

**VOCABULARY OF
THE MENDE
LANGUAGE**

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1884.

J. F. Schön

PREFACE.

THE Vocabulary which now appears in print was collected a few years ago. Since it was laid on the shelf, I have had the pleasure of receiving one published by missionaries of an American Society at Good Hope, west coast of Africa. The name of the author is not given. I have availed myself of its contents to the full extent by incorporating in the present work all that was new to me, regarding the common object which we both have in view as a sanction for my action, while in return I freely offer my labours to my American friends. Two different methods have been adopted in the reduction of the Mende language from the very commencement, as regards orthography. The American missionaries have adopted what we may call a euphonic system, giving different forms to different vowel-sounds; while the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society have adopted the system proposed by Dr. R. Lepsius, of Berlin, and which has been approved by all Missionary Societies in Europe, as well as by many Literary Societies, and will ere long supersede all other systems of writing foreign languages in Roman characters. We, on our part, can adopt no other system, and at the same time do not give up the hope that our American friends will see the necessity of adopting the same themselves ere long. All are agreed that it is not only a disadvantage, but a great hindrance, to the cause of missions and the spread

of learning, to write the same language and the same translations of Scripture in two different ways, and it cannot but prove a great obstacle to the teaching of English in the schools. I do not mean to propose the particular orthography I have adopted, though I am convinced that it is in harmony with Dr. Lepsius' system; but would suggest it to our friends as a basis for future consideration, and I shall be glad to listen and attend to any proposition from them which may lead to the adoption of a uniform system.

Brotherly intercourse between the agents of the two societies is very desirable, as well as an interchange of works. Had such existed hitherto, it would not have happened that "The Principles of the Mende Grammar, with Specimens of the Language," which was published in the Mende Mission in Sherbro, in 1874, should never have reached me until April, 1883, and, as it happened, on the very day when the first copy of my little Grammar* came into my hands from the printer. If I had had the book earlier I should have benefited by it. But as no alteration can now be made, let both go together. The vocabularies, though extensive, are after all but the beginning of the reduction of the language: every year will add new matter, and in this way we shall gradually get a complete dictionary. We do not despise the day of small things. No English-Mende vocabulary has been published before, as far as I am aware.

That these first attempts may be of some use to us, and become the stepping-stone to greater works, is the prayer of the author to the Giver of every blessing.

J. F. SCHÖN.

PALM COTTAGE, NEW BROMPTON, KENT,
October 29th, 1883.

* "Grammar of the Mende Language." London, 1882.

VOCABULARY OF THE MENDE LANGUAGE.

PART I.

MENDE-ENGLISH.

A

- A*, *prep.*, with, to, unto; by, at, in. Wu wā a tiē nyayē, Come ye with them, *i.e.* bring them to me. Kē ti wā a tōi, And they came with, *i.e.* they brought the horse
- A*, *interrog. adv.*, where? Tifa a ndōwoi Tifa? Where is the horn? A bi ke, Where is the father?
- A*, *pers. pron.*, 3 per. sing., he, she, it; and 2 per. plu., ye
- A*, *pers. pron.*, neg., he, she, it not
- A*, *interj.* of surprise, astonishment, delight
- A-biē*, *comp. per. pron.*, 2 per. sing., thou and thee
- Aēja* and *aēya*, expressions of surprise and sorrow
- Afmbō* and *ažumbo*, expressions of regret

- Aiya*, expression of pity
- Aiyō*, *adv.*, yes; a strong asseveration
- Akpōgbē*, expression of surprise
- Alēnga*, *adv.*, unitedly, together
- A-muē*, *comp. pron.*, 1 per. plu., we; us, to us
- A-ŋgō*, *pron.*, 1 per., I; me, to me
- A-ŋgiē*, *pron.*, he, him, her
- Aōu*, *adv.*, yes; expression of astonishment
- A-tiē*, *pron.*, they, them
- A-wuē*, *pron.*, ye, you, yours
- Ayē*, *interrog. adv.*, how?

B

- Ba*, *pers. pron.*, 2 per. sing., thou, thy
- Bā*, *pers. pron.*, neg., thou not
- Bā = pā = wā*, *tr. v.*, to kill, to hurt, to injure, to de-

- prive of. Nūmūi i ŋgi mbā lālō, ta ŋgi bālō ta be, Any one who shall kill his companion, shall be killed also. I ŋgi bā ŋgi nāvōi va, He has killed him for the sake of his money
- Bā, *n.*, honour, respect, worthiness. Nūmūi jī bālō ŋgi ma, As to this man, honour is on him, *i.e.* he is worthy, deserving of. Bā gō and bā dō, give honour
- Bā = mbā, definite state bāi, plu. bāisia, *n.*, price, value; bā gbāngo, very dear, valuable. Measure, the standard measure, as "bar" in bartering—bā-yēla, one bar
- Bā = mbā, *n.*, jaw, cheek
- Bā = mbā, *n.*, food, meat. Gbē bā lō bi lōni bi me? What food is it you want to eat?
- Bā, *n.*, musical instrument made of reeds and calabashes
- Bā, *with* ma, to fail to have something, as, I bā hāni ma i ye lōi la, He failed to have or to obtain the thing he wanted; to waver, be in doubt; I hāni, he wavered not; to impose upon, to take advantage of one's weakness or ignorance
- "Bāa-wele, *n.*, rectangular house"
- Bāba, *def. st.* babēi, plu. ba-
- bētsia, *n.*, hut, booth, temporary shelter made of reeds. A bābēi jī vāya
- Babōn, *n.*, jug
- Bāga, *def. st.* bagēi, *n.*, payment, glory
- Bāgo, *tr. v.*, to honour, to respect; *with* ma, Ŋgi bāgo bi ma, I honour thee; to value, to overrate. Ŋge bāgo nya levui ma be
- Bāhū, *def. st.* bahūi, *n.*, seed
- Bāi golenda, to count the cost; *with* or *without* ma
- Bāia = bāya, *as*, bāia hinda, treachery, hypocrisy; also traitor, hypocrite, *with* or *without* mo
- Bāji, *n.*, snuff-horn
- Bākūli, *n.*, watch-house between the barricades of a town
- Bāla = pāla = wāla, *verb. n.*, killing. Nika bālama hōu nja nūmu bāla mā ihōni, To kill a cow is lawful, to kill a man is not lawful
- Bāla, *n.*, basket
- Bāla (*see* Mbāla), *n.*, sheep
- Bālō = gbālō = kpālō, *tr. v.*, to hurt, cause pain; *intr.*, to grieve, to feel pain. I gbālō ʔi ma gbōn, It grieved them much
- Bālō = mbāla, *n.*, sheep; nya bālōi, my sheep
- Bālī, *n.*, hide and seek play
- Bālī-yāra, *n.*, mat with untwisted threads, woven by women
- Bālī, *tr. v.*, to vomit, to throw out

- Bāmāndē, *n.*, bell
 Bamba-kuta, *or* merely
 kuta, *n.*, tower
 Bāmo, *n.*, one who kills.
 Nūmu bāmo, murderer
 Bānda-bēla, *n.*, Mende blue
 cloth with darker stripes
 Bāndē-bāndē, *n.*, gossip,
 foolish deceptive talk
 Bandi = gbandi = kpandi,
adj., warm, hot
 Bānga, *adj.*, big, great,
 large. Ta-moi bangāngo,
 the man is very great.
 Mādagāska ti bāngawā
 mfa, Madagascar is a very
 large island
 Bānge, *n.*, cheek, side of
 face
 Bāngō-bāngō, bāngōlō, *adv.*,
 loudly, noisily; used of
 speaking
 Bāngō, *n.*, stationary
 wooden seat in a barre
 Bāngō yō lē nemahū, with-
 out, destitute of sense,
 foolish
 Bāō = hāwō, *tr. v.*, to save
 to heal, to cure, to deliver,
 to justify. Ngi nyāba-lōi
 i ye bāōi ikpēlē yakpēi na
 ma la, Her daughter was
 healed the very same
 hour. *Intr.*, to be well.
 Nya hāwōngo lē ngi lōni
 a halē, I am well, I have
 no need of medicine. I ti
 bāōa, He healed them.
 Tegūa bāōla, They cannot
 be saved, or cannot save
 themselves
 Bāōla, *ēi, verb. n.*, healing
- Bāōngo = hāwōngo, to be
 free; literally, thou art
 thy own
 Bara, *tr. and intr.*, to miss
 one's aim. Tibara pēlē
 ma, They missed the road
 Bato, (I think) thou seest.
 Sometimes interchanged
 with ngāto. It is more
 likely to mean "perhaps"
 Bātōke, *n.*, a term applied
 to things unseemly
 Bawa, *n.*, mercy, grace
 Bāwō, *n.*, health; *adj.*,
 healthy
 Bawōla, *ēi, n.*, salvation,
 restoration
 Bāya, *n.*, deceit, fraud,
 cheat; *tr. v.*, to deceive,
 to defraud
 Bāya-mo, *n.*, deceiver, hypo-
 crite
 Bā-yili, *n.*, a bundle of rice,
 sheaf
 Bē, *pers. pron.*, 2 per. sing.,
 thou
 Bē, *pers. pron.*, neg., thou not.
 Bē li, Thou shalt not go
 Bē and bee, you say, say-
 ing
 Bē, *adv.*, also, even; as, like
 Bē = mbē, def. st. bēi, self,
 myself; nya bē, I myself
 Bē, *adv.*, here, at this place.
 Nya yēnge lo bē, My
 work is here. Bi wa bēi,
 Thou mightest come here
 Bē, *tr. v.*, to dry, to be.
 Bēngo, as ngāma bēngo,
 dry eye = e lūa, he is not
 afraid = is impertinent,
 bold. Ndīma bēngo i

- dəwē ndogbo hānia gbī ma, literally, His heart is dry, it surpasses all the beasts of the forest = he is more cruel, fiercer, etc. Bēngo, to be becoming
- Bee, *n.*, mark
- Bebe, *adj.*, soft, easy, flexible. I gbọ bẹbẹngo, Which is easy
- Bẹgbẹle, *adv.*, this time; *and* bẹgbẹle
- Bẹi, *def. st.* of mbā, *n.*, rice. Nya-bẹi nyandẹngo, My rice is good
- Bẹindo, *adv.*, here, this place. Ta lo bẹndo, He is here. I bẹindo, He is not here
- Bẹi yāka, this side
- Bẹkẹ, *def. st.* ẹi; *plu.* bẹkẹa, *def. st.* bẹkẹsia; *n.*, arm, branch, members of the body. Ta ngulu bẹkẹa dəwē, They cut branches off the tree
- Beke, *n.*, Larva of the beetle Gōndō-vofo
- Beke, *adj.*, like. Kọloi jī beke na
- Bẹla, *tr. v.* = wẹla, to run away, to escape
- Bẹla, *def. st.* belẹsia, *and* halẹsia, forming the *plu.* of mo; *as.* lẹmo, *plu.* lẹbẹla, lehalẹsia. Kpọwamo, *plu.* kpọwahẹla, *def. st.* kpọwa belẹsia, foolish person
- Bẹla, *tr. v.*, to tear, to rend. I ngi gọlẹsia bẹla, He rends his garments. *Intr.*, to burst, to split; *as.* i bẹlā ndia, It was torn asunder, *i.e.* in the midst
- Bẹlẹ = mbẹlẹ, *n.*, glory, honour. Nya bẹlẹ ngi ma = My honour is not on him, *i.e.* he is not worthy of me. Ti ti bẹlẹ nyāni, They spoiled, *i.e.* dishonoured, them. Nyi bẹlẹ lāngo
- Bele, *tr. v.*, to notice, to watch; take notice of. Māhoungo wu wu nyamēi bele hōu. Ti ngi bele hōui lo gbōh
- Bele-gbemo, one who predicts by stones
- Bele-gotu, stones used in divination
- Beli, *n.*, high bed
- Beli, *tr. v.*, to drain, to ebb, to get dry. Nje belingo lẹ, The water dries, decreases, abates. Nje i belia
- Beli, *adj.*, skilful, clever; *tr. v.*, to know, to understand how to do a thing. Ngī lōni ngī wẹa ngulu-beli-mo, I wish to become a clever workman in wood
- Bẹmbẹ, *tr. v.*, to compass, to surround. Bẹmbẹ mbẹmbẹ gọla hū, Wrapped him in clothes
- Beme, *n.*, land sloping with gentle descent
- Beme, *n.*, a kind of wasp; the style of cutting the hair which leaves only