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Libyan Center for Amazigh Studies

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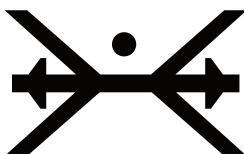
Learn Tamaziyt

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Eastern Nafousi Dialect
(Yefren & Kalaa)

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Intro

Welcome to this special book, a labor of love crafted to connect the Libyan Amaziyya diaspora with their heritage, language, and culture. For those living outside Libya, particularly in English-speaking countries, this book serves as a lifeline to our shared roots, a bridge that carries the beauty of Tamaziyyt language and traditions to the next generation. It is more than a language guide; it is a cultural compass for families eager to maintain their identity in an ever-changing world.

The Eastern Nafusi dialect, the focus of this book, is spoken primarily in the Nafusa Mountains of Libya, including vibrant communities like Yefren and Alqalea. It is a unique branch of the Tamaziyyt language family, characterized by distinct phrases, pronunciations, and expressions that reflect the deep history of the region. While speakers of other Tamaziyyt dialects can understand Eastern Nafusi, its particular style carries the cultural signature of the Nafusa Mountains, making it a treasure worth preserving.

Language is more than a means of communication; it is the vessel through which our values, history, and identity are carried. For many in the Libyan Amaziyya community abroad, ensuring that children grow up speaking Tamaziyyt is an act of cultural preservation and a way to pass on the pride of belonging to a community with a rich heritage. In a world that often pushes for assimilation, this book is a reminder of the importance of holding onto what makes us unique.

What makes this book unique is its focus on practical, everyday Tamaziyyt. You will find dialogues and exercises written in Tifinay, the authentic script of the Tamaziyyt language, alongside English translations. This bilingual approach ensures accessibility for learners who primarily speak English while

also introducing them to the beauty and functionality of the Tifinay alphabet. Every chapter is designed to engage learners through fun, relatable conversations, making the process of learning Tamaziyt both educational and enjoyable.

But this book is about more than language—it's about community, family, and identity. For the Libyan Amaziy diaspora, teaching Tamaziyt is a way to stay connected to a homeland that may be far away geographically but is always close at heart. It is also about creating a future where our children grow up proud of who they are, rooted in the wisdom and resilience of their ancestors.

Whether you are a parent wanting to pass on the gift of Tamaziyt to your children, a teacher developing a curriculum for young learners, or an individual eager to explore the culture and language of the Nafusa Mountains, this book is your companion. By the end, you will not only have learned a language but also gained a deeper appreciation for the Amaziy way of life—a tapestry of tradition, resilience, and harmony with nature.

Let this book be the start of a lifelong journey into Tamaziyt. Are you ready to embark on this journey? Let's begin, and may the path of learning be as joyful and rewarding as the connections it will create!

Lesson 1:

The Tamaziyt Alphabet

Objective

To introduce learners to the Tamaziyt alphabet, focusing on recognizing Tifinagh letters, their sounds, and examples of their use in words. The lesson is designed to help students match Tamaziyt sounds with familiar English equivalents.

The Alphabet

The Tamaziyt alphabet, written in Tifinagh, consists of 30 primary sounds. These include 24 consonants, 2 semi-consonants, and 4 vowels.

1. Consonants

The table below outlines the consonants, their pronunciation, and examples of words in Tamaziyt and English.

Tifinay	Sound	Like	Word		Meaning
ᚢ	f	f in fun	+ᚢᚢ+	<i>tfuyt</i>	Sun
ᚦ	b	b in bat	ᚦᚦ	<i>baba</i>	My father
ᚪ	m	m in man	+ᚪᚪ+	<i>tamamt</i>	Honey
+	t	t in top	+ᛖᛖ+	<i>tisnt</i>	Salt
ᚮ	d	d in dog	ᛖᚮ	<i>adfl</i>	Snow
ᚫ	r	r in red	ᛖᚫ	<i>ari</i>	Write
ᚫ	n	n in net	ᛖᚫ	<i>insi</i>	Hedgehog
ᚫ	l	l in light	ᛖᚫ	<i>ils</i>	Tongue
ᚫ	s	s in sun	+ᛖᚫ	<i>tafsa</i>	Snake
ᚩ	z	z in zebra	ᛖᚩ	<i>izm</i>	Lion
ᚪ	c	sh in shoe	ᛖᚪ	<i>uccn</i>	Wolf
ᚫ	j	j in jungle	ᛖᚫ	<i>ijdi</i>	Sand

Tifinay	Sound	Like	Word		Meaning
ጂ	g	g in go	ጂጂጂ	agmar	Horse
ጽ	k	k in kite	ጽጂጂ	akrcun	Foal
ሮ	h	h in hat	ሮሮለጂ	ahidug	Idiot
ኅ	ȝ	French r	ኅኅር	ayrum	Bread
ኅ	đ	Emphatic d	ኅኅኅ	tadfi	Tast (food)
ኅ	ት	Emphatic t	ኅኅ	aṭu	Wind
ሮ	ሱ	Emphatic s	ሮሮሮሮ	aşmmid	Cold
ሮ	ሱ	Emphatic z	ሮሮሮሮ	tayazidt	Chiken
ጽ	q	Arabic ق	ጽጽጽ	yqqur	Dry
ሮ	ሮ	Arabic ح	ሮሮሮ	muሮmd	Mohammed
ሮ	ሮ	Arabic خ	ሮሮሮ	aሮab	Arabic
ጽ	x	Arabic خ	ጽጽ	xald	Khaled

2. Semi-Consonants: Two intermediate sounds.

Tifinay	Sound	Pronunciation	Word	Meaning
ሮ	y	y in yes	ሮሮ	Meat
ሮ	w	w in water	ሮሮ	Word

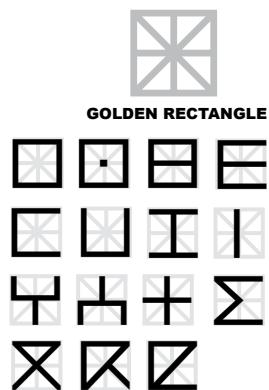
3. Vowels: Three vowel sounds.

Tifinay	Sound	Pronunciation	Word	Meaning
ሮ	a	a in apple	ሮ	Water
ሮ	i	i in india	ሮ	Soul
ሮ	u	u in blue	ሮ	Face

3. Neutral: Tifinay letter ሮ is used when two identical consonants appear together, the ሮ is used to separate them and make the pronunciation clearer, but it has no sound by itself.

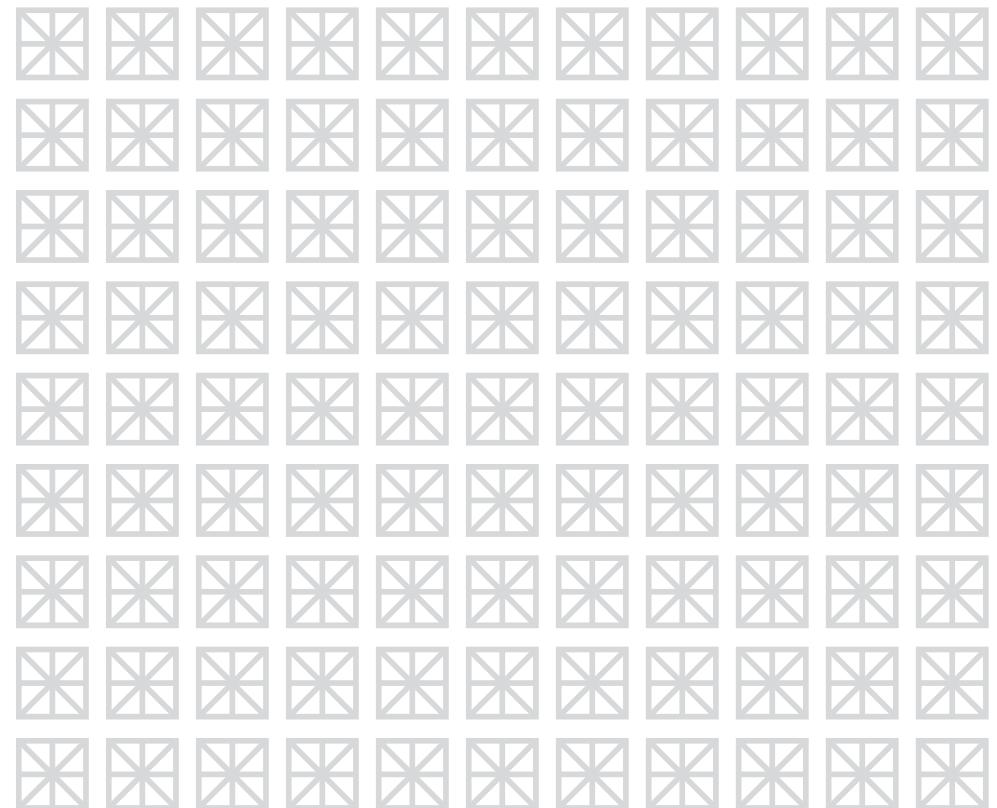
Tifinay	Sound	Pronunciation	Category
ሮ	Neutral e	Like e in the	Schwa

Note: Don't stress about memorizing these words right now. The key focus is to understand how each letter sounds.



taught to recognize and learn the shapes of the alphabet.

Exercise: Use your pencil to trace each letter of the alphabet.



Anecdote: The ancient Tifinay script was traditionally written in an angular style, with letters designed to resemble squares or sharp geometric shapes. This angular structure suggests that all Tifinay letters can be arranged within a golden square. By drawing lines connecting the corners and a plus sign in the center, the shapes of all the letters can be derived. This geometric approach is how young children are taught to recognize and learn the shapes of the alphabet.