

Chōōnii :soboön muut

Learn to read and write in Sabaot



A short introduction to the basic principles of reading and writing in the new, scientific writing system for the Sabaot language in Kenya.

This revised edition was prepared by Johnson Kipkirich and Iver Larsen, and published in 2006.

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Preface

This booklet is meant for Sabaot speakers who already know how to read and write in English and Kiswahili. It requires patience and effort to learn to read our own language, but **Āmē :chii booryēēnyii**. Remember also that **Chōōnii :soboon muut** and **Muytaayeet :kirkit**.

It was not until the early 1980's that Sabaot received an alphabet based on scientific, linguistic principles. Once the writing system was developed, there was a need to teach the Sabaot people how to use it, since no one had ever learned to read or write Sabaot in primary school. Three courses were developed: The introductory course (1-3 days), the intermediate course (one week) and the advanced course (one week or more). The first booklet to teach the writing system was produced in 1983 and was called **Korooryo ku taay**. It was meant for self instruction, but was also used as a basis for the three courses. Later, a simpler course book was developed for the intermediate course containing more exercises for class use. That book assumes that a teacher is available.

We wrote the present revised book, because many people had expressed an interest in having a book that they could study on their own. Many Sabaot people live in major towns, and they cannot easily attend one of the courses offered on Mt. Elgon. They can now use this book to study independently.

When you have finished this book, you may want to go on and study the more advanced book: **Korooryo ku taay**.

The dictation exercises in this book require an instructor or a friend who has already learned how to read Sabaot well. If you are not near an instructor, you may skip the dictation exercises. Answers for the exercises are provided in the back of the book.

In order to do the reading exercises you need to get hold of one or more of the Sabaot story books or the easy readers with Bible stories.

We hope that you will enjoy this book and that it will help you to learn to read and write Sabaot well.

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Introduction

Until very recently, Sabaot children were not taught to read and write their own language in schools. The main reason for this lack of teaching was the lack of school books in Sabaot.

Today there are many books available in the Sabaot language. Many children learn to read and write Sabaot in schools and a generation of Sabaot people will grow up who can read and write their own language.

This revised book is your opportunity to learn to read and write in Sabaot. There are a few rules that you will have to learn, but the most important thing you need to do is to start listening to yourself and others as you speak. The Sabaot language has many more vowels than Kiswahili and different ones from English. You already know all of them! You use them every time you speak Sabaot or listen to someone who speaks to you in Sabaot. There are both short and long vowels, heavy and light vowels. Most of the consonants are the same as in Kiswahili and English, but some are different. You will learn those differences in this book.

The whole Sabaot language is already in your head! Your ears can hear it, your brain makes you understand it, and your mouth knows how to say all the sounds in Sabaot. In this book you will learn topics like vowel harmony, grammatical tone marks and counting in Sabaot. It might seem hard in the beginning, because you are so used to reading and writing Kiswahili and English. But as you go through this book, you will find it very interesting and will understand why the Sabaot writing is different from Kiswahili and English. The lesson on numbers will help you to count in Sabaot properly and also to mention Bible chapters and verses in Sabaot.

If you study this book carefully, you will understand the basic principles that allow you to read Sabaot. When you have finished the book, you will feel proud that you can now read your own language. However, to obtain the goal of fluent reading, you need to practice by reading additional booklets. We suggest you aim to read about 10 pages per day or 50 in a week.

Lesson 1: Dialects of Sabaot

All languages around the world have some dialect differences, and Sabaot is no exception. There are three major dialect areas: Sabiiny (Sebei), Koony and Book. Within Koony there are the sub-dialects of Māsoob and Sōmēēk. Māsoob is more original and less influenced by other languages, and Sōmēēk is somewhat influenced by Book. Within Book there is the sub-dialect of Bong'om. The Terik people in Nyang'ori originally came from Book, but have been strongly influenced by Nandi.

One difference between Book on the one hand and Koony and Sabiiny on the other is that Book has kept the original “r” while Koony and most Kalenjin dialects have changed to “l” in a word like lēēl, which used to be rēēl as it still is in Marakwet. But then Book has since changed all “l”s to become “n”s. That is how “rēēl” became “rēēn”, “leel” became “neen” and “leekweet” became “neekweet”. A few words are also different. For instance, a goat in Book is “waarweet”, but in Koony, a “waarweet” is either a goat or a sheep, while a goat is “ng'orooryēēt”. Where Koony say “kule”, Book say “kini”. Where Koony say “kēēchiirēk”, Book say “kēēchiirōk”.

Another difference between Book and Sabiiny on the one hand and Koony on the other is that the short vowel “e” as in “berber” has changed to “a”, so that in Book and Sabiiny, this word is pronounced “barbar”. All short “e” sounds have become “a” sounds. The same applies to Marakwet.

In January 1981, the chief of Cheptais and the chief of Kapsokwony called Sabaot leaders together in order to discuss which dialect to use as the standard for writing purposes. After a long discussion, both meetings decided to use the Koony as the standard, because everybody felt that Koony was more original and also closer to other Kalenjin languages. That does not mean that other dialects are less valued or important. It was only a practical solution for the sake of publishing books, especially the Bible and school books.

These dialectal differences do not have a significant influence on the Sabaot alphabet. All dialects share the features of vowel length, heavy vowels, grammatical tone and the other things you will learn in this book. Once you have completed this book, you will be able to read and write Sabaot, no matter what your own particular dialect happens to be.

Lesson 2: Long and short vowels

Sumaneetaab 2: Twēkuutēk chēē kooyēch āk chēē nwookēch

A vowel can stand on its own and be pronounced by itself. Vowels are called “twēkuutēkaab ng'aleek” in Sabaot, or in short just “twēkuutēk”. In this lesson you will learn the all important difference between the long and short vowels in Sabaot.

Let us look at the following words as written in a poor writing system:

Karam (good)
Karam (wasps) (long form is karamik)
Karam (she drew water)
Karam (I drew water)

Do the words sound different? Listen carefully to the length of the vowels.

Since the vowels are different, a good writing system ought to show that difference. The easiest way is to write the short vowels with a single letter and the longer ones with a double letter as you see here:

Karaam (good)
Kaaraam (wasps)
Karam (she drew water)
Kaaram (I drew water)

Try to listen to the following words and compare the length of the vowels in each word in column 1 with the word in column 2. The verbs are given in their root form:

| a | aa |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Ata (how many) | Ataa (unripe) |
| Cham (love) | Chaam (whisper) |
| Nam (catch) | Naam (follow) |
| Banan (be poor) | Banaan (make poor) |
| Rat (tie) | Raat (today) |
| Tay (refuse) | Taay (first, ahead; fold) |

o

oo

Bot (get lost)
Chol (be disappointed)
Sob (become well)
Yot (sweat)

u

But (pluck)
Mut (bring, marry)
Nun (rot)
Nur (be wet)
Sus (bite)
Tuy (crash)

i

Bir (hit)
Miny (live)
Sir (write)
Yit (arrive)

Boot (lose something)
Chool (melt something)
Soob (heal)
Yoot (pull gently, spy on)

uu

Buut (surround)
Muut (slowly)
Nuun (cause to rot)
Nuur (make something wet)
Suus (fry)
Tuuy (black)

ii

Biir (defeat)
Miiny (be deaf)
Siir (jump over)
Yiit (cause to arrive, count)

If you speak the Koony dialect, you can also compare the following minimal pairs:

e

Ker (close)
Key (milk)
Tech (trap)
Ter (crack, burst)
Wech (flash)

ee

Keer (replace)
Keey (self)
Teech (build)
Teer (be different)
Weech (turn around)

You have now seen why it is important to write single and double letters. If we did not write the long sound different from the short sound, then the writing system would be very confusing. Just imagine that all of the above words in the two columns were written the same, regardless of whether the sound was short or long.

Let us now look at the following words in Kiswahili:

Karibu
Karibuni

*Are any of the sounds in these words longer than the other sounds?
Which ones?*

There is a rule in Kiswahili that vowel number 2 from the end is always long. It is not necessary to write the long vowel in Kiswahili, because people learn how to pronounce it correctly based on the position of the vowel.

Now look at: Tunakaa

How many syllables does this word have?

It has four syllables: Tu-na-ka-a

The second vowel from the end is in the -ka- syllable, so it becomes long. Then another -a- syllable is added. The result is a long vowel followed by another vowel. Therefore the -kaa ending in this word sounds very long. It is two syllables, with the first vowel lengthened. But a word like chaam in Saboot has only one syllable. Do not pronounce it chaam as if it was a Kiswahili word.

Do not think that the double aa in karaam is like the aa in tunakaa. That would be a mistake.

In Kalenjin, there are short vowel sounds like *a* in *cham*, and there are vowel sounds that are 50% longer like *aa* in *chaam*. Remember that the -*aa*- sound in Kalenjin is not a long sound like -*aa*- in Kiswahili. It has normal length, but it is a bit longer than the very short vowel sound -*a*-.

Exercise 1: (Reading)

Read the following proverbs several times until you can read them fluently as if you were speaking:

- 1. Karaam choorwaanti.**
- 2. Ma ng'oom chii kuchurta.**
- 3. Chabaay baan.**
- 4. Meemoontee chii koong'.**
- 5. Karaam mbareet kubiir rubiyaanik.**
- 6. Weekoot yiit.**

7. **Koonyit chii nyoo koonyitiing'.**
8. **Samis muryaa ku bo chii.**
9. **Meetorooch kimakeet.**
10. **Meetwaay eereen saaruur.**

Exercise 2: (A dictation exercise used in a course with a teacher)
See page 37.

Lesson 3: Heavy and light vowel sounds

Sumaneetaab 3: Twēkuutēk chēē nyikiisēch āk chēē kuskusēch

In this lesson you will learn that Sabaot has both heavy and light sounds and that this is something special for Kalenjin languages. It is not found in Kiswahili and English, so there is no model to follow in terms of writing these sounds.

Translate the following words into Sabaot and listen to the vowels as you pronounce them:

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| those | come |
| steal | thieves |
| your eye | your house |
| long | liver |
| clever | backbite |
| spear somebody | put |
| heifer | heifers |
| soft | soft (plural) |
| tough | tough (plural) |

Describe the difference in sound in the above pairs of words. How could this difference be shown in the writing system?

Some sounds in Sabaot are heavy (nyikiisēch), others are light (kuskusēch). The heavy sounds are written with a bēēruutyēēt (line, mark) over the vowel as follows:

oo

Choo (those)
 Choor (steal)
 Koong'uung' (your eye)
 Kooy (long)
 Ng'oom (clever)
 Toor (spear somebody)
 Roor (heifer) (or Roorta)

o

Bonbon (soft)
 Kolkol (tough)

ōō

Chōō (come) (or Chōōno)
 Chōōr (thieves) (or Chōōriik)
 Kōōng'uung' (your house)
 Kōōy(to) (liver)
 Ng'ōōm (backbite)
 Tōōr (put)
 Rōōr (heifers)

ō

Bōnbōnēch (soft, plural)
 Kōlkōlēch (tough, plural)

Notice how both short and long vowels can be either heavy or light.

Now compare the following pairs of words:

ee

Kween (firewood)
 Beel/Been (burn)
 Choorweet (friend)
 Keelteet (tooth)
 Meey (die)
 Yeeyiik (oxen)

ēē

Kwēēn (in the middle)
 Bēēl/Bēēn (elephants)
 Chōōrwēēt (a specific tree)
 Kēēlto (path)
 Mēēy (yawn)
 Yēēyto (an ox)

Those who speak the Koony dialect also have a difference between light “e” and heavy “ē”, but Book speakers use “a” instead of “e”:

e

Berber (stupid) (Barbar)
 Tenten (slim) (Tantan)
 Terter (weak) (Tartar)
 Wech (flash) (Wach)

ē

Bērbērēch (stupid, plural)
 Tēntēnēch (slim, plural)
 Tērtērēch (weak, plural)
 Wēch (hate)

What is the difference in the above words?

Even though this is a different vowel sound than above, the same line over can be used. It is the heavy sounds that get a line over.

The same applies to the sound “a” when it occurs in the beginning of a word:

| a | ā |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Abus (hit with stick) | Ābuch (turn upside down) |
| Anii (I) | Ānō (where) |
| Ake (one, another) | Ākoo (and) |
| Areet (clan) | Āriit (inside) |

Exercise 3: (Reading)

Read the following proverbs several times until you can read them fluently as if you were speaking:

- 1. Biitēē siilaakweet yēē mii ake.**
- 2. Iloombuuchē siimootwēēt keetiik chuut.**
- 3. Irēēku mooyēēt motoonyta kōōsuuwunēē barak.**
- 4. Isoobē biich chēē ng'eri kōōr.**
- 5. Kikēwētunēē keey kēny nkōkōōk mēkēyiik.**
- 6. Kunuur kēēltaab murēn.**
- 7. Kōōrēētaab chii ku bo chii.**
- 8. Kōōtaab ng'al kuutiit.**
- 9. Kooy koong'taab Yēyiin.**
- 10. Ma wuuy cheeng'eet, wuuy riibsēēt.**
- 11. Āmē chii booryēēnyii.**
- 12. Ākēsēnēēning' batay nto moo?**
- 13. Āmu kwaak biich āyēēng' mwēēng'.**
- 14. Ānkoo iyēku kiiruk, mēēyoomtōōsii ākwootiisyēk āyēēng'.**
- 15. Yoo kēēsoom rōōtwo iyēēng'sēē, ikētitooy āk karaas.**

Exercise 4: (Dictation)

See page 37.

Exercise 5:

Fill in the missing short or long vowel in the following sentences:

1. We'll see each other tomorrow - Makeekas k__y t__n

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2. Light a lamp | - N__m t__riit |
| 3. I am writing a letter | - Ās__rē barw__t |
| 4. A friend has arrived | - Kayit ch__rw__t |
| 5. The thief stole five cows | - K__choor ch__riintēēt t__ka m__t |
| 6. How many boys do you have? | - It__nyē wēēr__k at__? |
| 7. He has thirty cows | - Tiny__ tuuka s__s__m |
| 8. She has millet flour | - T__nyē b__sy__k__b b__ka |
| 9. I fetched water | - K__r__m b__ko |
| 10. Where do you live? | - Im__nyē __nō? |
- (Answers on page 37.)

Lesson 4: Vowel Harmony

Sumaneetaab 4: Choomnyēētaab twēkuutēk

In this lesson you will learn that heavy vowels like to stay together in the same word, and light vowels also want to stay together. The heavy vowels are stronger than the light vowels, and a heavy vowel can change a light vowel to become heavy.

How would you write “steal” and “He is stealing it”?

Choor Chōōrē

What happened to the -oo- sound in choor?

(It became heavy).

How would you write “foretell” and “He foretells”?

Ng'oor Ng'ōōrē

What happened to the -oo- sound in ng'oor?

(It became heavy).

How would you write “strangle” and “He strangles it”?

Keet Kēētē

What happened to the -ee- sound in keet?

(It became heavy).

The final part of these words is **-ē**, and the meaning of this part is present or future tense. (In linguistic terms it is an imperfective aspect marker that shows an action which is not completed). Notice that **-ē** is a heavy vowel. In Kalenjin languages the heavy sounds dominate the light ones. This means that a heavy vowel has the power to change a light sound into a heavy sound. That is why the light **-oo-** in *choor* is changed to the heavy **-ōō-** in *chōōrē*. This is called vowel harmony (choomnyēētaab twēkuutēk).

In lesson 2 we looked at many words which were similar, except that some had a short vowel sound and others a long vowel sound, for instance:

| | |
|------|-------|
| Cham | Chaam |
| Nam | Naam |

How would you write “He is whispering”?

Choomē

In this case, the **-ē** part also changes the light **-aa-** in *chaam* to a heavy sound. However, this sound is like the long light **-oo-**, so we write the word as *choomē* without lines over the **-oo-** sound. Notice that the sound is similar to the **-oo-** in *choor*, but different from the **-ōō-** in *chōōrē*.

How would you write “She is stepping on the gourd”?

Toorē tarkeet

If someone had written Tōōrē tarkeet, what would that mean?

If we did not write the lines over the heavy vowels, how could people know the difference?

Which of the following would you prefer for “He is tying the cow”?

1. Ratē teeta
2. Rotē teeta
3. Rātē teeta

*Are the vowels in **rātē** heavy or light? Is the -a- sound in **rātē** the same as in **rataat**? Is it the same as in **sobē**? What about the sound in **sōmōk**? What would be the best way to write this sound?*

Remember that because **-ē** is a heavy sound, and because of vowel harmony, this heavy **-ē** changes the **-a-** in *rat* to become heavy. Since we already have a way of showing heavy vowels by adding a line on top, it makes good sense to write the word as **rātē**. The **ā** sound is in between **a** and **o** in the Koony dialect, however, in the Book dialect it sounds like **ē**. We therefore have a slight problem because of the difference in pronunciation between the dialects. The only way to solve the problem is to learn the grammar and write according to the grammar. If the root word in the Koony dialect has an “a” like in *rat, bat, cham, kas, bakach, nam, am*, then we use the **ā** letter for the sound in the following words which have added the **-ē** suffix: **rātē, bātē, chāmē, kāsē, bākāchē, nāmē, āmē**.

Many nouns in Sabaot have a final suffix **-ta** as in *asiista, roorta, roobta, saang'ta*. These words also have short forms: *asiis, roor, roob, saang'*, and that shows us that the **-ta** at the end is a suffix.

If the root of the noun has a heavy word, the final suffix **-ta** becomes heavy. We could have written this as **-tā**, but since the speakers of all the dialects pronounce this sound as **-to**, it was decided at the orthography seminar in Kapsokwony to write it with the letter **o** instead of the letter **ā**. Therefore, we write **muuyto**, not **muuytā**, **bēēnyto**, not **bēēnytā**, **yēēyto**, not **yēēytā**.

You will need to remember the following rule about how to write the short heavy **a** sound:

ā is used at the beginning of a word, when the sound is between **a** and **o**, but **ā** is never used at the end of a word. Always use **o** at the end of a

word. **ā** is used inside a word if we know that it is really an *a* that has changed to **ā** because of vowel harmony. (Or if the Book speakers pronounce it as **ē** rather than *o*.)

The last part of this rule tells you to write an *o* in *bot* (be lost) and *botē* (getting lost). The word *bot* does not come from *bat*. The same applies to *sob* (become well) and *sobē* (he becomes well). The word *sob* does not come from *sab*. However, we write an **ā** in *bātē* (*split firewood*), *rātē* (*tie*), *sābē* (*follow the river*) etc, because these words come from *bat*, *rat*, *sab* etc. On the other hand, if the word has a short *e* in Koony like in *ker*, we write *kērē*, even though a Book speaker would say *kar* and then *kērē*. This is one of the most complicated things in Sabaot writing because of the dialect differences. One has to learn these rules, and one has to know what the root form of the word is in the standard dialect. This can be checked from the Sabaot dictionary.

The heavy vowels are special to Kalenjin languages and do not occur in Kiswahili. Therefore, there is no way of writing these vowels using the Kiswahili alphabet, or the English alphabet. Imagine if someone wanted to write Sabaot with the Kiswahili alphabet. They might write a word like *Kator*. Now, should that word be understood as *Kātōr* (He plucked the beans) or *Kāātōr* (I plucked the beans) or *Kaatoor* (I threw a spear) or *Katoor* (he threw a spear) or *Kāātōōr* (I put it)? There are many possibilities for misunderstanding, if the writing system does not differentiate between such words.

Exercise 6: (Reading)

Read the following proverbs and riddles several times until you can read them fluently as if you were speaking:

1. Intōōyē bēērbēēryo, kulētu ng'oomnān.
2. Āmē kuut nyoo kyaam mwaay saakaat.
3. Ānkoo ku tuuy teeta, ku leelach chēēko.
4. Bārē koorko kwaak kooyēēy.
5. Bēētii ng'aleekaab kibng'ōōkisyoo ākoy bokusyoor keey nkit.
6. Bo tyoony chii nyoo kēēkōōtēnē, āmēēbērē nyoo kābākāchē.
7. Boonto biiko keelek, āmēēbērē tukuuk tukul.
8. Ibutyinē tariit mōkōyoo nyēē kiikwaamee āmnyoo.
9. Karaam kulētunēē chii mokornoontiit kusiir kunyooyee.
10. Kāstooyiin koong', yēbiitiin yiit.

Chēbotyoonkōōchook:

1. Āboontē lakwanyuu nyēē sabuul kereeng'. (Saakyaanteet)
2. Āboontē lakwanyuu nyēē yyoong'ēē kereenkeet akeenke. (Boobchaanteet)
3. Āmiing', āmēēkāsē. (Kēmēwuut)
4. Choorweenyuu nyēē mābākooktoo. (Kitōōntōyēēnyuu)
5. Māloonyē tulwo. (Āynēēt)

Exercise 7: (Dictation)

See page 38.

Exercise 8: Put lines over the heavy vowels in the following:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Ame beenyto. | He is eating meat. |
| 2. Chame siriisyeet. | He likes the writing. |
| 3. Kiisoob Yeesu biich. | Jesus was healing people. |
| 4. Bakache biich muchas. | Greed kills people. |
| 5. Kichoor inee tuuka ayeeng'. | He stole two cows. |
| 6. Choor bichoo. | Those people are thieves. |
| 7. Teebuutek chee karoomech. | Good questions. |
| 8. Murenik chee koroomech. | Fierce men. |
| 9. Kebeneet nyee woo. | A big cave. |
| 10. Nyikiisech ng'echeroochu. | These chairs are heavy. |
- (See answer on page 38).

Lesson 5: Recent past tense ka- Sumaneetaab 5: Kiyēē kātākuyēyāksē

In this lesson you will learn the markers (prefixes) for recent past tense that describes an action which took place earlier on the same day. This is a grammar lesson, but it will help you to read better and especially to write Sabaot accurately.

*In the first lesson we looked at the words **karam** and **kaaram**. What is the difference in meaning?*

The root is *ram*, and the *ka-* in the beginning of a word shows that it happened earlier the same day.

If it happened yesterday, what would the word be?

Koram. (We will look at this later).

If it happened long time ago, what would the word be?

Kiram (Or: Kiiram in the Book dialect). (We will look at this later).

Let us look at how the word changes according to who is the one who drew water recently:

| | |
|----------|---------------|
| Anii | <i>Kaaram</i> |
| Inyiing' | <i>Keeram</i> |
| Inee | <i>Karam</i> |
| Acheek | <i>Keeram</i> |
| Akweek | <i>Kooram</i> |
| Icheek | <i>Karam</i> |

Let us do the same for the word for teaching:

| | |
|----------|------------------|
| Anii | <i>Kaaneet</i> |
| Inyiing' | <i>Keeneet</i> |
| Inee | <i>Keeneet</i> |
| Acheek | <i>Kakiineet</i> |

| | |
|--------|----------------|
| Akweek | <i>Kooneet</i> |
| Icheek | <i>Keeneet</i> |

Compare the two sentences:

1. Māchē kuram bēēko “She wants to draw water”
2. Māchē kooneet tiibiik “She wants to teach the girls”

Those words that go with *ku-* as in *kuram* are called *ku-class* words (linguists call them class one) and those that go with *koo-* are called *koo-class* words (class two). **Ram** is a *ku-class* word and **neet** is a *koo-class* word. What is the difference between a *ku-class* word and a *koo-class* word for the recent past tense? Compare the words above. The difference is for “he/she/they” and “we”. Compare *karam inee* with *keeneet inee* and compare *kakeeram acheek* with *kakiineet acheek*. The *koo-class* words have an extra *i-* before the root, and that *-i-* merges with the *ka-* so that *ka-* plus *-i-* becomes *kee-*, and *kee-* plus *-i-* becomes *kii-*. For more about these vowel merging rules, see the advanced reading book: *Koroorya ku taay*.

Now let us look at the word **sob** “get well”. How would this word be in recent past tense:

| | |
|----------|--------------------|
| Anii | <i>Kāāsob</i> |
| Inyiing' | <i>Kēēsob</i> |
| Inee | <i>Kāsob</i> |
| Acheek | <i>Kākēēsobchē</i> |
| Akweek | <i>Kōōsobchē</i> |
| Icheek | <i>Kāsobcho</i> |

(The *-chē* and *-cho* are plural suffixes, used with certain words.)

*Is the o-sound in **sob** light or heavy?*

It is actually heavy. It is a kind of heavy *a*, but it sounds more like an *o* than an *a* in both the Koony and Book dialects. That is why it is written with an *o* without a line over, even though it is heavy. A simple way of testing whether a word is heavy or not is to find out whether the sound changes when you add the *-ē* suffix. Compare **sob** “get well” with **sobē** “He is getting well”. Did the *o* sound change? No. When it does not

change, it means that it is already heavy, so it cannot be made more heavy than it already is.

Because the **o** in **sob** is a heavy sound, it causes the **ka-** in **kāsob** to become heavy. Notice also how the other prefixes become heavy because of the heaviness of the **sob** word:

Instead of **kaa-** as in **kaaram** we have **kāā-** as in **kāāsob**

Instead of **kee-** as in **keeram** we have **kēē-** as in **kēēsob**

Instead of **koo-** as in **kooram** we have **kōō-** as in **kōōsobchē**

The pieces like *ka-*, *kaa-*, *kee-* and *koo-* are called **prefixes**, because they are fixed before the root of the word. A piece like *-ē* or *-chē* which is added to the end of the word is called a **suffix**.

You have now met the **āā** letter for the first time. This letter is **only used in prefixes** like **kāā-sob**, **kāā-nēētiintēēt**, **kāā-bātiintēēt** **Kāābkātēēny**. The actual sound varies with the dialects. In Koony, the sound is like the *oo* sound, but in Book the sound is much closer to the *aa* sound, but still not quite an *aa*.

Understanding the grammar of your language will help you to read and write better and to learn it more quickly.

Another way of testing whether a word is heavy or light is to add the prefix *ka-* that shows the recent past tense as you learned in this lesson. Is the word “bir” (beat) heavy or light? If it is light, we will get *kabir*. If it is heavy we will get *kābir*. Which of the two is correct?

Kābir is the correct one. Therefore *bir* is a heavy word, and it changes *ka-* to become *kā-*. This is caused by the vowel harmony rule. We are not putting lines over the heavy sounds *i*, *ii*, *u*, and *uu*, because the difference in sound is very small in Koony, and most Book speakers don't pronounce them different at all.

It is possible to use both the prefix *ka-* and the suffix *-ē* at the same time.

How would you say: “He was drawing water (when something happened)”?

Kārāmē bēēko.

Now look at the same sentence with different persons doing the action:

| | |
|----------|-----------|
| Anii | Kāārāmē |
| Inyiing' | Kēērāmē |
| Inee | Kārāmē |
| Acheek | Kākēērāmē |
| Akweek | Kōōrāmē |

Now do the same for the **sob** word:

| | |
|----------|-----------|
| Anii | Kāāsobē |
| Inyiing' | Kēēsobē |
| Inee | Kāsobē |
| Acheek | Kākēēsobē |
| Akweek | Kōōsobē |

Exercise 9: (Dictation)

See page 38.

Exercise 10: (Reading)

Read the first story from *Bākāchē biich :muchas*. Don't worry about the tone marks like : / - and +. They will be explained later.

Exercise 11: Add the (bēēruutyēēt) line over the vowels where it is needed in the following sentences (Answers on page 38):

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Kaasob anii. | I got well. |
| 2. Kaabatik acheek. | We are farmers. |
| 3. Ankete kaasoobiinteet. | I know a healer. |
| 4. Kibaytooy ng'etunyto tyoong'iik. | Lion ruled the animals. |
| 5. Ki tuuyech makoonkook kenya. | Guinea fowls used to be black. |

Lesson 6: The Sabaot consonants

Sumaneetaab 6: Toloochik ām kuutiitaab Sabaot

In this lesson we will study some small differences between consonants in Kiswahili and Sabaot. Most consonants cannot be pronounced on their own, but they need a vowel to lean against. That is why consonants are called “Toloochikaab ng'aleek” or in short “toloochik” in Sabaot.

So far you have been reading in Sabaot without having to worry about the consonants, because you already know the consonants from other languages. In fact, if we only wanted to teach you how to read in Sabaot, there would be no need to talk about consonants. However, in order to learn to write properly, we must also study consonants.

Nine Sabaot consonants are pronounced and written the same as in Kiswahili. They are:

M, n, ny, ng', r, l, s, y and w.

However, there are some special consonants in Sabaot and in Kalenjin which are pronounced different from Kiswahili and English. They come in pairs and are:

p-b t-d ch-j k-g

In English and Kiswahili, we can find many words which are different only in these consonants. We call them minimal pairs, because the difference in sound is minimal. Only the first sound in the word is different. Compare the initial (first) consonants in each of the following words and listen carefully. Many Kalenjin speakers have great difficulty even hearing the difference.

| | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|---------|
| pata | bata | papa | baba | pima | bima |
| taka | daka | tamu | damu | toa | doa |
| chana | jana | chuma | juma | machozi | majonzi |
| kani | gani | koma | goma | kaa | gaa |
| pit | bit | bee | pea | push | bush |
| tie | die | got | god | dear | tear |
| choke | joke | cheer | jeer | chew | Jew |
| card | guard | class | glass | gold | cold |

Can you find any such minimal pairs for these consonants in Sabaot?

They do not exist. This means that there is no significant difference between these consonants in Sabaot, or indeed in any Kalenjin language. The sound is in between and acts like a chameleon. Between vowels they tend to move to one side, but in the initial position, they sound a bit different. It is best to use only one letter for each sound, so in Sabaot the following consonants are used:

b, t, ch and k

The following consonants are *never* used:

p, d, j and g

However, we can still have two ways of writing for names of people and places, because such names are used by outsiders and by Sabaots when they communicate to outsiders. The two ways are the proper Sabaot way and the way we are used to which is basically Kiswahili or English. For example:

Cheptais – *Chēēbtāyiis*, Kaptama – *Kaabtaama*, Chebet –
Chēēbēēt

The consonant “f” has been borrowed into Sabaot. It is only used in loan words from English or Kiswahili. Some of the words with the letter “f” are: Chiifuut, fuuntiit, feeteet, tifaayiik, faraasiit, Farisaayeeek, fāyiliit.

Exercise 12:

Put a tick by the words below which are spelled correctly (answers on page 38):

| | | |
|----------|----------|----------|
| kaakas | kaagas | gaagas |
| biiko | biigo | |
| boontēēt | boondēēt | poontēēt |
| rāmchi | rāmji | |
| taapteet | taabteet | |
| tisap | tisab | |
| targeet | tarkeet | |
| baankeet | paangeet | baangeet |

We also need to study the weak consonants *w* and *y*. These two consonants are a special case, because they are in between the vowels and consonants. They are sometimes called semivowels.

Although these consonants are also found in Kiswahili and English, there is a difference. In Kiswahili, these consonants - or any other consonant - can never occur at the end of a word. All proper Kiswahili words must end in a vowel. That is why Bantu languages always add a vowel to words borrowed from English. For instance, “net” becomes “neti” and “map” becomes “mapu”. An English word ending in -y like May becomes Mei, because *y* is a consonant when it occurs at the end of a word in English. But Kiswahili can never have a consonant at the end of a word, so it changes it to the vowel “i”. Sabaot has no problem with having a consonant at the end of a word, so there is no need to change a -y to become -i. The English word *May* sounds almost as Sabaot *meey*, just as the English word *boy* sounds almost as Sabaot *booy*. The proper Sabaot spelling of *mooy* is not *moi*, because *mooy* has only one syllable, not two as in *mo-i*. In fact, *mo-i* in two syllables would sound almost like *mooyi* (this calf).

The same applies to the letter *w*. Kiswahili can never have a word ending in *w*, but Sabaot can have such words, for instance *keew*.

Another difference is that Kiswahili can often have two or more vowels together in the same word like *chui*, *sijui*, *chai*, *maua*. Sabaot can never have two different vowel letters together in one word. This is an important rule to remember:

Two different vowels can never stand side by side in Sabaot.

Because the semivowels *y* and *w* are in between a consonant and a vowel, they become weak when surrounded by vowels. The *y* consonant is closely related to the vowel *i*, and the *w* consonant is closely related to the vowel *u*.

In the beginning of a word the *y* is weak before an *i* and the *w* is weak before a *u*, but we still write them. The word for count in Sabaot is *yiit*, not *iit*, even though in some other Kalenjin languages it may be *iit*. The same applies to words like *yib*, *yiil*, *yiileet*, *yim*, *yiim*, *yiinēēt*, *yiiny*, *yis*, *yiisyēēt*, *yit*, *yiiwoot*. In the same way, *w* is used before an *u*, even though the sound is weak, for instance: *wuu*, *wuuch*, *wukan*, *wul*, *wuulyēē*, *wun*, *wuun*, *wunuktē*, *wuunweet*, *wuny*, *wur*, *wuroowuriit*, *wuruur*, *wuurwēēt*, *wus*,

wusiit (Swahili: uzi), wusōōnēēt, wuusyō, wut, wuut, wutuut, wuutyēē, wuy, wuuy, wuuyēt, wuuyēēt, wuuytē.

Between vowels the *y* and *w* are also weak, but are still written. For instance, the recent past tense forms of *yit* are: Kaayit, keeyit, kayit, kakeeyit, kooyit, and **not** kait, keit, kait, kakeit, koit. The same applies to *kaayaat* from *yaat*. Remember that two vowels cannot stand side by side in Sabaot. The vowels must be separated either by a semivowel or by a hyphen (we will look at hyphens later).

There are two consonants that can appear double. They are the *y* and the *r*. Not many words have these double consonants.

For **-rr-** we have: arraa and korrōōn.

For **-yy-** we have: lēyyē, mayyeek, kayyeek, kaayyee, yyoony, yyēyii, yyētiit.

Exercise 13:

Put a tick by the words spelled correctly below (answers on page 38):

| | | | |
|----------|-----------|---|------------|
| tuuyta | tuita | tuuita | tuuyda |
| kaaliet | kaalyeet | kalyet | kaalyet |
| keuet | keewet | (kewet is a different word than keewet) | |
| chabai | chabay | chabaay | chapaay |
| baibai | paipai | baybay | paybay |
| sagityek | saakitiek | saagityeek | saakityeek |

Exercise 14: (Dictation)

See page 39.

Exercise 15: (Reading)

Read another story from *Bākāchē biich :muchas* or one of the other Sabaot story books. After you have practiced reading the story several times, read it aloud for someone else.

Exercise 16: (Writing)

Write five proverbs or riddles, or write a short letter to a friend. Try to get your writing checked by a friend who is experienced in writing Sabaot.

Lesson 7: Subject tone mark ☐ :

Sumaneetaab 7: Bēēruutyēēt nyēē ibooru kule ng'oo nyēē kāyēyē

In this lesson we will see how the grammatical tone difference for subject can be indicated in writing and thereby help the reader to immediately understand the meaning of the text.

Translate the following sentences into Sabaot:

The old man told him
He told the old man

Chēēbēēt refused the boy
The boy refused Chēēbēēt

The lion killed the young man
The young man killed the lion

Do these pairs of sentences sound the same or different? How would you describe the difference?

In the first pair the sound of *boontēēt* is different. In the second one both the words *Chēēbēēt* and *wēēriit* sound different. And in the third the words *ng'ētunyto* and *murēnēēt* sound different. In order to show that difference a mark (:) is put before the one who did the action. So we write them like this:

The old man told him
He told the old man

Kimwoochi :boontēēt
Kimwoochi boontēēt

Chēēbēēt refused the boy

Kitay :Chēēbēēt wēēriit
(nto: Kitay wēēriit :Chēēbēēt)

The boy refused Chēēbēēt

Kitay :wēēriit Chēēbēēt
(nto: Kitay Chēēbēēt :wēēriit)

The lion killed the young man
The young man killed the lion

Kibakach :ng'ētunyto murēnēēt
Kibakach :murēnēēt ng'ētunyto

Exercise 17: (Dictation)

See page 39.

Exercise 18:

Put the subject tone mark where necessary in the following sentences.
(Answers on page 39)

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Kimwoochi maamaanyii. | His uncle told him. |
| 2. Kakas sikiryēēt. | He saw the donkey. |
| 3. Kimwoochi Yēēsu rubiikyii. | His disciples told Jesus. |
| 4. Murēnēēt nyēē kibakaakta koorkēēnyii. | The man whose wife left him. |
| 5. Bākāche biich muchas | Greed kills people. |
| 6. Ng'oom chii nyoo kyaam nyalil. wise. | The person who suffered is wise. |
| 7. Mākōōniing' bēsēn rwoo. | A debt will not let you sleep. |
| 8. Yyēēchinē tērēētaab bēēko kurkat. | A water pot may break at the door. |
| 9. Solwo koong'. | The eye is a fool. |
| 10. Weekoot yiit. | Go and scoop the ear. |

Exercise 19: (Reading)

Practice and read aloud a short story.

Exercise 20: (Writing)

Write a short story of one page. It could be a traditional story or a personal experience. Remember to mark every subject with the subject marker.

Lesson 8: Indefinite tone mark /

Sumaneetaab 8: Bēēruutyēēt nyēē ibooru kule -/mākiinkētē nyēē kāyēyē

In this lesson we shall look at the grammatical tone difference between an indefinite verb form and a verb with first person plural as subject.

Translate the following sentences:

We ploughed the land
The land was ploughed

The cow was stolen
We stole the cow

We taught the boys
The boys were taught

Do they sound the same or different?

Yes, they do sound slightly different. In the first pair “we ploughed” and “it was ploughed” sound different, and in the second the difference is between “it was stolen” and “we stole”, and in the third it is between “we taught” and “they were taught”. To differentiate between them we use the mark (/) when the one who does the action is not known. We call this the indefinite tone marker. So we write them like this:

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| We ploughed the land | Kikiibat mbareet |
| The land was ploughed | /Kikiibat mbareet |

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| The cow was stolen | /Kikeechoor teeta |
| We stole the cow | Kikeechoor teeta |

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| We taught the boys | Kikiineet wēēriik |
| The boys were taught | /Kikiineet wēēriik |

Exercise 21: (Dictation)

See page 39.

Exercise 22: (Reading)

Read and study the following sentences, and make sure you read with the proper tone mark:

1. /Kāmēēkyoomēē nyēē mutuus.
2. /Kēēbirē maat ku lōō.
3. /Kēēbirēē ng'al sokoo.
4. /Kēēchuulē keet ku mining'.
5. /Kēēriibē chii nyoo (i)mnyoonē.
6. /Kiiwoong'unēē kisōōcho ng'woonin.
7. /Kiiyēēlē tany koong' nto /kēēchārē.
8. /Kyoomē tilya.
9. /Kyoomiisyēē too.
10. Mārōōbēnu kōōt yoo /kākiinēm suuswoontēēt akeenke.

Exercise 23: (Writing)

Write five proverbs and five riddles and be careful to mark the subject and indefinite markers where necessary.

Lesson 9: Middle past tense, distant past tense and hyphens

Sumaneetaab 9: Kiyēē kōyēyāksē, nyēē kiyēyāksē ākoo bēēruutyēēt nyēē ituuytōōs twēkuutēk

In this lesson we shall look at the middle past tense marker *ko-* and the distant past tense marker *ki-* and also show the use of hyphens in words that start with a vowel.

In lesson 5 we looked at the ***recent*** past tense for these three words:

| | |
|----------|-----------------|
| Anii | <i>Kaaram</i> |
| Inyiing' | <i>Keeram</i> |
| Inee | <i>Karam</i> |
| Acheek | <i>Kakeeram</i> |
| Akweek | <i>Kooram</i> |
| Icheek | <i>Karam</i> |

| | |
|----------|------------------|
| Anii | <i>Kaaneet</i> |
| Inyiing' | <i>Keeneet</i> |
| Inee | <i>Keeneet</i> |
| Acheek | <i>Kakiineet</i> |
| Akweek | <i>Kooneet</i> |
| Icheek | <i>Keeneet</i> |

| | |
|----------|-----------------|
| Anii | <i>Kāāsob</i> |
| Inyiing' | <i>Kēēsob</i> |
| Inee | <i>Kāsob</i> |
| Acheek | <i>Kākēēsob</i> |
| Akweek | <i>Kōōsob</i> |
| Icheek | <i>Kāsob</i> |

You will notice that *kiineet :inyiing'* and *kiineet :inee* have the same spelling for *kiineet* even though they sound different. In a good writing system the spelling and pronunciation should correspond, so we need to

add another tone mark which is mainly used in the past tenses in Sabaot. This is the tone mark for you (inyiing'). We take the apostrophe (') from the end of inyiing' and put it in front of the verb so that we get 'kiineet :inyiing'.

To show the *middle* past tense (yesterday's tense), Sabaot uses the prefix *ko-* (*koo-* in Book).

| | | |
|------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Anii | <i>Kwaaram</i> | I drew water yesterday |
| Inyiing' | <i>Kweeram</i> | You drew water yesterday |
| Inee | <i>Koram</i> | He/she drew water yesterday |
| Acheek | <i>Kokeeram</i> | We drew water yesterday |
| Akweek | <i>Kwooram</i> | You drew water yesterday |
| /Mākiinkēt | <i>/Kokeeram</i> | It was drawn yesterday |

| | | |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Anii | <i>Kwaaneet</i> | I taught yesterday |
| Inyiing' | <i>'Kweeneet</i> | You taught yesterday |
| Inee | <i>Kweeneet</i> | He taught yesterday |
| Acheek | <i>Kokiineet</i> | We taught yesterday |
| Akweek | <i>Kwooneet</i> | You taught yesterday |
| /Mākiinkēt | <i>/Kokiineet</i> | It was taught yesterday |

| | | |
|----------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Anii | <i>Kwāāsob</i> | I got well yesterday |
| Inyiing' | <i>Kwēēsob</i> | You got well yesterday |
| Inee | <i>Kōsob</i> | He got well yesterday |
| Acheek | <i>Kōkēēsobch</i> | We got well yesterday |
| Akweek | <i>Kwōōsobchē</i> | You got well yesterday |

To show the *distant* past tense (long ago), Sabaot uses the prefix *ki-* (*kii-* in Book).

| | | |
|------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Anii | <i>Kyaaram</i> | I drew water long ago |
| Inyiing' | <i>'Kiiram</i> | You drew water long ago |
| Inee | <i>Kiram</i> | He/she drew water long ago |
| Acheek | <i>Kikeeram</i> | We drew water long ago |
| Akweek | <i>Kyooram</i> | You drew water long ago |
| /Mākiinkēt | <i>/Kikeeram</i> | It was drawn long ago |

| | | |
|------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Anii | <i>Kyaaneet</i> | I taught long ago |
| Inyiing' | <i>'Kiineet</i> | You taught long ago |
| Inee | <i>Kiineet</i> | He taught long ago |
| Acheek | <i>Kikiineet</i> | We taught long ago |
| Akweek | <i>Kyooneet</i> | You taught long ago |
| /Mākiinkēt | <i>/Kikiineet</i> | It was taught long ago |

| | | |
|----------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Anii | <i>Kyāāsob</i> | I got well long ago |
| Inyiing' | <i>'Kiisob</i> | You got well long ago |
| Inee | <i>Kisob</i> | He got well long ago |
| Acheek | <i>Kikēēsobchē</i> | We got well long ago |
| Akweek | <i>Kyōōsobchē</i> | You got well long ago |

Notice how the tense markers merge with the person markers so that *ko-* plus *a-* becomes *kwaa-* (*kwāā-* in a heavy word) and *ki-* plus *a-* becomes *kyaa-* (*kyāā-* in a heavy word). In the same way *ko-* plus *i-* becomes *kwee-* (*kwēē-* in a heavy word) and *ki-* plus *o-* becomes *kyoo-* (*kyōō-* in a heavy word).

A few words in Sabaot begin with a vowel, so in order to separate the prefixes from the vowel root, we use a hyphen. This helps the reading process, and it shows that we have more than one syllable. We are using *am* 'eat', *āmiis* 'escort' and *irii* 'break' as examples:

| | Recent past | Middle past | Distant past |
|------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Anii | kaa-am | kwaa-am | kyaa-am |
| Inyiing' | 'kee-am | 'kwee-am | 'kii-am |
| Inee | kaam | kwaam | kyaam |
| Acheek | kakyaam | kokyaam | kikyaam |
| Akweek | koo-am | kwoo-am | kyoo-am |
| /Mākiinkēt | /kakyaam | /kokyaam | /kikyaam |
| Anii | kāā-āmiis | kwāā-āmiis | kyāā-āmiis |
| Inyiing' | 'kēē-āmiis | 'kwēē-āmiis | 'kii-āmiis |
| Inee | kēē-āmiis | kwēē-āmiis | kii-āmiis |
| Acheek | kākyoomiis | kōkyoomiis | kikyoomiis |
| Akweek | kōō-āmiis | kwōō-āmiis | kyōō-āmiis |
| /Mākiinkēt | /kākyoomiis | /kōkyoomiis | /kikyoomiis |

| | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Anii | kāā-irii | kwāā-irii | kyāā-irii |
| Inyiing' | 'kēē-irii | 'kwēē-irii | 'kii-irii |
| Inee | kā-iri | kō-iri | kii-iri |
| Acheek | kēkēē-irii | kōkēē-irii | kikēē-irii |
| Akweek | kōō-irii | kwōō-irii | kyōō-irii |
| /Mākiinkēt | /kākēē-iri | /kōkēē-iri | /kikēē-iri |

Exercise 24: (Reading)

Practice reading a story, and then read it aloud.

Exercise 25: (Writing)

Write about what happened a moment ago or yesterday and the most fascinating thing that ever happened in your life that you will live to remember. (About half a page for each).

Lesson 10: More tone marks

Sumaneetaab 10: Bēēruutēk alak subak

In this lesson we shall look at three more tone marks used in Sabaot.

We have so far learned three tone marks. They are:

1. Subject tone mark - *Kāmwoochi :moomo*
2. Indefinite tone mark - */Kikeecham siriisyēēt*
3. Tone mark for second person (inyiing') - *'Keeneet (:inyiing')*

Boonto :kuutiitaab Sābāwōōt bēēruutēk lo chēē kichāmchiin :siriik āk booyik ām tuuyōōsyēk chēē chaang' kule /kēēyēyiisyē ām siriisyēētaab kuutiini sukunyumnyumiit :sumaneet. Mii :bēēruutyēēt nyēē ibooru kule ng'oo nyēē kāyēyē kiyooto. Kumii :nyēē ibooru kule -/mākiinkētē nyēē kāyēyē, nyēbo sōmōk kōōbooru kule chiitaab āyēēng' nyēē kōyēyē.

Notice that the tone mark for indicating second person subject (you) is especially important for the koo-class verbs like neet, suus, etc. It helps us to get the difference between the following pairs of sentences:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| a. 'Kiineet (:inying') | - You taught him |
| b. Kiineet (:inee) | - He taught him |
| a. 'Kēēsuus bēēnyto | - You fried the meat |

b. Kēēsuus bēēnyto - He fried the meat.

For ku-class words it is less important to use in the past tenses, but it is still recommended because it helps us to see the difference between pairs of sentences like:

- a. 'Keecham siriisyooni - You accepted this writing
- b. Keecham siriisyooni - Let us accept this writing
- a. 'Keesir barweet - You wrote a letter
- b. Keesir barweet - Let us a write a letter

The other three tone marks are:

- 4. Emphatic past tense tone mark (!)
- 5. Negative tone mark (-)
- 6. Future tone mark (+)

Emphatic past tense tone mark !

Bēēruutyēēt nyēē ititiirē

The emphatic tone mark is an exclamation mark that is placed before the word like the other tone marks.

The emphatic tone mark points at the different intonation used when you want to emphasize what you are saying. Listen to the difference in sound in the following sentences:

- 1a. Kaakas I saw it
- 1b. !Kaakas I really saw it!
- 2a. 'Keeneet You taught (him)
- 2b. !'Keeneet You have definitely taught (him)
- 3a. Kakas He saw it
- 3b. !Kaakas He really saw it
- 3c. Kaakukas He really saw it

Now, for the third person subject (when the person doing the action is *he/she/it/they* instead of *I* or *you*), the Koony dialect would often say *!Kaakas*, but in the Book dialect it is more common to say *Kaakukas* (he

definitely saw it), where the extra *-ku-* is added. For a koo-class word, it would be *Kaakooneet* (He definitely taught (him)). In order to accommodate the Book speakers, it was decided to normally use the longer forms *kaakukas* and *kaakooneet* in the standard writing.

Negative tone mark -

Bēēruutyēēt nyēē tāyiisyē

Future tone mark +

Bēēruutyēētaab kiy nyēē makuyeyakay

Compare the following two sentences:

1. Māābiriing' - I will hit you
2. Māābiriing' - I will not hit you

How do you know the difference?

Yes, there is a tone difference, and that is why we need tone marks to distinguish them. One sentence talks about something that will happen in the future, so we use a plus sign before the word. The other talks about something that will not happen, so we use a minus sign before the word:

1. +Māābiriing' - I will hit you
2. -Māābiriing' - I will not hit you

Let us compare the future and negative in a verb paradigm for all the possible subject forms. Because the *-ku-* (or *-koo-*) prefix is used in the future forms, but not in the negative forms, it is not necessary to use the tone markers for third person:

- | | | |
|-----|---------------|----------------------|
| 1a. | +Māāmwoobook | I will tell you |
| 1b. | -Māāmwoobook | I will not tell you |
| 2a. | +Mēēmwoowoo | You will tell me |
| 2b. | -Mēēmwoowoo | You will not tell me |
| 3a. | Mākumwoowēēch | He will tell us |
| 3b. | Māmwoowēēch | He will not tell us |

| | | |
|-----|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 4a. | +Mākēēmwoobook | We will tell you |
| 4b. | -Mākēēmwoobook | We will not tell you |
| 5a. | +Mōōmwoowoo | You will tell me |
| 5b. | -Mōōmwoowoo | You will not tell me |
| 6a. | +/Mākēēmwoobook | It will be told you |
| 6b. | -/Mākēēmwoobook | It will not be told you |

Exercise 26:

Put the + and - tone marks where necessary in the following sentences.
(Answers on page 39):

| | |
|------------------------|-------------|
| 1. I will tell you | Māāmwoobook |
| 2. I will not tell you | Māāmwoobook |
| 3. I will be sleeping | Māārweē |
| 4. I will not sleep | Māārweē |
| 5. I will not come | Māāchōōnii |
| 6. I will be coming | Māāchōōnii |
| 7. I will not cry | Māāriirē |
| 8. I will be crying | Māāriirē |

Exercise 27: (Writing)

Write the following Kiswahili sentences in Sabaot with the necessary tone marks. (Answers on page 40):

- 1a. Mama akamwambia
- 1b. Akamwambia mama
- 2a. Shamba lililimwa
- 2b. Tulilima shamba
- 3a. Umeyakaanga?
- 3b. Ameyakaanga?
- 4a. Nitawaambia
- 4b. Sitawaambia
- 5a. Hakika, nimemwona
- 5b. Nimemwona

Exercise 28: (Reading)

Read the following sentences and study how the tone marks are used:

1. Karaam :teeta kuuyu, /kēēbāyēē leekwa.
2. /Kēēchuulē keet ku mining'.
3. 'Kēētēbēē terek amayye.
4. Kiy nyēē -'mēē-āmē, kwoomē :ake.
5. -/Mākiimēlchiintōōs kirōkōōn āyēēng'.
6. -'Mee-am ng'ōōki.
7. -Mēēbuurē :tukun chēbo chōōrsō.
8. -'Mēēmōlōlchi chii kiyēē manaayey.
9. /Simkiinkētē too.
10. Yoo 'kēēmwēyēē buun, -meeyeey lēt.
11. +Māākōōniing' beesaanik chēē imāchē.
12. -Māākōōniing' beesaanik chēē imāchē.

Lesson 11: Adjectives and numbers

Sumaneetaab 11: Nyēē ibooru wōlēē wuu :kiy ākoo kāāyiitiisyēēt

Adjectives are words that describe people or things. It makes a difference whether you describe only one thing or several things. In this lesson we shall look at adjectives in singular and plural and also how to count in Sabaot.

The simplest way to recognize whether a word is an adjective is to check whether it takes the **-ēch** suffix in the plural form. Compare:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1a. Nyikiis :kiyi | This thing is heavy |
| 1b. Nyikiis ēch :tukuuchu | These things are heavy |

Because the plural suffix **-ēch** contains a heavy vowel, it will change all light words to become heavy. This is the vowel harmony rule in Sabaot. Compare the following adjectives in singular and plural:

| Singular | Plural |
|----------|-----------|
| arraa | ārroonēch |

| | |
|---------|------------|
| baraay | bārooyēch |
| chabaay | chābooyēch |
| kaykay | kāykāyēch |
| kōrōōm | kōrōōmēch |
| nwaach | nwookēch |
| ng'waa | ng'woonēch |
| wōō | wōōyēch |
| wuuy | wuuyēch |
| lēēl | leelach |
| mining' | minkēēch |

Notice how the short *-a-* becomes *-ā-* in a heavy word, but the long *-aa-* becomes *-oo-*. Notice also that the last two words are irregular. They do not follow the normal pattern.

The main Sabaot numbers are:

| | | | |
|----|------------------|------|---------------------|
| 1 | akeenke | 20 | tibtēm |
| 2 | āyēēng' | 21 | tibtēm āk akeenke |
| 3 | sōmōk | 30 | sosom |
| 4 | ang'wan | 40 | artam |
| 5 | muut | 50 | konom |
| 6 | lo | 60 | tāmānwookik lo |
| 7 | tisab | 70 | tāmānwookik tisab |
| 8 | sisiit | 80 | tāmānwookik sisiit |
| 9 | sokool | 90 | tāmānwookik sokool |
| 10 | taman | 100 | bokol |
| 11 | taman āk akeenke | 200 | bokolwookik āyēēng' |
| 12 | taman āk āyēēng' | 1000 | kisyeereet |

Sometimes the word *rarweet* is used for a million and *araaram* for a billion. As an exercise, let us spell out a big number:

3.865.749 -

rarwoosyek sōmōk, kisyēērōōk bokolwookik sisiit tāmānwookik lo āk muut, bokolwookik tisab artam āk sokool.

Notice that some of the numbers add a final *-u* when used in subject position. Compare:

Kaakas biiko āyēēng' - I saw two people

Kakwa :biiko āyēēnku - Two people have come

Exercise 30 (Writing):

Write the following numbers in Sabaot. (Answers on page 40).

1. 11
2. 23
3. 35
4. 47
5. 52
6. 66
7. 79
8. 84
9. 98
10. 105
11. 273
12. 789
13. 1,234
14. 2,987,654

Lesson 12: One or two words?

Sumaneetaab 12: Ng'ālyoontēēt akeenke nto āyēēng'?

When we speak, all the sounds and words blend together to produce a long connected stretch of speech. However, it is the custom nowadays to separate words when we write them down.

It is not always easy to decide whether to write something in one word or in two words. One way to decide is to pronounce the sentence very, very slowly. That should help to separate words. Another way is to check whether each part can stand alone with its own meaning. For instance:

Chiito ake is written in two words, because both of the words can stand alone with their own independent meanings: **chiito** and **ake**. Still, when reading it, it is spoken together as one word: **chiitaake**. The two vowels melt together in speech, even though they belong to different words.

Kiineet keey is also written as two words, since each word can stand on its own. In addition, other words or parts of words can enter into the space between **neet** and **keey**, for instance, **kaaneeteetaab keey**.

However, in words like **kaaneeteetaab** and **kumnyēētaab (baaka)**, the grammatical element **-aab** serves to bind two nouns together, but it cannot stand alone.

The first example **chiito ake** is an example of two words where the first word ends in a vowel and the following word begins with a vowel. The two vowels, that is, the **o** from **chiito** and **a** from **ake** melt together to form **aa**. This will normally happen, unless a person speaks very, very slowly. Other examples are: **biiko āyēēng'**, **tuuka ang'wan**, **sireet nyēē arraa**.

The tense markers **ki-**, **ko-**, **ka-** and the person marker **ku-** pose special problems in Sabaot. Tense markers are in most languages bound to the verbs, but in Sabaot, tense markers can be attached to nouns, pronouns and adjectives as well as to verbs. When the tense markers are attached to verbs, they often melt together with other prefixes and are therefore written together with the verb in one word. However, when the tense markers are attached to nouns, pronouns or adjectives without any person markers they are written as separate words, for instance: **Ki karaam :kāānēētiisyēēt. Miyaat :bōōkitēēt, nto sumaneet ku karaam. Ki anii :nyooto. Nto ki anii ku inyiing'**.

For a beginning reader, it will cause some problems to read the words together in a fluent way, but for a more experienced reader, it will speed up the reading process when such words are separated.

Adjectives can also take person markers, and if that happens, the person markers are written together with the adjective, for instance **Ikaraam** (You are good) or **Kyaakaraam** (I was good).

The vowel harmony normally does not go beyond the word boundary. However, there are some small words which are influenced by a so-called reverse vowel harmony. For instance, the plural of **lēēl** is **leelach**. The irregular plural marker **-ach** is light and it forces the heavy **lēēl** to become light. In a similar way, the word for “and” is **āk** or **ākoo**. In numbers like **taman āk akeenke**, the heavy **āk** is actually pronounced as a light **ak**, because it is influenced by the light words **taman** and **akeenke** that

surround it. Because the words are written as separate words we keep the spelling **āk**, even though in this environment it sounds as **ak**. The reason is to keep the shape of this word the same all the time.

The same applies to the relative pronouns **nyēē** and **chēē**. They are always written with lines over them in order to keep the form of the word constant. In actual speech, the words become light if followed by a light word, e.g. **wēēriit nyēē karaam** is actually pronounced **wēēriit nyee karaam**.

Dictation exercises and answers

Exercise 2 (Dictation):

| | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| | Karaa | kaara | karam | kaaraam |
| m | | m | | |
| | cham | chaam | bakac | bakaach |
| | | | h | |
| | lach | laach | bir | biir |
| | sir | siir | yit | yiit |
| | til | tiil | nun | nuun |
| | chul | chuul | mut | muut |
| | yot | yoot | bot | boot |

Exercise 4 (Dictation):

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| Koong'uung' | Kōōng'uung' |
| Ng'oom | Ng'ōōm |
| Toor | Tōōr |
| Chōō | Choo |
| Bonbon | Bōnbōnēch |
| Kwēēn | Kweenik |
| Keelteet | Kēēlto |
| Chōōrwēēt | Choorweet |
| Anii | Ānō |
| Āriit | Areet |

Exercise 5 (Answers):

1. Makeekas keey tuun.
2. Naam taariit.
3. Āsirē barweet.
4. Kayit choorweet.
5. Kachoor chōōriintēēt tuuka muut.
6. Itinyē wēēriik ata?
7. Tinyē tuuka sosom.
8. Tinyē busyeekaab baaka.
9. Kaaram bēēko.
10. Iminyē ānō?

Exercise 7 (Dictation):

1. Chāmē baaba. 2. Chōōrē chōōriik. 3. Bātē Cheeroob kweenik. 4. Ibātē murēn mbareet. 5. Choomē chiichoo. 6. Toorē tarkeet. 7. Rātē teeta. 8. Kāsē inee nyēē karaam.

Exercise 8 (Answers):

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Āmē bēēnyto. | He is eating meat. |
| 2. Chāmē siriisyēēt. | He likes the writing. |
| 3. Kiisoob Yēēsu biich. | Jesus was healing people. |
| 4. Bākāchē biich muchas. | Greed kills people. |
| 5. Kichoor inee tuuka āyēēng'. | He stole two cows. |
| 6. Chōōr bichoo. | Those people are thieves. |
| 7. Tēēbuutēk chēē kāroomēch. | Good questions. |
| 8. Murēnik chēē kōrōōmēch. | Fierce men. |
| 9. Kēbēnēēt nyēē wōō. | A big cave. |
| 10. Nyikiisēch ng'ēchērōōchu. | These chairs are heavy. |

Exercise 9 (Dictation):

1. Kakeeram bēēko. 2. Kārāmē bēēko. 3. Kēēbuuchē kōōto. 4. Kāāsumānē kitaabuut. 5. Kooneet akweek nyēē karaam. 6. Kāāsob anii. 7. Kōōsoob akweek. 8. Kēēmāchē kiineet keyy kitaabuuni.

Exercise 11 (Answers):

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Kāāsob anii. | I got well. |
| 2. Kāābātik acheek. | We are farmers. |
| 3. Ānkētē kāāsoobiintēēt. | I know a healer. |
| 4. Kibāytooy ng'ētunyto tyoong'iik. | Lion ruled the animals. |
| 5. Ki tuuyēch mākoonkōōk kēny. | Guinea fowls used to be black. |

Exercise 12 (Answers)

kaakas, biiko, boontēēt, rāmchi, taabteet, tisab, tarkeet, baankeet

Exercise 13 (Answers):

tuuyta, kaalyeet, keeweeet, chabaay, baybay, saakityeek

Exercise 14 (Dictation):

| | | | |
|-----------|---------------|----------|--------------|
| cham | māchē | tyaach | tyaakte |
| tabanta | tisab | tibtēm | saakaatyeeet |
| tuubchēēt | twoolyoontēēt | chāmtooy | baybay |
| artam | ng'otwēēk | kulkulta | sokool |
| kayyeech | cheebyoosyeet | mayyeek | ārroonēch |
| bukantiit | nkokyeet | chaayiik | kaawaanik |

Exercise 17 (Dictation):

1. Kābir ng'ōokit. 2. Kabat :Cheeroob kweenik. 3. Keebat :baaba mbareet. 4. Kāāroong'u mayyeek. 5. Kēēbuur :biiko saang'. 6. Kēēmuuny :kōōkō ām kōōnyii. 7. Āmuyē kirkit. 8. Kāwus :yoomeet. 9. Kang'erecheraat :inee. 10. Kicham Yēyiin miisin :Maarya.

Exercise 18 (Answers):

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Kimwoochi :maamaanyii. | His uncle told him. |
| 2. Kakas sikiryēēt. | He saw the donkey. |
| 3. Kimwoochi Yēēsu :rubiikyii. | His disciples told Jesus. |
| 4. Murēnēēt nyēē kibakaakta :koorkēēnyii. | The man whose wife left him. |
| 5. Bākāche biich :muchas. | Greed kills people. |
| 6. Ng'oom :chii nyoo kyaam :nyalil. | The person who suffered is wise. |
| 7. Mākōōniing' :bēsēn rwoo. | A debt will not let you sleep. |
| 8. Yyēchinē :tērēētaab bēēko kurkat. | A water pot may break at the door. |
| 9. Solwo :koong'. | The eye is a fool. |
| 10. Weekoot yiit. | Go and scoop the ear. |

Exercise 21 (Dictation):

1. Kikeechaan baaka. 2. /Kikeechaan baaka. 3. /Kikiibuuch kōōto. 4. Kikiibuuch kōōto. 5. Kikiibuut buunik. 6. /Kikiibuut buunik.

Exercise 26 (Answers):

| | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| 1. I will tell you | +Māāmwoowook |
| 2. I will not tell you | -Māāmwoowook |
| 3. I will be sleeping | +Māārwēē |
| 4. I will not sleep | -Māārwēē |
| 5. I will not come | -Māāchōōnii |
| 6. I will be coming | +Māāchōōnii |

7. I will not cry -Māāriirē
 8. I will be crying +Māāriirē

Exercise 27 (Answers):

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1a. Mama akamwambia | Kumwoochi :momo |
| 1b. Akamwambia mama | Kumwoochi momo |
| 2a. Shamba lililimwa | /Kikiibat mbareet |
| 2b. Tulilima shamba | Kikiibat mbareet |
| 3a. Umeyakaanga? | 'Kēēsuus? |
| 3b. Ameyakaanga? | Kēēsuus? |
| 4a. Nitawaambia | +Māāmwoobook |
| 4b. Sitawaambia | -Māāmwoobook |
| 5a. Hakika, nimemwona | !Kaakas |
| 5b. Nimemwona | Kaakas |

Exercise 30 (Answers):

1. taman āk akeenke. 2. tibtem āk sōmōk. 3. sosom āk muut. 4. artam āk tisab. 5. konom āk āyēēng'. 6. tāmānwookik lo āk lo. 7. tāmānwookik tisab āk sokool. 8. tāmānwookik sisiit āk ang'wan. 9. tāmānwookik sokool āk sisiit. 10. bokol akeenke āk muut. 11. bokolwookik āyēēng', tāmānwookik tisab āk sōmōk. 12. bokolwookik tisab, tāmānwookik sisiit āk sokool. 13. kisyereet akeenke, bokolwookik āyēēng', tāmānwookik sōmōk āk ang'wan. 14. rarwoosyek āyēēng', kisyēērōok bokolwookik sokool āk tāmānwookik sisiit āk tisab, bokolwookik lo āk konom āk ang'wan.