<i>ch</i>	like ch in the English word charmer
<i>D</i>	<i>d</i>	as in English
<i>E</i>	<i>e</i>	like a in the English word ape
<i>H</i>	<i>h</i>	like h in the English word hope. When h is placed at the end of a syllable or word it denotes that the preceding vowel sound must be abruptly shortened. This is the only time that a syllable or word in Mara may end in a consonant and then it has no value in itself save to shorten the preceding vowel sound.
<i>I</i>	<i>i</i>	like ea in the English verb to tac
<i>K</i>	<i>k</i>	as in English
<i>L</i>	<i>l</i>	as in English
<i>M</i>	<i>m</i>	as in English
<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	as in English
<i>Ng</i>	<i>ng</i>	like ng in the English word wronger
<i>O</i>	<i>o</i>	like oung in the English word young only the ng is a nasal half sound and not the ng of the English full sound, this sound needs a lot of studying to pronounce it correctly.

Ô ô this is a combination of sounds, like ar in the English word ark combined with a short aw sound concluding with a nasal half sound ng and not the full sounded ng as in English ; these three sounds must be sounded in one sound with no hiatus between them.

Note.—To the inexperienced ear this sound is often confused with the diphthong ao but it should in no wise be confounded with it as it is a distinct sound of its own and is of very great importance.

P	p	as in English
R	r	like r in the English word riot, but the r must be distinctly rolled.
S	s	as in English
T	t	as in English
U	u	like o in the English verb to do
V	v	as in English
Z	z	like z in the English word zebra

There are two diphthongs in Mara, they are :—

Ao ao like ar in the English word ark combined with a short aw sound, but there must be no hiatus between these two sounds but uttered in one and the same breath. This diphthong is sometimes by itself a word.

yu like the Mara y and u with no hiatus between them and the two sounds uttered in one and the same breath, this is a sound of some importance and should be well practised.

All the ordinary vowels in Mara, viz:—a, aw, e, i, u, being long there are only a very few instances where the vowel needs a circumflex accent placed over it to increase the length of that sound, but it is most important that words thus accented should be given particular attention to, as forgetting to accent such a vowel or *vice versa* changes the meaning entirely in some few words, especially is this the case with the vowel 'a' for instance :—

Cha pi va na—I won't give it to you.

Cha pi vâ na—I shall give it you.

(see the verb, Future Indef.)

When *ch*, *k*, *p*, or *t* are combined with *h* they are pronounced as follows :—

Chh like *ch* in the English word churn.

Kh like the *kh* in the English word khaki.

Ph like *ph* in the English word uphand.

Th like *th* in the English word Thomistic.

these must be distinctly aspirated and there must be no hiatus between the *c* and *h*, *k* and *h*, *p* and *h*, *t* and *h*, and must be pronounced in the same breath. When the liquids *l*, *m*, *n*, and *r* are aspirated they are preceded by the letter *h*, the initial *ng* is never aspirated in Mara.

GRAMMAR AND DICTIONARY OF THE LAKHER OR MARA LANGUAGE



सत्यमेव जयते

BY THE LATE

REGINALD ARTHUR LORRAIN

Founder of the Lakher Pioneer Mission,
and author of "Five Years in Unknown Jungles".

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