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ARTICLE VI.

LANGUAGES OF AFRICA.—COMPARISON BETWEEN THE MANDINGO, GREBO AND MPONGWE DIALECTS.

By Rev. John Leighton Wilson, American Missionary at the Gaboon river, Western Africa.

[THE following paper from the pen of Mr. Wilson is inserted, partly, on account of its intrinsic importance, and partly from its relation to the foreign missionary enterprise. It communicates a variety of facts respecting the languages of Western Africa, which will be deeply interesting, alike to the Christian and the philologist. The phenomena, adduced by Mr. Wilson, are a striking confirmation of the scientific value of Christian missions. Though an indirect and undesigned effect, it will of itself amply repay all the cost which is incurred. The missionary is, in this way, coöperating most efficiently, and without interference with his great spiritual work, with the learned scholars and philanthropists of Christendom, in extending the boundaries of knowledge and civilization. We will only add, should any apology for the insertion of this piece be needed, that there are subscribers and readers of the *Bibliotheca Sacra* at all the missionary stations of our principal Foreign Missionary Society, and at some of the stations of other societies.—Eds.]

Too little is as yet known of the numerous and diversified dialects of Africa to determine with certainty the precise number of families which they form. The Mountains of the Moon, which divide this great continent into two nearly equal portions, also form an important dividing line between two great branches of the negro race, who, it is probable, emigrated to Africa at remote periods from each other and from different parts of the old world.

In the northern half of the continent, or that part of it occupied by the black race, the number of languages is very great, the different families of which show very little if any affinity for each other; while in the southern division one great family prevails over the whole even to the Cape of Good Hope. As there is a tendency to the multiplication of dialects in all countries where there are no written standards, the above fact furnishes a presumptive argument, in favor of the opinion, that the northern portion of the continent must have been settled by the negro race at

a much earlier period than the southern; or, that the present inhabitants of this portion of the country overran and rooted out its original occupants at no very remote period. However this may be, the languages spoken on the opposite sides of these mountains, show as conclusively, as any argument drawn from this source can, that these two families of blacks, whatever physical resemblances there may be, must have had different origins.

In the northern half of the continent, the number of dialects is incredibly great. Those spoken along the western coast, i. e. between the river Senegal and the Cameroons in the Bight of Biafra, which is no doubt the western termination of the Mountains of the Moon, may be grouped into five distinct families, the boundaries of which are not inaccurately defined by the established geographical divisions of the country.

The Mandingo, including the Jaloof, the Foulah, the Soosoo and other kindred dialects, may be regarded as forming one of these principal families. Those of the natives who speak these dialects are Mohammedans, and no doubt a less or greater number of Moorish or Arabic words has been incorporated with all of them. These dialects are spoken along the coast from Senegal to Sierra Leone, and in the interior as far as the head waters of the Niger.

From Sierra Leone or Cape Messurado to the mouth of the Niger, in what is called Upper Guinea, a distance coastwise of twelve or fifteen hundred miles, there are four distinct families, showing very little if any affinity for each other. The first extends from Basa to St. Andrews, embracing the Basa, Kru, Grebo and other dialects, all of which belong to one general family called the Mena or Mandoo language. The natives, who speak these dialects, are pagans, and though physically considered, they are one of the finest races in Africa, they are less intellectual than the generality of tribes along the coast.

From Frisco to Dick's Cove, along what is called the Ivory Coast, we have another language, usually called the Kwakwa, which possesses no traceable affinity for any other language along the coast. The inhabitants of this part of the coast are a fine, athletic race and occupy an important part of the coast in a commercial point of view, but like the tribes above and below are pagans of the lowest order.

From Dick's Cove to Badagri we have the Fanti, as called by the natives themselves *Fantypim*, which includes the Ashanti, Dahomey, Popo, Accra and other dialects. Among the dialects

of this family there is more diversity than among those of either of the preceding. The natives here discover considerable mechanical skill and much more versatility of character than the inhabitants of the Grain Coast.

On the great rivers of the Gulf of Benin, Bonny, Benin and Calibar, we find another distinct family of languages, possessing some striking peculiarities, entirely unknown to any of the dialects either west or south.

How nearly related these different families along the sea coast may be to those of Central and Northern Africa is not known. While there is a constant tendency to a multiplication of the dialects of the same family, the different families themselves have preserved their distinctive features without essential change or modification. The want of written standards accounts for the first of these facts, while the fixed habits of the natives, in opposition to the roving character of most barbarous nations, account for the other.

Crossing the Mountains of the Moon we find one great family of languages extending itself over the whole of the southern division of the continent. The dialects of this family, though they differ essentially as dialects, have too many striking affinities for each other, to allow any doubt of their having a common origin.

Many of these dialects, especially those spoken along the sea-coast, have incorporated with themselves a less or greater number of foreign words, according as the tribes have had less or more commercial intercourse with foreign nations. Those along the western coast have borrowed largely from the Portuguese—those in the vicinity of the Cape of Good Hope, it is probable, have borrowed from the English and Dutch—those of Mozambique have adopted many words from the Madagascar people as well as the Portuguese, with both of whom the nations have had long and extensive intercourse; while those still higher up the coast have drawn quite as freely from the Arabic. The Sooahelee language, spoken by the aboriginal inhabitants of Zanzibar, is very nearly allied to the Mpongwe, which is spoken on the western coast in very nearly the same parallel of latitude. One fifth of the words of these two dialects are either the same or so nearly so that they may easily be traced to the same root.

This great family of languages, if the Mpongwe dialect may be taken as a specimen, is remarkable for its beauty, elegance and perfectly philosophical arrangements, as well as for its almost

indefinite expansibility. In these respects, it not only differs essentially and radically from all the dialects north of the Mountains of the Moon, but they are such as may well challenge a comparison with any known language in the world.

It is impossible to ascertain from what particular stock the different dialects of the same family have sprung, nor is it important to establish this point. We have selected as the subject of comparison, one dialect from three different families, viz. Mandingo, the Grebo and the Mpongwe; as two of these are from the northern part of the continent and the other from the southern, we shall be able not only to see all the points of agreement and disagreement between the languages of those who are supposed to be separate races, but likewise how much divergence there may be in the languages of those who are supposed to have had a common origin.

The Mandingo is spoken chiefly between Senegal and the Gambia; the Grebo at Cape Palmas and in that vicinity. The distance between these two places is six or eight hundred miles. The inhabitants of these two regions have had little or no intercourse with each other and therefore may be regarded as strangers. The Mpongwe is spoken on both sides of the Gaboon, at Cape Lopez and Cape St. Catharine, in what is usually called Lower Guinea. The distance from Cape Palmas to the Gaboon is ten or twelve hundred miles, and that between the latter and Sene-Gambia is eighteen hundred or two thousand.

Our object in the following essay will be to mention all the important points in which these dialects differ from each other, as well as those in which they agree, although the latter are regarded as purely accidental and such as would be as likely to arise by comparing them with the Indian dialects of North or South America or with those of Polynesia as among themselves. The principles of the Mpongwe will be more fully developed than either of the others, not only on account of its great superiority, but because it possesses some very remarkable characteristics for an uncultivated language, and evinces a degree of skill and precision in its grammatical arrangements, that may challenge for itself a comparison with any known language whatever.

General Remarks.

Before entering into a minute analysis of the grammatical principles of these dialects, it will be important to offer a few remarks of a general nature.

The first thing that would be sure to arrest the attention of one, who has had an opportunity to study the character and habits of the people in connection with their languages, is the remarkable correspondence that will always be found between the character of the different tribes and the dialects which they respectively speak.

The Grebo tribe, physically considered, are one of the finest races in Western Africa. They are stout, well formed, and their muscular system is remarkably well developed. They stand erect, and when not under the influence of excitement, their gait is measured, manly and dignified. When engaged at work or in play, they are quick, energetic and prompt in all their bodily evolutions; they are fond of work, are capable of enduring great hardships, and, compared with most of the tribes of Western Africa, are really courageous and enterprising. But they are destitute of polish, both of mind and of manners. In their intercourse with each other, they are rude, abrupt and unceremonious; when opposed or resisted in what is their right or due, they become obstinate, sullen and inflexible. They have much vivacity of disposition, but very little imagination. Their songs have but little of poetry, and are unmusical and monotonous; besides which they have very little literature in the form of ancestral traditions or fabulous stories. Their dialect partakes very largely of these general outlines. It is harsh, abrupt, energetic, indistinct in enunciation, meagre in point of words, abounds with inarticulate nasal and guttural sounds, possesses but few inflections and grammatical forms, and is withal exceedingly difficult of acquisition.

The Mpongwe people, on the other hand, are mild in their disposition, flexible in character, courteous in their manners, and very deferential to age and rank. But they are timid, irresolute and exceedingly averse to manual labor. They live by trade, are cunning, shrewd, calculating and somewhat polished in their manners. Their temperament is of the excitable or nervous character and they are altogether the most imaginative race of negroes I have ever known. They have inexhaustible stores of ancestral traditions and fabulous stories, some of which, if embodied in suitable language, would bear comparison with the most celebrated novels and romances that have ever been presented to the world. These general outlines of the character, habits and disposition of the people are no bad counterpart to their language. It is soft, pliant and flexible; clear and distinct in enunciation, pleasant to the ear, almost entirely free from guttural and nasal

sounds, methodical in all its grammatical forms, susceptible of great expansion, and withal very easy of acquisition.

The same correspondence might be pointed out between the Mandingo dialect and the people by whom it is spoken, but enough has been said already, to illustrate our general remark. Whether the disposition and habits of the natives have been modified by the character of their language; or whether, on the other hand, these dialects have been moulded so as to suit the disposition, character and pursuits of the people, are points that cannot easily be determined. Most probably they exert a reciprocal influence upon each other. It must not be presumed, however, that the comparative perfection of these dialects is to be regarded as an infallible criterion of the relative improvement of the different tribes. This would bespeak for the Mpongwe tribe a degree of improvement and civilization far above the others, which the actual and known condition of that people does not authorize.

One general characteristic of the Grebo, and one which establishes at the outset an essential difference between it and the other dialects, is that it is made up in a great measure of *monosyllabic words*. It has a considerable number of dissyllabic words, a few trisyllables, and a very few words of four and five syllables. But a very cursory glance over a few printed pages of Grebo will show a vast disproportion of monosyllabic words. The names of most of the objects with which they are familiar belong to this class; for example, *na*, fire; *ni*, water; *tu*, tree; *kai*, house; *ge*, farm; *yau*, sky; *bro*, earth; *nu*, rain; *twe*, axe; *fa*, knife; *kbi*, fence; *lu*, head; *kwa*, hand; *yi*, eye; *mē*, tongue; *kli*, breast; *kē*, back; *bo*, leg; *wēnh*, sun; *hni*, fish; *gi*, leopard, *nā*, rum; and so also most of the verbs in common use; as, *dī*, eat; *na*, drink; *pē*, sleep, lie down; *na*, walk; *dī*, come; *mu*, go; *hli*, speak; *la*, kill; *bi*, beat; *ya*, bring; *kba*, carry; *ni*, do; *wá*, hear,¹ etc., all of which are not only monosyllables, but most of them may be spelled with two simple letters of the Roman alphabet.

Both the Mandingo and the Mpongwe have a goodly number of auxiliary and connecting particles; but they are not sufficiently numerous to constitute a striking feature in either. In the

¹ We have adopted a more simple mode of orthography here than has been used in writing the Grebo; *h* final is used to distinguish words whose meanings are different, but whose orthography would be the same. So *nā* is used to indicate the nasal sound of the final vowel, but is omitted in the above examples, for the sake of simplicity.

Mandingo, about one fifth of the verbs are monosyllabic words, but the nouns, with very few exceptions are words of two or more syllables.

In Mpongwe, there are not more than a dozen monosyllabic nouns, and perhaps not more than two or three monosyllabic verbs, in the entire language. In relation to those enumerated above, with the exception of a single noun and verb, they are all words of two, three or four syllables.

Another observation of importance is, that there is no one word that is common to the three, or any two of these dialects,¹ except the letter *m* which is used as a contracted form of the personal pronoun *I*, in the Mpongwe and Mandingo, and the particle *ne* which is used in the sense of *is* in the Grebo and the Mpongwe, though in the latter, it is evidently a contraction of *inle* which does not always have the force of *is*. Even when some new object is presented to these people, and it is their evident intention to confer upon that object a name corresponding with the sound or some other attribute belonging to it, they do not always employ the same word; a bell in Grebo is *bikri*, in Mpongwe it is *igalinga* and in Mandingo *talango*; a saw in Mandingo is *sero*, in Grebo *griká*, and in Mpongwe *gwigasa*. When the foreign word is retained, it is differently modified to suit their dialects. A plate in Grebo is *plédé*, in Mandingo *pélo*, and in Mpongwe *péle*. Tobacco in Grebo is *tama*, in Mpongwe *tako*, in Mandingo *taba*, and in some other dialects it is *talakwa*. This discrepancy shows that there is not only a material difference in the development of the organs of speech among these different tribes, but an equal difference in their powers of discriminating sounds.

The Grebo has few or no contractions or coalescences, but the people speak with so much rapidity and their words are so completely jumbled together, that a whole clause may sometimes be mistaken for a single word, the phrase *é ya mu kra woué*, it has raised a bone in my breast (a figurative expression for great anger), is pronounced *yamukroue*.

The Mandingo and Mpongwe both abound with contractions, and they compound their words so as out of three or four to make but one; but in both cases, the elementary parts of each com-

¹ The writer is indebted to Mac Brair's Mandingo Grammar, for all the knowledge he possesses in relation to that language. The vocabulary embraced in that Grammar contains seven or eight hundred words, and it is upon these, and a few other specimens of Mandingo in the same volume, that his inferences and observations are drawn.

pound word or phrase, are preserved with so much distinctness, that they can always be easily analyzed. In Mandingo the word *mbadingmuso*, sister, is made up of *mi*, my, *bado*, mother, *dingo*, child, *muso*, female; i. e. "my mother's female child." So in Mpongwe, the word *onwángiwam*, my brother, is made up of *onwána*, child, *ngi*, mother, *wam*, my; and so *omantwè*, his wife, is compounded of *oma*, person, *antò*, female, *wè*, his, i. e. "his female person" for his wife; so the phrase *arombia* is compounded of *a*, he (which disappears before *a*), *are*, is, *oma*, person, *mbia*, good. These combinations though frequent in the Mpongwe, and perhaps as much so in Mandingo, are not sufficiently numerous to constitute a leading feature in either, as they do in some of the Indian dialects of North America.

There are certain words and phrases in the Grebo dialect, which it is almost impossible for a foreigner ever to acquire, so as to be understood by the natives when he uses them. The phrase *hani na nyene ne?* What is your name? is one that is extremely difficult, and not less so is the phrase *kbunè-nyini-yidu*, bad habit. The word *hmu*, five, and all the reduplicated forms into which it enters, are too completely nasal to be fairly represented by any combination of articulate sounds whatever.

In Mpongwe, on the other hand, there are not more than three or four words that are at all difficult of utterance; and there is scarcely a sentence in the language, which a foreigner may not with very little care, speak at the first trial, so as to be universally understood by the natives. It is probable that the Mandingo, in this respect, partakes of the character of the Mpongwe and not of the Grebo.

In the Grebo and Mpongwe there is a large number of words whose significations, though entirely different, have an orthography very nearly the same. In all such cases, the Grebo distinguishes between them: first, when they are monosyllables, by a certain pitch of the voice or accent; it is thus that the first and second persons of the personal pronoun *má* and *máh* are distinguished from each other; and so also the first and second persons plural *a* and *ah*.

When cases of this kind occur in dissyllabic words, the accent rests on one or the other syllable as a mark of distinction, as in the words *nyina*, day, and *nyina*, woman. The Mpongwe, on the contrary, never uses the accent, as a means of distinguishing words whose orthography is very nearly the same, but relies wholly upon the clear and distinct sounds of its vowels.

In all three dialects, almost every word terminates in a vowel sound. In Grebo *n*'s final is employed to designate the nasal sound of the vowel; and it is possible that *ng* final in Mac Brair's Mandingo grammar may serve the same purpose. *M* final occurs in a very few Grebo words; and the vowel sound after *m* in certain Mpongwe words is scarcely audible. In relation to the incipient syllable, the usage is variable. In Grebo with the exception of a few of the personal pronouns, which are simple vowels, as is the case in both of the other dialects, every word commences with one or more consonants. In Mandingo, perhaps one fifth of the verbs and nouns commence with vowels; whereas in Mpongwe, at least one half of the nouns and verbs, if we take into the account the derivative parts of the verb, have vowels for their initial letters. Almost every noun in the Mandingo terminates in *o*; in the other two languages the final termination is variable. The prevalence of initial vowels in Mpongwe, accounts for the great number of contractions and coalescences which are to be met with in that language.

ORTHOGRAPHY.

The same alphabet of simple sounds has been employed in writing all three of these dialects, but it must not be inferred that the same system is equally adapted to each. The sounds in the Mandingo and Mpongwe are generally easy and natural, and are accurately represented by Mr. Pickering's system of orthography. The Grebo, on the contrary, has a great many difficult sounds that cannot accurately be represented by any combination of articulate sounds. Each vowel in this language has, besides its natural power, a corresponding long and short as well as nasal sound. The vowels in Mpongwe and Mandingo have none but their natural sounds, and such variations as are common to most European languages. The letters *v* and *z* are entirely wanting in the Mandingo and Grebo dialects, but are of more frequent use in the Mpongwe than almost any other consonants.¹

There are a good many consonant combinations, chiefly at the beginning of words, that deserve to be noticed. Some of these are common to all three of these dialects; some are peculiar to one.

¹ It may be remarked that although *v* is but once used in Grebo and *z* never, yet both of these letters are freely used in the Basa dialect which is closely allied to the Grebo.

The following are common to all three, viz. *ny* and *ng*; *ny* is a natural and easy sound and commences a large number of words in all three dialects; *ng* is found at the beginning of a good many words, especially in the Grebo and Mandingo, and in this position is very difficult of pronunciation; but in the middle of a word the letters have their natural sounds, but are never separated. *Mw*, *bw* and *ty* are common to the Grebo and Mpongwe, though the two former occur but seldom in the Mpongwe, and the first not often in the Grebo. None (of a peculiar or unusual character) are common to the Grebo and Mpongwe. The following are so common, as the incipient letters of Mpongwe words, that they mark this dialect most decidedly; and, although they seldom or never occur at the commencement of Mandingo words, they are common in the middle syllables, viz. *mb*, as in the words *mboa*, dog; *mboni*, goat; *mp* as in *mpolu*, large; *nd* as in *ndondwi*, high; *nk* as in *nkala*, town; *nj* as in *njonga*, the name of a man; *nt* as in *ntondo*, basket; *nty* as in *ntyáni*, shame; *ngw* as in *ngwe*, mother; *gw* as in *gwi*, where; *fw* and *vw* representing sounds intermediate to these component letters; *zy* as in *zyele*, is not; *nl* which represents a mixed sound of these two letters as in *ininla*, spirit. *Ng* in the middle of words is a favorite combination both with the Mandingo and Mpongwe. The following are peculiar to the Grebo and are found at the beginning of words, viz. *ml* as in *mlenè*, to swallow; *hl* as *hla*, to strike; *hli*, to speak; *hy* as in *hya* and *hyèiru*, child, children: *kh* as *khimi*, small; *kb* as in *kbinaè*, fashion, habit, etc. When *kb* is preceded by a vowel, the *k* unites itself with that and *b* has its natural sound, but when united at the beginning of a word, is very difficult of enunciation.

ETYMOLOGY.

Neither of these dialects has an article, definite or indefinite; the place of the indefinite article in the Mpongwe and Grebo, and probably in the Mandingo also, being supplied by the numeral for *one*. Thus, in Grebo, *gnebwi du á nede*, man one lived there, for a man lived there; and in the Mpongwe *oma mári*, person one, for a person. The want of a definite article in Grebo is supplied by the personal pronoun for *he*, thus *gnebwi ná*, "person he," for the person, and by the demonstrative pronouns *nènu*, this, and *náná*, that. In Mpongwe this deficiency is variously supplied by the definite pronoun *yi*, and more frequently by the demonstrative pronoun for *this* and *that*, as *oma yiná*, this man, or *oma yáná*, that

man, for the man. The article, as a distinct part of speech, is perhaps wanting in all the dialects of Western Africa.

Prepositions.

Prepositions in the Grebo are not numerous. It has none to correspond with *to* when reference to place is made; thus they say, *á mu Bliigi*, he is gone Bliigi, and never *to* Bliigi; the language wants a word to correspond with our preposition *with*; thus they say, *á hla áchi fá*, he cut himself knife, instead of with a knife.

Many prepositions in Grebo are compound words, one part of which goes before, the other follows the noun which they govern; thus, *ko ná máh*, for him to, *ko-máh* being one word. A simple un-compounded preposition almost always follows the noun it governs. Another peculiarity about the Grebo preposition is, that a large number of them are verbalized and inflected like any other verbs; thus, *wo* is used in the sense of *from* or *come from*, as the case may be; and in the past tense becomes *woda*, came from; and so *hi*, by, when verbalized, means *to go by*; so *kwa*, near, when inflected, *kwada*, near to or came near.

The Mandingo prepositions like those of the Grebo, are but few, and with one exception, like them, follow the noun which they govern. Many of them are incorporated with the noun as affixes, but none of them are verbalized, like many in the Grebo.

The Mpongwe has a much larger number of prepositions than either of the others; and what forms a marked difference between it and the other two dialects, is, that its prepositions invariably go before the nouns which they govern.

Adverbs and Conjunctions.

There is nothing of special importance to be noticed in connection with these parts of speech in either language. The adverb *ye* in the Grebo frequently assumes the inflections of the verb it qualifies, whilst the verb itself remains uninflected. It sometimes incorporates itself with the personal pronoun, as *tá mu* for *té á mu*, where is he gone? There are a large number of particles in all these languages, that are indiscriminately used as prepositions, conjunctions and adverbs, so that these parts of speech are not very distinctly marked, and cannot therefore be very important in showing the analogies existing among these dialects.

Nouns.

There are no inflections in either of these languages, to distinguish gender or case; but each has an inflection to distinguish the singular from the plural number.

The gender in every case is made by coupling the word for *man* and *woman* with the noun; thus *nyare nomi*, man-cow for bull; *idâmbe nyanto*, woman-sheep for ewe. The nominative and the objective cases are always of the same form, and can be distinguished from each other by their relative position to the verb. The possessive case is formed in the Mandingo and Grebo by inserting the personal pronoun *his* between the nominative and the possessive, the nominative case always occupying the second place, *Dwè-a-yu*,¹ *Dwè*, his son, for *Dwè's*, son. In Mpongwe, the *definite pronoun*, of which we shall have occasion to speak presently, is the connecting link, but the arrangement of the two cases is directly the reverse, thus, *Onwa-wa-Dwè*, i. e. the child of *Dwè*, the definite pronoun always agreeing with the nominative case. This is a point of important distinction between the Mpongwe and the other two dialects, the more so, as the usage on both sides is uniform and invariable.

In Grebo, the plural is formed from the singular, generally, by a change in the final vowel; thus, *hya*, child, pl. *hyè*, children; *bli*, cow, pl. *bliz*, cows, etc. Sometimes there is not only a change of the final vowel, but an additional syllable so suffixed, thus, *kai*, house, in the plural, *keyè*, houses; the plural of *yu*, child, is *iru*. Both these examples must be considered exceptions, of which however there are very few. In general, the distinction between the singular and plural of Grebo nouns, is very slight, and many nouns are the same in both numbers; thus, *blable* a sheep, pl. *blable*, sheep; and so *wudt*, goat, pl. *wudz*, goats, etc.

In Mandingo, the plural is derived from the singular by suffixing *lu*, when the termination of the singular is in *o*; thus,

Singular.	Plural.
<i>Muso</i> (woman)	<i>Musolu</i>
<i>Yiro</i> (tree)	<i>Yirolu</i>

When the final letter of the singular is not *o*, it is changed into it; thus,

Singular.	Plural.
<i>Manza</i> (king)	<i>Mansolu</i>

¹ In Grebo *a* is the same as *d*, his, but modified for the sake of euphony.

In some cases the adjective takes the inflection of the plural, whilst the noun to which it belongs remains in the singular number; thus,

Singular.	Plural.
<i>ke bette</i> (a good man)	<i>ke betteolu</i>
<i>fane kuiring</i> (a white cloth)	<i>fane kuiringolu</i> .

This is a peculiarity that does not belong to either of the other dialects.

This dialect forms verbal nouns in several ways; the *noun of instrument* is formed by suffixing *rango* to the verb; thus,

<i>do</i> , work	<i>dorango</i> , a working instrument
<i>muta</i> , hold	<i>mulerango</i> , a holder, peg, etc.

The noun of *agency or office* is formed from the verb by suffixing possessive pronouns for *his* or *he*; thus, from *kantá*, to keep, comes *kantala*, a keeper.

There is another verbal noun formed by suffixing *ro*; thus, from *sunya*, to steal, comes *sunyaro*, theft.

The points of resemblance between Grebo and Mandingo nouns, are, 1st, that the inflections to form the plural are always on the last syllable; and 2d, that both of them can form a noun of agency by suffixing the personal pronoun to the verb.¹ The points in which they differ are, 1st, that Mandingo nouns, generally, terminate in *o*, whereas those of the Grebo are variable; 2d, that Mandingo nouns, generally, have one well marked mode of forming the plural, and that by affixing a separate syllable; whereas in Grebo, the plural, with few exceptions, is made by changing the final vowel into another vowel, and in many cases the distinction between the two numbers is scarcely perceptible; and 3d, that the Mandingo has a much greater variety and number of derivative or verbal nouns than the Grebo. These facts in connection with those already mentioned, viz. that there are no nouns common to both, and that the greater part of the Grebo nouns are monosyllables, whilst those of the Mandingo, with scarcely a single exception, are words of two, three, four and five syllables, show that there can be little or no affinity between these two dialects.

But the Mpongwe branches off still farther, and shows conclusively, not only in relation to her nouns, but also in reference to her adjectives, pronouns, verbs and grammatical construction, as

¹ The Grebo does form a noun of agency in this way; thus, from *nu*, did, comes *nuá*, the doer; but this is not much used in the language.

will appear from the sequel, that it possesses no affinity with either.

All the changes which take place in Mpongwe nouns, except such as result from the laws of contraction and coalescence, are invariably on the *incipient syllable*.

An abstract verbal noun is derived from the verb by prefixing the letter *i*; thus,

<i>noka</i> , to lie	<i>inoka</i> , a lie
<i>jufa</i> , to steal	<i>ijufa</i> , theft
<i>sunginla</i> , to save	<i>isunginla</i> , salvation.

The noun of agency is formed by prefixing the letter *o*, which may be regarded as a sort of a relative pronoun; thus,

<i>noka</i> , to lie	<i>onoka</i> , or <i>onoki</i> , a liar
<i>sunginla</i> , to save	<i>osunginla</i> , or <i>osunginla</i> .

There are some exceptions and variations from the above rules, not important to be mentioned.

In Mpongwe there are *four* modes of forming the plural from the singular, which furnish the basis for a classification of its nouns, as well marked and as complete as a similar classification of Latin and Greek nouns.

For the sake of convenience, these classes are called *declensions*, although this term is not strictly and philosophically correct.

The *first declension* embraces all those nouns which commence their singular number with one or more consonants; and the plural is formed from the singular by prefixing *i* or *si*; thus,

Singular.	Plural.
<i>nago</i> , house	<i>inago</i> or <i>sinago</i>
<i>nyare</i> , cow	<i>inyare</i> or <i>sinzare</i> .

Derivative nouns which begin with *i*, belong to the plural only of this declension.

The *second declension* comprises all those nouns which commence with the letter *e*, and form their plurals by dropping *e*. If the first consonant should be *z*, *e* is not only dropped, but *z* is changed into *y*; thus,

Singular.	Plural.
<i>egara</i> , chest	<i>gara</i> , chests
<i>ezema</i> , thing	<i>yema</i> , things
<i>ezango</i> , book	<i>yango</i> , books.

The *third declension* embraces all nouns whose incipient letter is *i*; (except the derivative nouns, which commence with *i*, and

belong to the plural of the first declension), and forms its plurals by changing *i* into *a*; thus,

Singular.	Plural.
<i>idámbe</i> , a sheep	<i>adámbe</i> , sheep
<i>ikándá</i> , plantain	<i>akándá</i> , plantains.

If the first consonant should be *v*, it is changed into *mp*; thus,

Singular.	Plural.
<i>ivanga</i> , law	<i>ampanga</i> , laws.

The *fourth declension* embraces such nouns as have *o* for their incipient letter, and form their plurals by changing *o* into *i*; thus,

Singular.	Plural.
<i>olamba</i> , cloth	<i>ilamba</i> , cloths
<i>omamba</i> , snake	<i>imamba</i> , snakes.

The *fifth declension* embraces such nouns as commence with *a*, and have both numbers of the same form; thus,

Singular.	Plural.
<i>aningo</i> , water	<i>aningo</i>
<i>alugu</i> , rum	<i>alugu</i> .

This *declension* may belong to the plural of the *third*.

The only irregularities which occur are in relation to the words *oma* (person) and *onwana* (child), and such words as are compounded with these; as, *omanto* (woman), the plural of which is *anto*; and *onwágiám*, the plural of which is *anwágiám*. The plural of *oma* is *aulaga*, and the plural of *onwana* is *anwana*; so it would seem that the singular of these nouns belong to the fourth, and the plural to the Fifth declension. These, however, are the only irregularities which occur in Mpongwe nouns.

This classification of Mpongwe nouns does not rest, however, entirely or chiefly on their different modes of deriving the plural from the singular number; but it is rendered much more conspicuous and necessary from the different modes in which they receive their adjectives, as will be seen presently.

Some changes take place on the final syllable of nouns, as has already been mentioned, in obedience to the laws of contraction or for the sake of euphony; the following are some of these changes, viz. *a* final followed by *y* incipient, is changed into *i*; thus *swakayám* (my knife) becomes *swaki yám*; the same change takes place before *w* incipient; thus, *olambi wám*, and not *olamba wám*; *o* final before *y* are both superseded by *w*; thus, *ndego wám* is used for *ndego yám*, etc., etc.

Adjectives.

In relation to this part of speech, there are a few particulars in which there is some general resemblance among these dialects, not such however as would be so likely to arise from any existing affinity, as from the uncultivated state of these languages.

In the first place, this class of words are not numerous in either, but much less so in the Grebo and the Mandingo than in the Mpongwe; 2, neither have degrees of comparison; and 3, neither have inflections for number, except the Mpongwe.

The deficiency of adjectives in these languages is made up by the use of a substantive and verb; thus in Grebo, *kanu ni ná*, hunger works him, for hungry; *á ká te plande*, he has many things, for rich; and so in Mpongwe *e jágá njana*, he is sick with hunger, for he is hungry; *are nániva*, he has money, for rich, etc. A similar usage prevails in all three to express the relative qualities of things; thus in Grebo, to say "his knife is better than my knife," they would say *á fa hio na fa*, i. e. excels or passes my knife. To express the superlative degree, they would connect with the word *hio* another, viz. *pépè* which means "all" so as to make the phraseology *hio pépè*, i. e. excel all.

Their modes of counting differ. The Grebo counts up to five, and then there is a reduplicative up to ten, and then another up to twenty; after which they count by twenties up to ten twenties, which is *huba*, or two hundred. The Mpongwe and Mandingo have what may strictly be called a decimal system; each counts to ten, where there is a reduplication; eleven is ten and one, twenty is two tens; ten tens is one hundred, for which each language has a word.

The Grebo has no ordinals; the Mandingo forms its ordinals by a suffix, the Mpongwe by a prefix. In all three, the derivatives are formed simply by repeating the numerals.

Having noticed the points of difference and resemblance between these dialects, as far as they go, we proceed now, to point out some very remarkable peculiarities of the Mpongwe adjective, which are entirely unknown to the others, and perhaps are unknown to any other language in the world.

Mpongwe Adjectives.

Under this head are included adjectives of every description, viz. possessive, demonstrative, distributive, numeral and a species

of pronominal adjective, that is denominated for the sake of convenience, the definite pronoun. All of these are included under one head, because they are all governed by the same general rules of inflection.

Though they have no inflection to indicate gender or case, they have a singular and plural, and a species of *declensional inflection* by which they accommodate themselves to nouns of all declensions; thus, the same adjective has one form for a noun of the first declension, another for a noun of the second declension, etc. This will be better understood by an example; thus,

1. DEC. { Sing. *nyare mpolu*, a large cow
Plur. *inyare impolu*, large cows.
2. DEC. { Sing. *eyara evolu*, a large chest
Plur. *gara volu*, large chests.
3. DEC. { Sing. *iddmbe ivolu*, a large sheep
Plur. *iddmbe ampolu*, large sheep.
4. DEC. { Sing. *omamba ompolu*, a large snake
Plur. *imamba impolu*, large snakes.

Here then, without anything that can be denominated case or gender, we have as many as seven different forms for the adjective *large*, viz. *mpolu*, *impolu*, *evolu*, *volu*, *ivolu*, *ampolu*, and *ompolu*, in the use of which the natives are governed by the strictest and most uniform principles of grammar.

Adjectives again are to be divided into *three distinct classes*, not according to the classification of our grammars, into demonstrative, possessive, distributive, etc., but according to the peculiar mode which each adopts of being inflected through the declensions. Before entering into a description of these different classes, it is necessary to give some explanation of the definite pronoun.

Definite Pronoun. This particle, *yi*, *ya*, or *yo* (it assumes these different vowels according to rules that will be mentioned presently), is a part of speech peculiar to the Mpongwe, but is so intimately interwoven with the whole structure of the language, and is used for such a variety of purposes, that it is difficult to assign it a place under any of the established divisions of speech. It partakes of the nature of the personal pronoun; is used as a relative pronoun and points out its antecedent with admirable precision; and serves as a connecting link between the nominative and the possessive cases. These different forms of it incorporate themselves with the initial vowel of all verbs of the past tense; they serve as an auxiliary in forming the infinitive mood; some-

times they exercise the function of a preposition ; they serve to indicate the nominative to the verb when it is preceded by more than one ; they incorporate themselves with all adjectives whose incipient syllable commences with a vowel, and are indispensable to the inflection of the great mass of adjectives in the language ; they form the incipient syllable of all ordinal numbers and are used in various other ways, too numerous to be mentioned. This pronoun is inflected through the different declensions like any other adjective ; indeed it is the basis of the two principal classes of adjectives, without which, they cannot be inflected. This may be better understood by an example ; thus,

- | | | |
|---------|---|--|
| 1. DEC. | { | Sing. <i>nyare yi re</i> , the cow it is there |
| | { | Plur. <i>inyare si re</i> , the cows they are there. |
| 2. DEC. | { | Sing. <i>egare zi re</i> , the chest it is, etc. |
| | { | Plur. <i>gare yi re</i> , " " " |
| 3. DEC. | { | Sing. <i>idámbe nyi re</i> , the sheep, etc. |
| | { | Plur. <i>adámbe mi re</i> , " " " |
| 4. DEC. | { | Sing. <i>omamba wi re</i> , the snake it, etc. |
| | { | Plur. <i>imamba yi re</i> , " " " |

All the parts, singular and plural, being *yi, si, zi, nyi, mi, wi*. If it is united to a word, no matter whether it be a noun, adjective, or verb, that commences with a vowel, it drops its own vowel, and incorporates itself with the following word, in the same manner as the French article with a noun which commences with a vowel or a silent *h*. The vowel is superseded by *a* before certain consonants, but under what particular circumstances is not known. When it takes *o* it is either in the objective case, or it is a nominative possessing something of a demonstrative character ; thus, *ininla nyi denda mpani mbe, nyo be juwa*, i. e. " the soul that sins, it (the very same) shall die," etc. It differs from adjectives and nouns, but agrees with personal pronouns in having an objective case.

Having now explained the nature and office of this somewhat anomalous particle, which makes a marked, if not a radical difference between this and the other two dialects, we may complete the classification of adjectives.

The *first class* of adjectives embraces all those which receive the definite pronoun as a prefix, which they may do in two ways, 1. when the ground-form commencing with a vowel, incorporates the prefix with itself without forming an additional syllable ; thus, *'am* is the ground-form for *my* but is never used by itself ; by receiving the prefix it becomes *y'am, s'am, z'am*, etc. ; and 2. when

the ground-form commences with a consonant and receives the prefix as an additional syllable; thus, *ngulu*, strong; *yingula*, *singulu*, according to the number and declension of the noun to which it belongs. Before the word *tenatena*, red, and some other words, the vowel of the prefix is *a*, as *yatenatena*, etc.

The *second class* embraces those adjectives whose initial changes are analogous to those that are produced on the incipient syllables of so many nouns in the different declensions successively; i. e. they assume, reject or change their initial vowel according as nouns of the different declensions would. The word *mpolu* belongs to this class; and the example already given under the head of the inflection of adjectives generally, will explain the characteristic just mentioned.

The *third class* embrace such adjectives as combine both of the above peculiarities in their own inflections; this occurs in the words *enge*, much, and *ango*, little; neither of which is ever used by itself. With nouns of the first declension it is *nyenge*, pl. *sin-yenge*; in the second declension it is *ezenge*, pl. *yenge*; in the third, *inyenge*, pl. *amange*; and in the fourth it is *onyenge*, pl. *imienge*, etc.

The ordinal numbers are derived from the cardinal, by simply prefixing the definite pronoun, all of which, as well as the cardinal numbers themselves, are to be arranged under the different classes of adjectives according to their incipient syllables respectively.

Pronouns.

Personal Pronouns. All three of these dialects have a large number of personal pronouns, resulting from contracted forms of the same word, forms to express objects of importance or diminutiveness, emphasis, etc., in which there are some peculiarities for each one. Neither has any forms to express gender; and, with the exception of an objective form of the first person singular in the Grebo, they have no case.

The Grebo has a form of the third person singular and plural for insignificant objects.

The following is a list of the personal pronouns in each.

GREBO PERSONAL PRONOUNS.

Singular.	Plural.
1st Pers. <i>má</i> , I	<i>á</i> or <i>ánu</i> , we
2d Pers. <i>máh</i> , you	<i>ák</i> or <i>ánuu</i> , ye
3d Pers. <i>á</i> , <i>ná</i> , dim. <i>á</i> and <i>ná</i> , he, she, it	<i>oh</i> , <i>no</i> , <i>eh</i> and <i>ne</i> , thy.

They are declined thus :

First Pers. singular.	First Pers. plural.
Nom. <i>má</i> , I	<i>d</i> and <i>amu</i> , we
Poss. <i>ná</i> and <i>má</i> , my	<i>d</i> , our
Obj. <i>má</i> , <i>mu</i> , <i>mí</i> , me	<i>am</i> and <i>amu</i> , us.
Second Pers. singular.	Second Pers. plural.
Nom. <i>máá</i> , you	<i>áá</i> and <i>áamu</i> , ye
Poss. <i>náá</i> and <i>máá</i> , your	<i>áá</i> , your
Obj. <i>máá</i> , <i>máá</i> , you	<i>áamu</i> , you.
Third Pers. singular.	Third Pers. plural.
Nom. <i>d</i> and <i>ná</i> , he, she, or it	<i>oá</i> and <i>no</i> , thy
Poss. <i>d</i> , <i>ná</i> , his, her, its	<i>oá</i> and <i>no</i> , their
Obj. <i>ná</i> , him, her, it	<i>no</i> , them.
Third Pers. dim. Sing.	Third Pers. plural.
Nom. <i>éá</i> and <i>né</i> , he, she, or it	<i>oá</i> and <i>né</i> , they
Poss. <i>éá</i> , his, her, its	<i>oá</i> and <i>né</i> , their
Obj. <i>né</i> , him, her, it	<i>né</i> , them.

NOTE. The first and second persons, both singular and plural, are not distinguished from each other except by intonation, which is marked in writing by *h* final.

The following are the pronouns personal of the Mandingo, viz.

- | |
|---|
| 1. Pers. singular, <i>né</i> (cont. forms), <i>n</i> , <i>m</i> , <i>I</i> , me |
| 2. " " <i>ite</i> " " <i>i</i> , thou |
| 3. " " <i>ate</i> " " <i>a</i> , he, she, it. |
| 1. Pers. plural, <i>ntolu</i> , <i>ntelu</i> (sometimes <i>n</i>), we, us |
| 2. " " <i>allolu</i> , or <i>allelu</i> , cont. <i>al</i> , ye, you |
| 3. " " <i>ítolu</i> , or <i>ítelu</i> , " <i>y</i> , thy, them. |

The nominative and objective cases are always the same ; the possessive case, which belongs properly to possessive pronouns, is formed by suffixing *la* to the personal pronouns ; thus,

- | |
|---|
| 1. <i>ntela</i> (cont. forms), <i>na</i> , my |
| 2. <i>ítela</i> " " <i>íla</i> , thy |
| 3. <i>atela</i> " " <i>ála</i> , his, her, etc. |

The following are Mpongwe personal pronouns :

- | |
|---|
| 1. Pers. singular, <i>mié</i> , <i>mí</i> , <i>m'</i> (emphatic) <i>mié</i> , I, me |
| 2. " " <i>o</i> , <i>d</i> , <i>awé</i> , you |
| 3. " " <i>e</i> , <i>é</i> (in combination <i>a</i>), <i>yé</i> , <i>ayé</i> , he, she, it, him. |
| 1. Pers. plural, <i>azuwé</i> , <i>az'wé</i> , <i>'zuwe</i> , we, us |
| 2. " " <i>anuwe</i> , <i>'nuwe</i> , ye, you |
| 3. " " <i>wao</i> , <i>wa</i> , they, them. |

The possessive pronouns are formed by prefixing the definite pronouns; which see under the head of *Adjectives*.

á and *ɛ* are used both as nominative and objective cases, only however when they are incorporated with the final syllable of the verb.

Relative Pronouns.

The Grebo has a relative pronoun, singular and plural; as, *nyá* (who), pl. *nyo* (who), which neither of the others has; but both these have more than one word for this purpose. *O* is the ordinary relative pronoun in Mpongwe, *mande*, when a question is asked. In Mandingo, *man*, *many*, or *men*.

All three dialects form a reflexive pronoun by suffixing a syllable; in Grebo it is *dui*, from which comes *ádui* (himself); in Mandingo, the suffix is *fang* or *dung*; as, *m'fang* (myself); in Mpongwe, it is *mè*; as, *miémè* (myself), *ayémè* (himself), etc.

Verbs.

There are but few points of resemblance among the verbs of these three dialects. Neither has any inflections to indicate the person or the number, i. e. the first, second and third persons, singular and plural, are of the same form.

The second person plural of the imperative mood in Mpongwe verbs, has a form different from the singular, which is almost the only exception to the above principle that is worthy of notice. Another circumstance common to all is that they use conjunctions, and other auxiliary particles, to express the various shades of meaning of the different tenses and moods; and some of these particles are the same in two or more of them, which cannot justly be regarded in any other light than an accidental circumstance.

Grebo verbs are exceedingly meagre in point of inflections. They have an indicative, an imperative, and an infinitive mood. The subjunctive mood is little else than the indicative, having the conjunction *ne* (if) placed before it; and the potential mood is likewise dependent upon auxiliary particles.

Tense is well defined in Grebo verbs, perhaps much more minutely than in either of the other two dialects. With the aid of auxiliary particles, there are as many as *thirteen tenses*; viz. the present, indefinite past, imperfect indefinite past, the past tense of to-day, the imperfect past tense of to-day, the past tense of yesterday, the imperfect past tense of yesterday, the past tense of time previous to

yesterday, the imperfect tense of time previous to yesterday, the indefinite future tense, the future tense of to-day, the future tense of to-morrow, the future tense of time subsequent to to-morrow. This remarkable minuteness in defining the precise time of an event or action, is not effected, however, by changes wrought upon the radical word, but by the use of auxiliary particles, which are seldom used except in this capacity. There is not, strictly speaking, any future tense; the only way by which they can express future action, is by employing the verb *minio* or *mi* (to go), as an auxiliary, and the infinitive mood; thus, to say, "I will do it," they say, *mi ni numu*, i. e. "I go it to do." And so *mi ni numu*, "I am going it to do, presently, or some future part of the day." And in all these cases, the auxiliary verb receives the inflections, whilst the infinitive mood of the principal verb remains unchanged. No Grebo verb is capable, of itself, of more than twelve or fifteen different forms; for all the accessory ideas or shades of meaning, it is indebted to the use of auxiliary particles, many of which are inflected instead of itself.

It has a passive voice, which is made by affixing the letter *ɛ* to the active form; but it is never used, when it can be avoided by circumlocution. Instead of saying *he was killed*, they would say, *he* or *they* or *somebody killed him*. Instead of saying, *he was killed in war*, they would say, *war killed him*. The want of passive verbs characterizes the Mandingo, the Basa, the Fantee, the Acra, and perhaps all the dialects of Northern Africa. The particles *na* (is) and *mána* (was) are the only parts of a substantive verb used in the Grebo. A reciprocal form is produced by a reduplication of the incipient syllable.

Mandingo Verb.

The Mandingo verb possesses but little more completeness or system than the Grebo. It seems to be equally dependent upon auxiliary particles, and, like the Grebo, but not to the same extent, it defines the time of an action with considerable minuteness. The radical or ground form is capable of but few inflections, even less than the Grebo. It has a causative form, which is made by the aid of a suffix, which the Grebo has not; but on the other hand, it wants a reciprocal form, which the Grebo has. It differs essentially from the Grebo, in its not being under the necessity of employing the verb *to go* or *come*, to aid in expressing a future tense. It is said to possess seven tenses and four moods, but strictly speaking, there are, perhaps, not more than three moods,

the conditional being expressed by aid of conjunctive particles. It uses a greater variety of particles in the sense of substantive verbs.

Mpongwe Verb.

The Mpongwe verb has *four moods*, the indicative, the imperative, the conditional or subjunctive, and what may be denominated the *conjunctive mood*. By the aid of auxiliary particles, it forms a potential and an infinitive mood.

The conjunctive mood has only one form, and is used as the second verb in a sentence, where the two verbs would otherwise be joined by a copulative conjunction. Although not inflected itself, it is joined with verbs of all moods, tenses, and persons.

The conditional mood has a form of its own, but uses conjunctive particles as auxiliaries at the same time. Different conjunctive particles are used with the different tenses.

The imperative mood is derived from the present of the indicative, by the change of its initial consonant into its reciprocal consonant; thus, *tõnda*, to love; *rõnda*, love thou; *denda*, to do; *lenda*, do thou. These changes will be noticed more fully presently.

The potential mood is made, like the subjunctive, by the aid of auxiliary particles.

The tenses in Mpongwe are a present, past or historical, perfect past, and future. The perfect past tense, which represents the completeness of an action, is formed from the present tense by prefixing *a* and by changing *a* final into *i*; thus, *tõnda*, to love; *atõndi*, did love. The past or historical tense is derived from the imperative by prefixing *a* and changing *a* final into *i*; thus, *rõnda*, love; *arõndi*, have loved, etc. The future tense is formed by the aid of the auxiliary particle *be*; as, *mi be tõnda*, I am going to love. It must be carefully noted, however, that this same combination of words, if the nominative follows, expresses past time; thus, *ne be tõnda Anyambia Ebreham*, i. e. God loved Abraham. When it is future, the nominative goes before the verb in the order of construction. When an action is immediately to take place, the present tense is used as a future; thus, *mi bia*, I am coming immediately; but, *mi be bia*, I am coming after a while, or at some indefinite future time.

The passive voice is formed from the active, simply by changing *a* final into *o*; thus, *mi tõnda*, I love; *mi tõnda*, I am loved. In the historical and perfect past tense, which terminate in *i*,

o is simply adjoined; thus, *arōndā*, have loved; *arōndio*, to have been loved. This passive form, which is so simple in itself, may be found in every mood and tense which properly belongs to the active.

There is another feature in the Mpongwe verb, equally simple and remarkable; there is a negative for every affirmative form of the verb, and this is distinguished from the affirmative by an intonation on the first or principal vowel of the verb, which is characterized in writing by the use of an italic letter. The negative form belongs to the passive as well as the active voice; thus,

ACT.	{ Affir. <i>mi tōnda</i> , I love
	{ Neg. <i>mi tōnda</i> , I do not love.
PASS.	{ Affir. <i>mi tōnda</i> , I am loved
	{ Neg. <i>mi tōnda</i> , I am not loved.

Having now treated of the moods and tenses of Mpongwe verbs, of which there is nothing remarkable, except the very simple manner in which the passive voice is formed from the active, and the equally simple process by which the negative form is distinguished from the affirmative, we proceed now to point out another characteristic of Mpongwe verbs, which is wholly unknown to other dialects, and which certainly constitutes a most wonderful feature in this.

All the verbs in the language, with the exception, perhaps, of ten or a dozen, may be regarded as *regular verbs*, inasmuch as they are all governed by the same fixed principles of inflection; they are such as are of two or more syllables, the final letter of which is always *a*, and the incipient consonant of which must be *b*, *d*, *f* (which is closely allied to *fw*), *j*, *k*, *p*, *s*, *t*, and *sh*, each of which has its reciprocal consonant, into which it is invariably changed to form the imperative mood and such of the oblique tenses of the verb as are derived from it. Such verbs as commence with *m* or *n*, which have no reciprocal consonants, retain these two letters throughout all their inflections; but, in other respects, are perfectly regular. The following example will illustrate what we mean by the change of these consonants into their reciprocal letters; thus, the invariable reciprocal letter of *b* is *v* or *w*; so the imperative is derived from the present of the indicative, in all verbs which commence with *b*, by changing *b* into *w* or *v*; thus, *mi bōnga*, I take; Imp. *wōnga*, take; after the same manner, and with invariable uniformity, *d* is changed into *l*, *f* into *v* or *fw* into *vw*, *j* into *y*, *k* into *g*, *p* into *v*, *s* into *z*, *sh* into *zy*, *t* into *r*; thus,

<i>mi bōnga</i> , I take	<i>wōnga</i> , take thou
<i>mi denda</i> , I do	<i>lenda</i> , do thou
<i>mi fuena</i> , I err	<i>wuena</i> , err thou
<i>mi jona</i> , I kill	<i>yona</i> , kill thou
<i>mi kamba</i> , I speak	<i>gamba</i> , speak
<i>mi panga</i> , I make	<i>vanga</i> , make
<i>mi songa</i> , I follow	<i>xonga</i> , follow
<i>mi tōnda</i> , I love	<i>rōnda</i> , love
<i>mi xunguna</i> , I help	<i>zanguna</i> , help thou
<i>mi sheva</i> , I play	<i>zyeva</i> , play, etc.

Having now explained what a regular verb is, we proceed a step further, to explain what may be denominated the different *conjugations* of every regular verb.

Every regular verb in the language may be said to have as many as five simple conjugations, and as many as six compound conjugations.

These conjugations are, 1st, the radical conjugation *kamba*, I speak; 2d, the causative, which is derived from the radical by changing a final into *iza*; thus, *kamba*, to speak; *kambiza*, to cause to speak; the 3d, frequentative or habitual conjugation, which implies habitual action, is derived from the radical by suffixing *ga*; thus, *kamba*, to speak; *kambaga*, to speak habitually; 4th, the relative conjugation, which implies performing an action for or to some one, is derived from the radical by suffixing *na*; thus, from *kamba*, to speak, comes *kambana* or *kambina*, to speak to or with some one; and 5th, the indefinite, which is derived from the radical by suffixing the imperative to the present of the Indicative; thus, from *kamba* comes *kambagamba*, to speak at random.

By combining these simple derivative conjugations, as many as six compound conjugations may be formed. Thus, by uniting the habitual and the causative, we get *kambizaga*, i. e. to cause to talk habitually, etc. The following table will exhibit all these conjugations; thus,

Simple Conjugations.

Radical,	<i>mi kamba</i> , I talk
Frequentative,	<i>kambaga</i> , to talk habitually
Causative,	<i>kambiza</i> , to cause to talk
Relative,	<i>kambina</i> , to talk to, or with some one
Indefinite,	<i>kambagamba</i> , to talk at random.

Compound Conjugations.

<i>kambizaga</i> , to cause to talk habitually
<i>kambinaga</i> , to talk habitually with some one
<i>kambinaza</i> , to cause to talk with some one

kambagambaga, to talk at random habitually
kambagambiza, to cause some one to talk at random
kambagambina, to talk with some one at random.

These compound tenses might be still further multiplied, by combining three or more of the simple conjugations into one; thus, *kambinazaga*, to cause to speak with some one habitually, but such extended combinations are seldom used.

Now, in relation to the above simple and compound forms of the verb, each one of them has, according to principles already mentioned, not only an affirmative active and negative active voice, but also an affirmative and negative passive voice, each one of which is inflected through all the moods and tenses according to the same rules as the radical conjugation, thus giving to the verb a variety and a number of inflections that is surpassed by no language in the world. The number of different forms into which every regular verb may be wrought, not including those which require auxiliary particles, is upwards of two hundred, which must appear astonishingly great when it is remembered that the verb is not inflected on account of person or number. The whole number of tenses or shades of meaning, which an Mpongwe verb may be made to express, with the aid of its auxiliary particles, is between twelve and fifteen hundred. It is not pretended that any one Mpongwe verb is habitually or frequently used in all of these varied and almost interminable ramifications; for this would imply a degree of mental activity to which no native tribe in Africa has attained; but we mean to assert that some parts of every conjugation are less or more frequently, and that the most remote ramification may, at any time be used and convey a precise idea to the mind of the native, even had it been the first time he had ever heard it so used.

It is further important to mention, that the natives do not always confine themselves rigidly to the idiom which is implied by the character of the verb; that is, instead of using these complicated combinations, they may express their same ideas by the use of two or more independent words; thus, instead of saying *e kambizè*, he caused him to speak, they may say *e pangè e kamba*, i. e. he makes him to talk.

It will be borne in mind too, that, although the inflections of the Mpongwe verb are exceedingly complicated, it preserves a most marked method, and, by committing to memory a few very simple principles, every part may easily be traced up to its root.

It has been remarked that the Mandingo has no passive voice,

and that the Grebo, if it really has one, seldom uses it. The Mpongwe, on the other hand, uses the passive voice much more freely than the active; and it may be said with truth, that it never uses an active verb when it can use a passive one. The great partiality which is felt for the use of the passive voice, leads to a species of idiom which is very remarkable indeed. For example, they would be much more likely to say *mi tōndo n'an-laga*, I am loved by people, than to say *anlaga wi tōnda mie*, the people like me; so *mi tōndo ndē*, I am loved by him, in preference to *e tōnda mie*; they say *e bōngo n'ahugu*, i. e. "he is taken or overcome by rum," for, he is drunk; *e nya inyama si jono ndē*, i. e. he eats the venison which is killed by him, instead of, which he killed; *olōngā w'inya wi tōndo ne reri yē*, i. e. the kind of food that is liked by his father, instead of that which his father likes. The phrase, "your coming to this house," is expressed thus, *ibia s'ibio nuoe*, literally, "the coming which is *comed* by you;" and again, the death which we die in this world, is thus rendered, *ijuwa si-juwo zuoe ntye yindā*, i. e. "the death which is *died* by us in this world."

Syntax.

But these dialects do not differ from each other less in their construction, or the mode of arranging their words in sentences, than they do in their etymological principles. This will be better understood, however, by arranging a few sentences together with an interlineation of English.

FAMILIAR PHRASES.

Mandingo, <i>Ilafita munnela?</i>	What do you want?
Grebo, <i>dēh ida?</i>	" " "
Mpongwe, <i>o bel' ande?</i>	" " "
Mand. <i>Ibeta minto?</i>	Where are you going?
Grebo, <i>Tē miē?</i>	
Mpong. <i>o kēnda gwā?</i>	
Mand. <i>Atata minto le?</i>	Where is he gone?
Grebo, <i>Tā muē?</i>	
Mpong. <i>Akēnda gwā?</i>	
Mand. <i>Iko di?</i> or <i>dile?</i>	What do you say?
Grebo, <i>A hē dē?</i>	
Mpong. <i>o buia sē</i> or <i>okamba sē?</i>	
Mand. <i>Nt a ke nola,</i>	I cannot do it.
Grebo.	
Mpong. <i>mi agekizi denda mo.</i>	

- Mand. *Abe bungo kono*, he is in the house.
 Grebo, *á ne kai biyo*,
 Mpong. *are go nago*,
- Mand. *nkonkota, konko le benna*, I am hungry.
 Grebo, *kans ni mu*, hunger works me.
 Mpong. *mi jégd njana*, I am sick with hunger.
- Mand. *Imuso be mintole?* Where is your wife?
 Grebo, *Tè nèt nah nyéma?*
 Mpong. *omacanta uná, wi re gwi?*
- Mand. *Nye ding sabba sotto*, I have three children.
 Grebo, *Má ká iru táká*,
 Mpong. *Mi are anawana arawo*.
- Mand. *Ate ma mo batte lati*, he is a good man.
 Grebo, *ka nyeboi*, good person.
 Mpong. *omá mbia or arombia*, he is a good person.
- Mand. *Nétu nge kanna le fa*, we killed a bird.
 Grebo, *á la niblo*,
 Mpong. *Azur' e ayoni nyéni*.
- Mand. *Nbulo man si*, I have no time.
 Grebo, *Ye ti ká*.
 Mpong. *mi ayele egomba*.
- Mand. *Ntotu motu be balo koiring*, our people are white.
 Grebo.
 Mpong. *anlaga wasyo wi re pupu*.

All these dialects are poor in point of words; the Grebo much more so than the Mpongwe; there are no corresponding words for rich, hungry, happy, etc. The word *píta* signifies to squeeze, defraud, cheat, etc. The word *lie (se)* in Grebo signifies to tell a falsehood, to mistake, etc. All terms which belong to the Christian religion, science, government, etc. are wanting. Again there are terms in these languages for which there are no corresponding words in English, the names of trees, grasses, birds, fish, their social economy, systems of idolatry and fables.