

**AN ENGLISH-NYANJA
DICTIONARY OF THE NYANJA
LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN
BRITISH CENTRAL AFRICA**

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An English-Nyanja Dictionary of the Nyanja Language Spoken in British Central Africa by
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ROBERT LAWS

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BRITISH CENTRAL AFRICA

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J. Thin

P R E F A C E.

VARIOUS circumstances have delayed the earlier appearance of this Dictionary. It was intended to prefix a Grammar, but the publication of the Nyanja Grammar of my colleague, the late Rev. Dr. Henry, renders this the less needful; and so the grammatical notes have been reduced to the Table of Concords rendered necessary by the references to these in the body of the work.

In the Nyanja, as in all the Bantu languages, the grammar depends on what has been called the Principle of Euphonic Concord, whereby the initial letter or syllable of the noun affects or governs the rest of the sentence. This relation of the noun to the rest of the sentence offers two methods of arranging a classification of these: first, to group the nouns in classes, counting Singular and Plural of the same word as one class, and giving the corresponding concords for these; or, second, to discard the distinction between Singular and Plural, and classify the nouns according to their concords alone.

The latter is the plan adopted by Dr. Bleek in his Comparative Grammar of the Bantu Languages, and is the more strictly scientific method. The former affords the greatest help to the European seeking to acquire the language, who has not had the advantage of special training in philology.

As, however, all numerical classifications of nouns are arbitrary, if such numbers are inserted in a dictionary, they become a hindrance rather than a help in learning the proper

concord for each noun. When the Singular and Plural of a noun are known, the concord for each can be at once supplied, except in nouns forming their Plural by prefixing *ma* to the Singular. In the dictionary the proper concord for the Singular nouns of this class is indicated by the insertion of the possessive particle *wa*, *la*, or *ya* used with each.

The appropriate concords for the adjectives are indicated by the simple hyphen, e.g. *-kuru*, big; or with the hyphen and the italic, *-a* or *-o*, as *-abwino*, good; *-oipa*, bad.

This contribution towards the knowledge of one of the most useful and, when its dialects are included, one of the most widely-spoken of African languages, is offered as an aid to those who are seeking the extension of Christianity and civilisation in that region.

ROBERT LAWS.

TABLE OF CONCORDS FOR THE CHINYANJA LANGUAGE.

CLASSIFICATION OF NOUNS.

Class I.—Nouns which change the initial letter or syllable of the Singular into *a* to form the Plural :—Muntu, a man ; Antu, people.

Class II.—Nouns which change the initial letter or syllable of the Singular into *mi* to form the Plural :—Ntengo, a tree ; Mitengo, trees.

Class III.—Nouns which in composition form the Plural not by any change in the Singular, but by prefixing *z* or *zi* to the word following :—Nyumba, a house ; Nyumba zambiri, many houses.

Class IV.—Nouns beginning with *ish* in the Singular which form their Plural by changing the *ish* into *z* :—Tshintu, a thing ; Zintu, things.

—*Note.* Greatness is expressed by bringing nouns into this class :—Nsomba, a fish ; Tshinsomba, a large fish.

Class V.—Nouns beginning with *ish* in the Singular which form their Plural by changing the *ish* into *dz* :—Tshiutu, grain (seed) ; Dzintu, grains (seeds).

Class VI.—Nouns which change the initial letter or syllable of the Singular into *ma* to form the Plural :—Dzino, a tooth ; Mano, teeth.

Class VII.—Nouns which form their Plural by prefixing *ma* to the Singular :—Fupa, a bone ; Mafupa, bones. The nouns of this class take the same concord for all their Plurals, but in the Singular the concords are of three varieties (or sub-classes), represented by the three words :—Fupa, a bone ; Mafupa, bones. Uta, a bow ; Mauta, bows. Fumu, a chief ; Mafumu, chiefs.

Class VIII.—Nouns which form their Plural by prefixing *a* to the Singular :—Garu, a dog ; Agararu, dogs.

Class IX.—Infinitives of verbs, corresponding to the English verbal noun in *ing* :—Kulima, hosing. Some of these have Plurals which are

formed by changing the initial *ku* into *ma*, and the final *a* into *o* :—
Kulipira, a paying or payment ; Malipiro, payments.

Class X.—Diminutives. These are formed by prefixing *ka* and *ti* to the ordinary Singular and Plural of the noun :—Garu, a dog ; Kagaru, a little dog ; Tiagaru, little dogs.—*Note 1.* Frequently the *ti* of the Plural is prefixed to the ordinary Singular of the noun, as Tigaru, little dogs. *Note 2.* As is the case in most languages, the form of the diminutive is also the form of endearment and respect.

Class XI.—Relative Nouns. The initial syllables of Singular and Plural for these nouns (of which *o* is the vowel) are given in the Table of Concoords, and in composition the noun takes the concord of the class under which these initial syllables are found. A noun of the first class is here taken as a type :—Wotshita, worker ; Otshita, workers.

Class XII.—Nouns which take their concoords as if the initial syllable of the Singular were *mu* :—Nkamwa, month ; Nkamws, months.

TABLE OF CONCORDS FOR THE CHINYANJA LANGUAGE.

	CLASSES.	CLASSES.	CLASSES.	CLASSES.
	SING. I. SING. VIII.	PLU. I. PLU. VI. PLU. VII. PLU. VIII. PLU. IX.	SING. II. SING. VII. 2.	PLU. II. SING. III. SING. VII. 3.
Of, as sign of Possessive case Concord of Numerical Adj. Good Big Bad	wa modzi wa-bwino wang'-kuru wo-ipa	a a-wiri a-bwino a-kuru o-ipa	wa u-modzi wa-bwino won-kuru wo-ipa	ya i-wiri ya-bwino ysi-kuru yo-ipa
Whole, all Another, other My or mine Thy or thine His, her, its	enso & ienso wina wanga wako watahi	onso ena anga ako atahi	wonso ena wanga wako watahi	yonso ina yanga yako yatahi
Our or ours Your or yours Their, theirs Who, which, or what This, that, these	watu wanu wao omwe amene	atu anu ao omwe amene-wa	watu wanu wao womwe umene-u	yatu yanu yao yomwe imene-i
This, these (here) This, those (there) That, those Which (of two)? What or which, etc.?	uyu uyo udya uti? utani? and wotani?	awa awo adya (aja) ati? otani?	u uo udya uti? wotani?	ii iyo idya iti? yotani?
What? (of race, kind, or quality) How much? How many? Where is he? Where are they? He, himself, etc. Pronominal Subjective Pre- fixes of verb in all tenses except perfects P. S. P. for Perfects Pro. Objective medials Initial Syllables of Relative Nouns	wanje? wangati? ali kuti? cka a- wa- -m- wo-	anje? angati? ali kuti? oka a- a- -a- o-	wanje? ungati? uli kuti? woka u- wa- -u- wo-	yange? ingati? iri kuti? yoka i- ya- -i- yo-