

**A DICTIONARY OF
THE GREBO
LANGUAGE**

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A Dictionary of the Grebo Language by John Payne

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JOHN PAYNE

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OF THE

GREBO LANGUAGE.

BY THE

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OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL MISSION, CAPE PALMAS, WEST AFRICA.

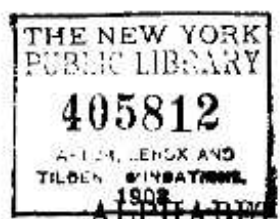
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1860.

JF.



a á â b c d e ě f g h i j k l m n o ő p r s t u ů
v w y z.

Sound of Vowels.

a	pronounced	as in father	i	pronounced	as in ravine
æ	"	" hat	ɪ	"	" pin
ʌ	"	" all	o	"	" no
e	"	" they	ɔ	"	" not
ɔ	"	" met	u	"	" rule
			ū	"	" but

Diphthongs.

ai	pronounced	as i in pine,
au	"	" ow in now,
iū	"	" u in pure.

Sound of Consonants.

G always hard as in *go*, *y* is used as a consonant as in *yard*; *ch* is pronounced as in *church*; *bw*, *gm*, *gnw*, *hml*, *kb*, *kbw*, *kp*, *kpw*, *mw*, and *ny*, are combinations which have no representatives in English pronunciation.

Nasals.

Hm and *hn* at the beginning of words, and *nh* at the end, represent the nasal sound.

INTRODUCTION.

THE *Grebo* people inhabit the West Coast of Africa about Cape Palmas, in lat. 4° north. Like the Tribes generally in this region, they have come from the Interior at a comparatively recent date. Of this no better proof is needed than the current tradition that a *Kobo Kal* (foreign house)—no doubt Portuguese slave factory—was found at Cape Palmas when the Greboes made their first settlement there.

It does not appear, however, that the Greboes came directly to this place in their emigration from the north. Their earliest home near the coast was in the rear of *Bereby*, sixty miles below. Here, after becoming too numerous for comfort in their narrow territory, a portion of the tribe determined to embark in canoes on the ocean, and seek a new home towards the west. As, however, the movement was opposed by a majority, it was necessary to make preparation for it in secret, and to embark at night. In doing this a number of the canoes *capsized*, and the people in them were left. These were called *Worēbo* or the *capsized*, from *worē*, to capsize. Those who launched successfully *bounding over the waves*, took the name *Grebo* from the monkey *grè* or *grē*.

Proceeding up the coast the Greboes landed in detached parties in the country now inhabited by the *Baboes* below the Cavalla River, and at Cavalla and Cape Palmas above. The towns built at this time seem to have been small and temporary. The Greboes continued their migration up the coast as far as Grand Sestros, forty miles above Cape Palmas. At length directed by an oracle, the scattered fragments of the Tribe collected and built a large town, on Cape Palmas, called *Bwine*, or *Bwimle*.

These migrations of the Greboes, account for the affinity of their language with those of the tribes along the coast between Cape Palmas and *Sinos* ninety miles to the north-west. At Grand Sestros, indeed, are to be found large branches of Grebo families, and the dialects along all this portion of the coast are so much alike, that the people readily converse with each other. The resemblance is continued and increased by constant intercourse.

It is from this part of the coast that the *Kroomen* or native African seamen are obtained in greatest numbers. The term *Kroo* is a foreign corruption of *Kraoh*, the name of the tribe at and near *Setra Kroo*, seventy-five miles above Cape Palmas. The *Kroo* people were the first to go to sea, and as other Tribes have followed their example, the name *Kroomen* has been extended to them. It is now synonymous with *seamen*.

Of this class, the Greboes at present furnish a larger number in proportion to their population than any other Tribe. They are to be found in permanent or temporary communities at Fernando Po, a thousand miles below Cape Palmas, at Monrovia and Sierra Leone two hundred and fifty and four hundred miles above, at other convenient shipping places and factories, as well as on

board of scores of trading vessels and men-of-war. They are, moreover, active traders themselves, doing for foreigners a considerable commission business with the people of the interior bordering on their own territory.

The proper Grebo population including those at home and abroad, does not probably much exceed forty thousand; but with that of kindred tribes referred to, it is at least one hundred and fifty thousand. How far the Grebo may supersede similar dialects cannot be foreseen; nor is it ascertained at present to what extent it may be used as the medium of communicating religious instructions in those dialects. But its affinity with these, and its value for instructing those who speak it, make it well worth the labor required to have added it to the number of written languages, while the character and position of the Greboes themselves—now being gradually brought under the influence of Christianity, through the efforts of the Episcopal Mission at Cape Palmas—would seem to designate them as a part of God's chosen instrumentality for spreading the Gospel and developing lawful commerce in Western Africa.

The following collection of words has been made during a connection of twenty-two years with the Episcopal Mission at Cape Palmas. Its publication has been delayed partly by a press of duties which left comparatively little time for such work, and partly from the conviction that a good degree of familiarity with a language is essential to any reliable vocabulary of it. It is still incomplete; but so far as it goes it may be relied upon as correct.

The system of orthography adopted, is that recommended by Pickering for reducing the Indian languages to writing. It was inaugurated by the Rev. J. L. Wilson, late of the A. B. C. F. M., who during his

residence at Cape Palmas, devoted considerable attention to reducing the Grebo dialect to writing. The diacritical marks used do not accurately designate all the vowel sounds in the language. But it was deemed inexpedient further to encumber the words; especially as there are many shades of sound and intonation, only to be apprehended in a thorough acquaintance with the spoken language.

GREBO DICTIONARY.

A.

A, *pr.* we, our.

Adui, *pr.* ourselves.

Ah, *pr.* ye, your.

Ahdui, *pr.* yourselves.

Ahmonh, *pr.* you.

Ahmu, *pr.* ye.

Ahnyebwetu, *pr.* yourselves.

Ahwio. A word of salutation in the plural number ;
also, an expression of thankfulness on receiving
a gift or set of kindness.

Ake, (*Eng.*) *n.* ark.

Amo, *pr.* us.

Amu, *pr.* we.

Aua, (*Eng.*) *n.* hour.

Awĩ, *adv.* yes.

Â.

Â, *pr.* he, she, his, her.

Âbe, *pl.* ohbe, *pr.* other.

Âdâ, *pl.* ohde and wade, *pr.* such, one such.