Dictionary of the Kiniassa Language

Krapf Johann Ludwig
DICTIONARY

OF THE

KINIASSA LANGUAGE

BY

THE REV. JOHN REBMAN,

LATE MISSIONARY IN EASTERN AFRICA.

EDITED BY HIS COLLEAGUE,

THE REV. DR. L. KRAPF.

LONDON:

CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY,
SALISBURY SQUARE, FLEET STREET.

1877.
N.B.—Regarding the Alphabet used in this Dictionary, the Editor has followed that of Dr. Steere, as given in his valuable Handbook of the Swahili Language, page 8 (second edition). *Rebman* has adopted another Alphabet and Orthography, which to an English reader was rather objectionable. The Editor is of opinion that the introduction of a standard alphabet in behalf of the great South-African family of languages ought to be left to the development of the natives of future generations. He fully admits that the standard alphabet of Dr. Lepsius is an excellent elaboration, which perhaps even at the present period might be introduced into East Africa, though it will be better to postpone this matter until a greater number of dialects of the great South-African family will have been reduced to writing. The remarks made by Dr. Steere, pages 6 and 7 in his Handbook, are very much to the point, and the students of East-African languages will do well by taking notice of the words expressed by the Right Reverend Missionary Bishop for Central Africa.
In introducing this Dictionary to the student, the Editor may be permitted to offer a few remarks; first—how it came that Mr. Rebman compiled this Dictionary, and secondly—on the Author himself.

After the Committee of the Church Missionary Society in England had resolved upon printing this Dictionary, and after they had charged the Editor with the execution of their design, the latter repeatedly was urgent with Mr. Rebman, to give him some historical hints in regard to the first occasion or idea which had brought him on composing this Dictionary.

Mr. Rebman complied with the Editor's request by dictating to his wife (only a very short time before his death) the following lines:

"The Dictionary of a new African language owes its existence to a circumstance most insignificant in itself. In the latter end of 1855 a Swahili man from Mombas passed at my station (Kisuludini) with a head of cattle. At that time it had been my purpose to bring in cattle for labour, for the benefit of the Mission and by way of an example for the natives. So I bought a young heifer for a few dollars and a fraction, cattle in East Africa at that time being very cheap. The fraction, however, I could not pay for want of change. So I proposed to the owner to do a few days' work in order to complete a full dollar. He agreed to do so. One day while he was at work with my servants in building an appendage to our dwelling-house, I heard him talk with them in a strange language. On inquiry I was told it was Kiniassa, i.e., the language spoken in the neighbourhood of the lake Niasa (Nyassa), the most southern of the great inland lakes. I at once felt the wish to learn so much of it as to be able to judge about its relationship with the Kisusaheli and Kinika and some other dialects spoken inland of Mombas with which I had got more or less acquainted."

After Rebman's death, his afflicted widow showed the Editor a facsimile of copied letters which her husband had written to the Committee between the years 1850—1855.

In a letter written on the 13th of April, 1854, he says: "Of the preparatory work which I have been engaged in
this half-year, I would first mention the gathering of a Vocabulary of the Kiniassa language, which I have now carried to the letter 'M.' I need scarcely say that it also belongs to the great South African family of languages. Sounds which we have not yet met in other dialects are, 'pf' and 'ps' or 'bs.'

"My informant is a slave from Mombas, who came into our service before I knew anything about his origin, which I rather accidentally discovered when I heard him once speak to one of his fellows in a strange dialect. On enquiry, I was told that he was a Mniassa, who, in consequence of international expeditions for slave-catching, was seized by a tribe called Wapogera, who sold him to the Wamaravi, and these to the Suaheli slave merchants, who had come from Uibu (a small island belonging to Mozambique, and on the maps called Ibo). At Uibu, which was reached after two months' travelling at a very slow rate (in effective march only half the time is wanted), he was at last bought by slave merchants from Mombas. This, he thinks, happened about ten years ago, while he is now a man of about thirty years of age. The remembrance of his country and language can therefore be well supposed to be still very distinct. His native territory he calls Kumpande, two days West from the lake, which by the tribes who live on its banks, is called Niansha or Niancha [see Dictionary, page 135, properly: Ni (me) yancha (love) = love me], of which the Suahelis evidently made Niassa. Salimini (this is the name of my informant) states that he used to go very often to the lake in search of Mia (pl. of Müa) a species of palm, of the leaves of which the natives make mats, bags, &c., ss also to buy cotton, which is grown near the lake, and of which they weave a coarse kind of cloth, while their better articles of clothing, as also their beads, brass wire, and especially their guns (called fudi in their language) they buy from the Portuguese, who seem to have some settlements at no great distance from them, called 'Kubale' and 'Kumkoma.' The Portuguese are called by them 'Wakigunda,' while the name generally given by the East Africans to Europeans is 'Wazungu.'

"From that part of the lake's banks he used to come to from his home, the opposite side cannot be seen, but a boat starting at daybreak will reach it at sunset. Their boats are, however, not provided with rudders, wherefore they only use
oars. Following the margin of the lake to the South through the territory of Maravi for a few days, its breadth seems gradually to decrease, till, as my informant expressed himself, people on the one side are within call of people on the other side, but of its extent to the North he and his countrymen have no idea. They only know that it gets much broader there than it is with them, so much so that they are deterred from fording it, because they lose sight of the banks, and therefore only go to neighbouring islands for fishing. During the cold or rainy season the lake is said to be extremely boisterous, but during the hot season quite calm.

"When my informant spoke of the cold in his country, he described the water as getting a hard crust during the night, which of course can be nothing else but ice, called 'kungu' in their language. This, however, is only found in small collections of standing water, and never in the lake Niassa. The Wahião (not Wahiáu) are spread on the Eastern banks of the lake; to the south and south-west are the Wamari, and north from these the Wakamunda, of whom the Wakampande and Wapogera are only subdivisions. The name Maravi, which in older maps is given as the name of the lake, I had never heard before from a native. Salimini, my informant, never applied it to the lake, but to a large territory bordering upon it, and in fact forming its South-western banks. The occupants are called Wamari, and these, together with the Wakamunda and perhaps still other tribes, are by the Snahelis on the coast generally comprised under the common name of Waniassa.∗ The Wakamanga, whom on the map of 1850 I have placed to the east of the lake, are, according to Salimini, to be placed even to the west of the Wakamunda, to whom they stand in the same relation as the Wakamba to the Wanika inland of Mombas.

"Salimini also mentioned a large river to the south of his country, which he called Temba, and the people living on its banks, Watemba. In the vicinity of the Watemba are the Wandsuns, who, from an abundance of iron in their country, seem to be the principal blacksmiths among all the tribes around. On being applied to for hoes by people who have come from a distance with a cow or goat for their barter, they will work all the night at their fires. I might mention

∗ See page 120 the word "Manguru, pl. Wanguru"
many more names referring to regions of inner Africa, but the great thing is to go and see with your own eyes, and whenever I make inquiries about those unknown regions, I feel as if I must go and visit them.

"From all that Salimini told us respecting his country, people, &c., they must be far superior to the people around us in this quarter. It appears also a most fruitful land, fruits and vegetables abounding, but slavery casts a dark shade over all. So constantly are they exposed to it that in building their cottages they always make a secret door, plaster it over so that to a stranger it is invisible, by which they may escape at a moment's warning."

Let us hope and pray that this monster of slavery and all other gross heathenism may soon be put down by the light and power of Christianity and Christian civilization, which is happily beginning to be inaugurated in that dark region by the noble enterprise which the various Scotch churches have directed toward the Southern end of Lake Niassa, whilst the Universities' Mission at Zanzibar no doubt will occupy the North-eastern shore of that great lake.

The Editor of this Dictionary ardently wishes that the tribes of the Wakamdunda in the West may still be found existing and not have been entirely annihilated, as has been the case with many tribes of that quarter. The Author and the Editor, as well as the Society which has liberally offered the means for giving publicity to the Dictionary, would consider themselves amply rewarded, if the publication of this work would induce a few or many Missionaries to convey the tidings of salvation to the Wakamdunda and the other tribes residing in the West, and especially in the region where Dr. Livingstone breathed his last, so that also in the latitude of the Lake Niassa, a chain of Mission-Stations between the East and West coasts of Africa might be established, as the Editor has proposed (since 1844) a line of Missions under the Equator (the so-called Equatorial Mission chain). Whether this Dictionary will be of any real use to the Missionaries of the Church Missionary Society, proceeding to Karague and Uganda, remains to be seen, but in a general way it will be useful to all Missionaries and travellers, who have to do with the people of the great Southern family of African languages.

* See the word "Batara," page 8.
Mr. Rebman in a letter dated Cairo on the 27th Nov., 1855, writes to the Committee:

"Excepting the time I spent with Abbe Gundcha every morning in reading and praying with him, I was exclusively engaged in studying the Kiniassa language. The Vocabulary which I had originally intended to form, growing under my pen to a Dictionary, finding as I gradually did, to my great astonishment, that language to be nearly as rich in words as the Kisuaehili, with all that the latter has borrowed from the Arabic, and almost richer in grammatical forms of a most curious kind. The importance of that language in its relation to the great South African family of languages can scarcely be overrated, when it is known that it contains the fundamental meanings of a great number of words, not only in Kisuaehili, Kinika, Kisambara, &c., but even in the Caffre language. It was with the profoundest interest that I traced the various forms and particles of speech which elucidated what had still remained dark and unaccountable to us in the other dialects. I fully believe that the language spoken to the west of the lake Niassa holds the same central position in the great South African family of languages, as the people who occupy that part of the Continent do, in a geographical point of view, for no sooner had I got an insight into it, than the dialects with which I had previously made myself more or less acquainted, appeared to me rather as so many rays of one and the same light. My study of the Kiniassa was to me such a continual intellectual feast, that days and weeks fled so quickly as I never remembered they had done before, and it was with great reluctance that I tore myself from it when we had to get ready for our voyage to Aden."

Secondly, in regard to the Author of this Dictionary the Editor is not wishful of making any remark. It may suffice to refer the reader to what the Committee of the Church Missionary Society has published, when the intelligence of Rebman's death on the 4th of Oct., 1876, last, reached them. The publication is headed:

THE LATE REV. JOHN REBMAN.

Very remarkable are the coincidences of missionary history. But few have been more remarkable than that furnished by the death of John Rebman, just at the present moment. Blind, and infirm, and prematurely aged (he was but fifty-six when he died), the solitary veteran clings to his post at "the entering in of the gate" of Equatorial Africa, even after thirty
years of trial and hardship, unbroken by a single visit to Europe; and it
is only when at length a strong Missionary party arrives to occupy the
post, that he is persuaded to come home. Scarcely has he settled down in
the retirement provided for him, than a sudden providential call, loud and
clear, announces to the Church Missionary Society that the time has come
for making a vigorous attempt to carry the Gospel into those very regions—
the great Lake districts of Central Africa—the first accounts of which
he himself conjointly with his colleagues KRAPP and ERHARDT sent
home twenty years ago. An expedition is organised and dispatched. It
arrives on the coast. It starts for the interior, commissioned to plant
a mission on the shores of the Missionaries' inland sea. Truly he might
well say, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace"; and
so it comes to pass. The veteran's work is done, and in peace he departs,
to receive at the Master's hand the reward of his faithful service.

The story of John Remman's career is soon told. Born in Wurtemberg
in 1830, he was a student of the Basle Missionary College, and afterwards
at Islington. He was ordained, and went to East Africa, in 1846, to join
Dr. KRAPP (who had commenced a Mission-station at Mombas, in 1844),
and there he remained till 1875. Comrade after comrade sent out to his
aid died or retired in broken health; his wife, a true companion in
tribulation, was taken from him, and for several years he was entirely
alone. He gathered round him a small band of converts, and one of them
has been the instrument of bringing out of heathenism the Siraama
Christians lately baptised by Mr. Fisch. But his work was mainly a
preparatory one: he compiled a dictionary in Kisinga, and improved with
numerous additions the Dictionary of the Kisuaheli and Kimika languages,
which Dr. KRAPP had first reduced to writing between 1844—53, labours
of which future Missionaries will reap the benefit. On his return, attempts
were made, both in England and Germany, to restore his eyesight; but
they were unsuccessful; and on his retirement a few months ago to
Kornthal in Wurttemburg, the residence of his old friend and fellow-
labourer KRAPP, it was hoped that a happy provision had been made for
the comfort of his declining years by his marriage with the excellent
widow of Mr. Fisch, former Basle Missionary in India. But God had
prepared for him some better thing than even rest in the fatherland and a
wife's loving care; and on October 4th, he entered into the rest awaiting
him in the Father's mansions above. On his death-bed he exclaimed,
"Now it is time to say, Praise be the Lord!" and then again, thinking
he might recover, "There is still work before me: trust and be not afraid." But
it was not to be.

KORNTHAL, NEAR STUTTGART, GERMANY, in December, 1876.

The Editor L. KRAPP.
Adamba (adv) Here. NB. It is also only when preceded by any word, but yahe, when it stands first. — Idea yahe, come here; but: Yabe esuhomma le bu mumura here it is not good to rest. 
Adaba (adv) There.

Aduma. Three. This seems to be the formation of the word for the ma-class, e.g. esuhomma adumma, omul, asumma, omir, see y sketches.

Adama (v.r.) to lean, to recline (Kis. tado). — Adama (v.dat.)

Agana (v. r.) to look with fixed eyes, to stare, to gaze at, to look in one particular direction. Ada Jama ya bu agamama na buwanda, he is gazing eyed (Kit. guma mato yu magodo).

Airi, Two.

Aleo (v. a. 1) To catch something thrown at any one (see sehe), he was also whom whose Kit. bu-m-ntshem msamne.

2) Aloe (pron. dem. this): rel. to the "her" class.

Ali, he or she ta. It stands also in many cases for it.

Alike = Kit. yoko, gape, he is there.

Ammo, he, she, it is there. — Material ethne amaro? Is there still water (or) it is finished?

Ambo (v. a.) Kit. abile mulema we bu mumbo, to take off the upper place (of derma, see "mumbo"). — The "ambo", when taken out of the pot, being laid one place above another.

Amba (v. a.) to begin. Yk. The first syllable of this word is in one position "am" and in another "yam." When it stands first, it is invariably "Yamba," but when preceded by any other word or particle, the changes seem to be irregular. Yamba vero, begin to-day!

Kinassa.

Adamba (contr. from dusu adambadumo, he begins yesterday. But: Dusumbo, adambino, and adambango msumma and again adambino contr. from Uza—

Amba msumba, do not begin to borrow morning. — Amba (v. d. r. l.) to begin to or for any one, to begin at, from any where. — Ntambana mombo anu msumba ni ambo msumbo, it is not in the house of this (man) that they began to see this quarrel.

Ambaka (v. r.) to ford (as orokos), to cross a river in a boat, or on foot, or by swimming. — Ambaka (v. r.) to admit of fording, to be fordable.

Ambaka (v. r.) to ford to or for any one. — Ambaka (v. int.) to ford, frequently, also cause. to cause or induce to ford. — Ambedek (v. a.) to ferry (as orokos), to convey, make pass over water, also said of arrows shot across a river or lake. — Ambedek (v. d.)

Amese (pron.) (pl. amenes) (They who, the same who). The one who I deny life, i.e. it is I who am regardless of life — who am courageous, for courage brings riches (Kit. abanda poko ni mato, ambascambo pombo mato, or mabasca-mabompo pombo mato). There is a fine distinction between ameso and ndiya.

Ameso points to one in distinction from another, while "ndiya" is merely indicative. E.g. maboshi mbe ndiya am evo gendeyi hve mumbe, this is the one which takes the lead to the plantation, but: amese avonepo hve mumbe will be said after a doubt has been raised about the same. Ameso and ameso, it is he, the very one. See y sketches (v.)