

Review Articles

**Arnold Kiel: *A Bibliography of the Maa Language and the Maasai People (East African Languages and Dialects vol. 25)*, 2015, Köln, Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 258 S., CD-ROM, € 39,80 [ISBN 978-3-89645-710-3]
by Sergio Baldi, Napoli**

Maasai or Maa is an Eastern Nilotic language spoken in Southern Kenya and Northern Tanzania by the Maasai people, numbering approximately one million people. It is closely related to the other Maa varieties: Samburu, the language of the Samburu people of central Kenya, il-Chamus, spoken south and southeast of Lake Baringo; and Parakuyu spoken in Tanzania. The Maasai, Samburu, il-Chamus and Parakuyu peoples are historically related and all refer to their language as *ɔl Maa*. Properly speaking, “Maa” refers to the language and the culture and “Maasai” referring to the people “who speak Maa.”

The loss of the Maasai language, while not rapid, is happening as a result of close contact with other tribal groups in East Africa and the rise of Swahili and English as the dominant languages.

The author of this bibliography is Rev. em. Arnold Kiel, who spent a great part of his active life either among or in close neighbourhood to the Maasai people and “Although the compiler of this Maa bibliography is not an expert in the study of African languages, the editors of the series *East African Languages and Dialects* find the result of his long-lasting collection worth to be presented to wider academic public” (Foreword: p. 5).

The work is an enormous mass of information about this language and its speakers, collected in a period of almost thirty years by the author. The collection of nearly 3,800 entries is the main part of this Bibliography (pp. 42–240) and they are listed according to the author’s alphabetical order. Each item is preceded by some ten capital letters with round brackets, which inform the reader about the topics of the listed work by a progressive number. The broad classification of them is given at p. 8 and it covers: **A.** Palaeontology, Archaeology, Geology, History; **B.** Geography, Climate, Zoology, Botany, Ecology; **C.** Anthropology; **D.** Psychology, Medicine, Nutrition, Gender Issues; **E.** Religion; **F.** Way of Life; **G.** Modern Development; **H.** Language (incl. Literature in Maa Language); **I.** Popular Literature; **J.** Varia (Films, Music, also Research). The work is enriched

by a list of periodicals quoted (pp. 14–32) and major theses as well as important works on Maa Language and the Maasai People (p. 37).

At the end there is an Index of subjects (p. 241–258), which reach from Administration up to Witchcraft, where the author tries to gather the items listed alphabetically for making easier the research on a special subject. Here some of the main headlines are: Agriculture, Anthropology, Archaeology, Bible, Christianity/Churches, Climate, Colonialism, Culture, Dress, Ecology, Education, Family, Famine, Films, Folklore, Food, Geography, Housing, Lakes, Languages, Law, Linguistics, Literature, Livestock, Maa, Marriage, Medicine/Diseases, Mission, Museum, Music, National Parks, Pastoralism, Politics, Religion, Research, Statistics, Tourism, Trade, Tribes, Vegetation, Water, Wildlife, Witchcraft.

A reader will here find a great relevant material for any research or curiosity about the language and its speakers. We should felicitate with the author and with the editors for giving to the researchers a useful instrument at hand.

Before ending this brief presentation of the work, I like to note two things. One point affects the material presented in alphabetical order, making the job easier for the compiler of the bibliography, but diminishing its scientific value and represents a waste of time for those who consult a particular topic. In fact I tested a specific grammatical subject under Linguistics (p. 248) and, after being forced to go through 48 items, it was hardly to find what I was looking for! This is a very sensitive issue, as I was able to experience myself, filling the first linguistic bibliography of the Hausa language as a Master's thesis, published by the Istituto Italo-Africano of Rome in 1977, where I followed what done in the Swahili bibliography by Alberto Mioni, i.e. listing the items according to the subjects and not alphabetically!

The second observation relates to the editorial format of the CD that appears in a “white anonymous form” without any indication printed on it. Given the costs of the work and the quality of published works by Köppe, it is worth to be read and it is a valuable source of scientists who are concerned with Maa studies.

References

- Baldi, S. 1975. *Systematic Hausa Bibliography*. M.A. thesis (Duquesne University, Pittsburgh), published by Istituto Italo-Africano, Roma 1977, 140 p.
- Mioni, A. 1967. “La bibliographie de la langue swahili. Remarques et supplément à la *Swahili Bibliography* de M. Van Spaandonck”. *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, 27, VII: 485–532.