

Appendix I

Salimini's Chichewa

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Salimini's Home

Salimini seems to have been the only informant used by Johannes Rebmann in writing his *Dictionary of the Kiniassa Language*.¹ Evidently he did look for other informants, but apparently without much success, as we read in chapter 8 of Steven Paas's biography²: 'Even in 1858, when in exile in Zanzibar and working on the Dictionary, he asked for Salimini to be sent to him, because he "could find no man here, who spoke that language as well as he did".' At any rate, in the dictionary itself there is no indication of any other contributor.³ Rebmann refers to Salimini as 'my informant' five times in the introduction, and the name of Salimini's home village of Mpande or Kumpande, or of Salimini himself, is also mentioned or implied in no fewer than 35 entries in the dictionary.⁴

It is interesting therefore to ask from what region Salimini came, and whether his village of Mpande or Kumpande can be located from the information given. In the introduction we are told that it was two days' journey west of the Lake. The nearest place for crossing the Lake was apparently Senga (see the entry Dsenga), where the Lake is relatively narrow. Rebmann says:

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 day-break will reach it at sunset.

¹ An internet copy of the dictionary can be found by entering 'digitized Rebman Kiniassa' (with that spelling) into Google.

² Paas, Steven (2011), *Johannes Rebmann* (Nürnberg / Bonn).

³ The dictionary also appears to be not quite finished, since on every page there are four or five entries which have no definition, or only an equivalent in Kiswahili or an untranslated example in Chichewa. It appears that Salimini explained the words to Rebmann in Swahili, which he then translated into English.

⁴ See the entries Bua, Chada, Charera, Demera, Denge, Dsekuere, Dsenga, Dsimbiri, Fuma, Iai, Iwo, Karumbe, Kidsa, Kirobue, Kisambo, Kisumpi, Koma, Lingadsi, M, Mabuyu, Mankamba, Masie, Mbodo, Mgama/ Mkama, Midawa, Mideme, Miriri, Misu, Mpande, Msauka, Msincha, Paso, Pogera, Tumbo.

We are also told that Mpande (Mphande) was at an elevated location:

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.⁵

Another clue is that the river Bua was 1½ days' journey to the West of Mpande:

Bua: (n.prop.)⁶ of a river or perhaps a large swamp, a mile in breadth and overgrown with a kind of reed, the ashes of which are used as salt, one and half day's journey to the west of Kumpane. The reeds and rank grass, with which the river seems generally covered, render the crossing very treacherous at certain seasons, so that they warn each other by saying: "Ukamka Bua, kaoroke mua nseru, ubandurire."⁷ If you go to Bua, cross it with prudence, keep striking off, i.e. do not think of going straight on, but turn in various directions according to the depth of water.

These indications place Mpande definitely in the Central Region of Malawi, south of the Bua. One might at first suppose from the mention of ice that it was in a mountainous area such as Dedza.⁸ However, certain entries where the names of villages can be identified make it clear that the site was in the Lilongwe region and a little north of the River Lilongwe:

Mabuyu: a territory one and half days' distance to the west of Kumpane. Its inhabitants belong to the Wakamunda. – Mabuyu, Demera, and Misu; these countries are said to be much frequented by the Portuguese for trade, bartering slaves and cattle for guns and gun-powder.

Demera: name of a territory one day's journey W.N.W. from ku Mpande. The inhabitants belong to the Wakamunda.

Kirobue: name of a country 2 days N.W. from M-pande.

Lingadzi: name of a river, a tributary of the Lintibe; going from Pande westward, it is forded after half a day's journey.

Mankamba: a country, one day's journey to the west of M-pande (at noon they ford the Lingadzi).

Mapuyu, Demera, Chilobwe, and the River Lingadzi can be easily

⁵ This is presumably the Chichewa word *khungu* 'skin'.

⁶ n.prop = nomen proprium, i.e. proper name.

⁷ *Ukamka Bua, kaoloke mwa nzeru, upandulire.*

⁸ Temperatures below zero are rare in the Lilongwe area today, but there were frosts in 1937 and 1955. In the latter a temperature of 24° F (–4° C) was recorded in Lilongwe. See R.G. Willan, 'Some Notes on the Cold Spell in August 1955', *The Nyasaland Journal*, Jan 1957.

identified on the map. Mapuyu is near Namitete, about 27 miles to the west of Lilongwe; Demera is 13 miles N or NNE of Mapuyu; and Chilobwe is 7 miles NW of Demera.⁹ The River Lingadzi joins the River Lilongwe at Lilongwe.¹⁰ Assuming that a young man could walk about 25 or 30 miles in a day, all these entries would place Mphande a few miles to the east of the present city of Lilongwe, perhaps (but not necessarily) at the village of Kamphande, located 12 miles NE of Lilongwe between the Salima road and the railway line.¹¹

The entry below will also fit this location, if we assume that 'S.W.' is an error for 'S.E.' (an easy mistake):

Midawa: name of a country 1½ days' journey S.W. The inhabitants are Wamuale and are subject to King Undi who resides at Mano.

For there is a village called Mitawa, near Linthipe trading centre, about 25 miles S.E. of Lilongwe, and 7 miles south of it is a village called Undi, which presumably reflects the name of King Undi. Maano is near the Kapoche river in eastern Mozambique, and Undi is the name of a well-known dynasty of Chewa kings.¹²

Further evidence that Salimini came from near Lilongwe can be found the names of rivers mentioned in the dictionary entries, which are mostly concentrated in this area: the Bua (with tributaries Kakuyu, Mtete (*Namitete*), Liuye), the Lilongwe (with tributaries Mtedza, Nankhaka, Lumbadzi, Lingadzi), and the Linthipe.¹³ The following entry suggests that the River Lilongwe was not far from Salimini's home:

⁹ These three villages are on or near the route taken by a Portuguese expeditions led by Lacerda in 1798, Baptista and Jose in 1811, and Monteiro and Gamitto in 1831, travelling from Tete to the court of the ruler Kazembe in Zambia. No doubt Gamitto's expedition was followed by other traders. See P.A. Cole-King, *Lilongwe: A Historical Study* (1971).

¹⁰ The Lingadzi is therefore not a tributary of the Linthipe; but as Rebmman points out (in the entry Rironkue) the Lilongwe river is a tributary of the Linthipe. There is another Lingadzi north of Dowa, but it flows directly into the Lake. – Misu (Mizu) is not on Malawian maps; Rebmman says it is two days' distance S.W. of Mpande, which might put it just over the border in Mozambique. – The Mankhamba mentioned is clearly not the famous rain-making shrine near Mtakataka at the south end of the Lake, but another place of the same name.

¹¹ If this was Salimini's home village, when visiting the Lake he would presumably have reached the shore at Maganga, near the mouth of the Lilongwe/Linthipe rivers. The Lake is extremely wide here, but much narrower just a few miles further north at Senga.

¹² The present Kalonga Gawa Undi, who resides in Zambia, is regarded as the Paramount Chief of the Chewa. See further: Marwick: 'History and tradition in East Central Africa through the eyes of the Northern Rhodesian Chewa', *Journal of African History*, IV, 3, (1963), pp. 375-390. It seems that Kumpande was not subject to Undi. Salimini says that the hereditary chiefs of Kumpande were called Chalera (see entry Charera). S.J. Nthara (*Mbiri ya Achewa*, 27, 65) mentions a Chief Chalera who resided at Bunda.

¹³ He also mentions a certain Ugonde river (with tributaries Kabeni, Kamansi), and in the introduction he refers to the Temba (Themba is apparently an old name for the Shire) 'a large river to the south of his country', which people used to visit to obtain iron tools.

Mbirira, s. (ya) The roaring (of water dashing against rocks), from “ku rira;” madi yarira mbirira, lit. the water cries a roaring (Kis. vuma), ku Rironkue rero kunarira mbirira, at the Ronkue it is roaring to-day.

Five mountains are mentioned in the dictionary entries, Tuma, Kirenge, Tumbo (‘one day’s journey N.W. of Mpande’), Msondore, and Kapfuramani. Tuma (or Thuma), can easily be identified. It is situated about 28 miles west of Lilongwe between the Lilongwe and Linthipe rivers, and Salimini would have passed it on his way to the Lake. This mountain is mentioned again in the entry Mbando as a dangerous place to cross:

Mbāndo,¹⁴ s.¹⁵ coll. (wa) a robbing attack ... ana-di-chidira mbando, they waylaid us for an attack, or they made an attack of robbery on us. Such attacks take place on the Tuma-mountains, over which the way leads through a narrow pass, where the robbers lie in ambush.¹⁶

Chilenje is a well-known mountain south of Nkhoma, although the distance given (‘about 3 days south of Mpande’) is a little further than expected. The other three mountains are no longer found on maps.¹⁷

Another place which can easily be identified, but whose distance and direction are problematic, is the following:

Msincha (n.prop.) name of a country 7 days’ journey to the South of Mpande. On the way there you cross the rivers Mdede and Kakuyu¹⁸, running N.W. into the Bua. The dynasty is Kantona. In this country is the sacred forest of Gúa (see msidu wa Gua).

Msidu (msitu), s. (wa) (pl. mi-), forest (Kis. mũitu), msitu wa Gúa, a very remarkable forest in the country called Msincha of about 15 miles in length, and 5 or 6 in breadth. The trees, of which it is composed, are said to be all of one kind, of about 18’ in height and presenting a perfectly level surface at the top, and standing so close to each other, that neither man nor animal can enter. But the most remarkable circumstance is, that the inhabitants of the country keep it sacred, no tree being ever cut down of it, though they are much in want of fuel, so that they are obliged to put up with roots dug out of the ground and with stalks of Guinea and Indian corn. Their sacrifices for rain &c. are also offered in its neighbourhood. Lit. the forest of a heap so called from its density.

¹⁴ Probably a misprint for *mbanda*; the spelling *mbanda* is found in the entry Gua.

¹⁵ s. = substantive, i.e. noun; coll. = collective; ana-di-chidira mbando = *anatichitira mbanda*.

¹⁶ This would presumably refer to the track through the Thuma Forest Reserve leading from the Lilongwe-Salima road to Nkhoma.

¹⁷ A website called ‘Cheeseburger’ conveniently lists the names and heights of 1053 Malawian mountains with maps.

¹⁸ Mdede = Namitete; Kakuyu is a river which crosses the road between Namitete and Msitu.

For ‘Msincha’ can be none other than the well-known rain-shrine at Msinja, which was situated at the foot of the Dzalanyama mountain, while the forest of Guwa sounds very like the Dzalanyama forest itself, in which the sacred mountain of Kaphirintiwa, the site of the creation of human beings in Chewa mythology, is located.¹⁹ However, there is a puzzle here; since although halfway between Llongwe and Mchinji you cross the rivers Mtete (= Namitete) and Kakuyu and shortly afterwards come to a village called Msitu, this is over 40 miles from Msinja, which was much further south.²⁰ It would seem that Rebmman, or Salimini himself if he was describing the location from hearsay, has mixed up directions for the village of Msitu with those for the sacred forest, called Kasitu, at the southern end of the Dzalanyama range.

The Name of the Language

Rebmann refers to Salimini’s language as ‘Kiniassa’, which is a Swahili word, the equivalent of Chinyanja ‘the Lake language’. Salimini himself seems to have called his dialect Kikamtunda ‘the language of the highland’.²¹ Possibly he might also have used the name ‘Kinyanja’, since he apparently regarded his own people, the Wakamtunda (‘highlanders’) as a branch of the Waniassa.²² The word Mchewa, however, comes in only one entry in the dictionary, where it appears to mean ‘innocent man’ or ‘kind man’:

Mchewa, s. (wa) wachewa; ndife wa chewa, si ife dinachida ipso,²³ we are innocent, it is not we who have done that; muntu uyu ni mchewa na-mu-onera kifundo.²⁴

The name ‘Chewa’ was certainly in use at this time, although perhaps

¹⁹ Cf. J.W.M van Breugel, *Chewa Traditional Religion*, 34: ‘On the top of the Dzalanyama mountains, the frontier between Mozambique and Malawi, there is a part covered with a sacred forest, in which stands the rock that bears a number of imprints, now believed to be the footprints of the first man and woman. The whole area is called Msinja and it became the site of the great rain shrine of the Chewa.’ (The word *guwa* means a mud platform or an altar.)

²⁰ W.H.J. Rangeley, ‘Two Nyasaland Rain Shrines’, *The Nyasaland Journal* 5:2 (1952), 32, places Msinja on the south bank of the Diamphwe River. S.J. Nthara, *Mbiri ya Achewa*, 10, likewise places it at the source of the Diamphwi, i.e. to the south of the Dzalanyama range. The shrine was destroyed by Angoni raiders in the 1870s.

²¹ See the entry M’ombo, where Rebmman distinguishes the dialect ‘Kimaravi’ from ‘Kikd’, i.e. Kikamtunda.

²² In the entry Mdunda, Rebmman says that the Wakamdunda are ‘one of the tribes generally comprised under the name Waniassa’.

²³ *Ndife wachewa, si ife tinachita izo.*

²⁴ *Munthu uyu ndi mchewa, ndamuonera chifundo* ‘This man is an Mchewa, I have seen his kindness’.

not yet for this region; in 1831 the Portuguese traveller Gamitto recorded the ‘Chévas’ as living in a large part of eastern Zambia;²⁵ and in 1863 Dr Livingstone reported that the ‘Machewa’ or ‘Macheba’ were a section of the Manganja living between Kasungu and the Bua.²⁶

Rebmann’s Spelling

The entries in the dictionary are amazingly precise about the meanings of the words,²⁷ seemingly with very few errors,²⁸ but the spelling is difficult for modern readers, since several letters (namely b, d, g, k, s, w, ch, ds, gn, pf, ps) are used for more than one sound, and sometimes the same sound is written in two different ways.²⁹ Some examples are given below. The spellings in bold are those in the dictionary.

b = b/p: bara (*bala*) ‘wound’, bamenebo (*paamenepo*) ‘there’.

ch = ch/tch: chaga/chaka (*chaka*) ‘year’, chenche/tshentshe (*ntchentche*) ‘fly’

d = d/t: dia (*dya*) ‘to eat’, dadu (*tatu*) ‘three’. In some words a dot is written over the d.³⁰

dh = d: ndodho (*ndodo*) ‘stick’, diso/dhiso (*diso*) ‘eye’.³¹

ds = dz/ts: dsancha (*dzanja*) ‘hand’, chodsa (*chotsa*) ‘to remove’.

gn = ng’/ny: gnombe (*ng’ombe*) ‘cow’, gnienga (*nyenga*) ‘to cheat’. nieregnesa (*nyerenyesa*) ‘to tickle’.

i (after a consonant) = y: niama (*nyama*) ‘animal’.

j = j, but is rarely found, being usually replaced by y: chaje/chaye (*chaje*) ‘empty’.

k = k/kh: karúru (*kalulu*) ‘hare’, kasu (*khasu*) ‘hoe’.

l = l/r: lila/lira/rira (*lira*) ‘to cry’. As with d, in some cases a dot is written over the l.³²

nch = ntch/nj: nchido/chido (*ntchito*) ‘work’, nchopfu (*njobvu*) ‘elephant’, mdsinche/mdsinghe (*mtsinge*) ‘river’.

²⁵ See the map in Marwick (op.cit.). Apparently Gamitto was the first to record the name.

²⁶ *A Popular Account of Dr. Livingstone’s expedition to the Zambesi and its Tributaries and the Discovery of Lakes Shirwa and Nyassa 1858-1864*, chapter 14.

²⁷ For example, Dsuruguda (*tsulukuta*) ‘to rub (only said of the body in washing or oiling)’.

²⁸ One such error is Ino ‘that (at a distance)’; (the correct meaning ‘this’ is given in some other entries, such as Chaka). He also mistakes the names for some animals, such as Niumbu, which he thinks is a giraffe (in fact it is a gnu or wildebeest).

²⁹ We do not know how much of this confusion is due to Ludwig Krapf’s editing. Krapf put a note in the dictionary to say that in editing it he had altered the orthography from Lepsius’s system to that of Dr. Steere. Among other changes he made was to replace d with a dot under it by ch. The use of ‘s’ for both s and z is puzzling, however, since both Lepsius and Steere make a clear distinction.

³⁰ E.g. Dambe ‘[baobab fruit]’, Dambo, Demba, Dodoma, Dogo, Dogoda. Possibly it represents a sound between l and d.

³¹ See for example entries Diso, Funda, Ndodani/Nlodani, Nkuir, Psidirira. D is however much more common than dh.

³² E.g. Laula/raura ‘to be obscene’, Lakua, Laga/raga, Lalada.

o, u (after a consonant) = w: indsoa/insoa (*inswa*) ‘termites’, chingue (*chingwe*) ‘string or small rope’.

p = ph: para (*phala*) ‘food made from flour and water’.

pf = pf/bv: pfuba (*pfupa*) ‘bone’, pfāra (*bvala*) ‘to put on, wear’.

ps = ps/bz: psa (*psa*) ‘to be burnt’, psala/psara (*bzala*) ‘to plant’.

r = l/r: Rironkue (*Lilongwe*) ‘name of a river’, rero (*lero*) ‘today’.

s = s/z: sinta (*sintha*) ‘to exchange’, sanga (*zanga*) ‘my (pl.)’.

t = th: tandisa (*thandiza*) ‘to help’.

tsh = tch: tshera (*tchera*) ‘to set (a trap) for’.

v = v/ŵ: vipsera (*vipsera*) ‘scars’, riviroliviro (*liŵiro*) ‘speed’; but v usually becomes bv (spelled pf), e.g. pfala (*bvala*) ‘put on, wear’.

w = w/ŵ, watu (*wathu*) ‘our’, wantu (*ŵanthu*) ‘people’.

y = y: yake ‘his’.

z (rarely written) = z: muesi/muezi (*mwezi*) ‘moon’.

Occasionally Rebmman writes accents over the vowels, e.g. ō, ū etc for long o, u, e.g. bōra/boora (*boola*) ‘to bore’, ĭ, ŭ for short ĭ, u, e.g. dĭa (*dya*) ‘to eat’, ě, ú etc. for an accented vowel, e.g. edsēmūra (*yetsemula*) ‘to sneeze’. But the accents are not consistently used, and do not correspond to the tonal accents of Chichewa; e.g. Rumbádsi (*Lumbadzi*) ‘name of a river’.³³

Grammatical Features

Salimini’s Chichewa differed in several ways from modern Chichewa. Here are some of those differences:

1. The prefix *chi-* is generally, but not always, written *ki-* in the dictionary:³⁴ *chiko/kiko* (*chiko*) ‘calabash’, *kibande* (*chipande*) ‘a ladle’, *kidsa* (*chitsa*) ‘the stump of a tree’, *chida* (*chida*) ‘a weapon’, *chaka kino* (*chaka chino*) ‘this year’. According to Rebmman’s translations, *ki-/chi-* nouns were often diminutive, e.g. *kignoma* (*ching’oma*) ‘a small drum’, *chigo* (*chigo*) ‘a small log’, which is not always the case today.³⁵

2. The plural of *chi-/ki-* nouns can be *bzi-* (spelled *psi-*), *bvi-* (spelled *pfi-*) or *vi-*, not *zi-* as in modern Chichewa; e.g. *pfiko/viko/psiko* (*bviko/viko/bziko*) ‘calabashes’, *pfintu pfidadu* (*bvinthu bvitatu*) ‘three

³³ See the entry *kibāra* (*chipala*) ‘a smithery’, in which he claims that the accent changes to *m’kibāla* when *m’* is added; although *chipala*, being toneless, has no accent.

³⁴ Possibly this is merely an effect of the transcription and is not a phonetic reality; however, Rebmman’s remark in the entry *Ki*, which he says is ‘sometimes softened into “chi”’, suggests that he was aware of the difference. Compare also ‘Kigamu: see *chigamu*, of which it is only a different pronunciation.’

³⁵ Other examples: *kidsuba* (*chinsupa*) ‘a small gourd-bottle’, *kigunda* (*chigunda*) ‘small garden’, *kigudhu* (*chigudu*) ‘small piece of cloth’, *kidambo* (*chitambo*) ‘small cloud’, *kibuma* (*chibuma*) ‘small lump of earth or clay’, *kibukudu* (*chipukutu*) ‘small bundle of anything’. In modern Chichewa *chigunda*, *chigudu*, *chibuma* and *chipukutu* are diminutive, but not *chitambo* or *chinsupa*.

things', vipsera (*vipsera*) 'scars', psida (*bzida*) 'weapons', psaga psiwiri (*bzaka bziwiri*) 'two years'.

3. Nouns of type munthu 'man' and galu 'dog' (classes 1 and 1a) have plural *wā-* (spelled *wa-*) instead of *a-*, for both polysyllabic and monosyllabic roots: wantu wawiri (*wanthu wawiri*) 'two men', wagaru (*wagalu*) 'dogs', Wadonga (*Watonga*) 'Tonga people'.

4. *Ka-* class nouns have plural *tu-* (spelled *du-*) instead of *ti-*: kambéni aka (*kampeni aka*) 'this small knife', pl. dumibeni udu (*tumipeni utu*) 'these small knives', dumibeni duanga (*tumipeni twanga*) 'my small knives'.

5. *Bu-* class concords (now obsolete) were still in use: buado buanga (*bwato bwanga*) 'my boat', ubuána ubu (*ubwana ubu*) 'this childishness', ufa buanga / ufa wanga 'my flour', udsi bonse (*utsi bonse*) 'all the smoke'.

6. *Ma-* class nouns usually had the concord *ya-* (as in Swahili) instead of *a-*: masiku yonse 'all days, always', maroyanga (*malo yanga*) 'my sleeping place', maere yake *ya-ni-sungusa* (*maere yake yandizunguza*) 'his tricks bewilder me'; but with Present or Past tense verbs the concord is *a-*, just as in modern Chichewa: madsí alimo anata? (*madzi alimo anatha?*) 'is there still water (or) is it finished?'. With numbers it seems that this class could have either *ma-*, *a-*, or *ya-*: masira masano (= *mazira asanu*) 'five eggs', mapada airi/mairi (*mapata awiri*) 'two roots', yawili (*yawiri*) 'two'.³⁶

7. The Future tense (both remote and near) was *-ta-* (spelled *da*) as in Swahili, not *-dza-*: adakudsa mawa (*atakudza mawa*)³⁷ 'he will come tomorrow', muomba ada-i-ta dsaruyanga lero (*muomba ataitha nsalu yanga lero*) 'the weaver will finish my cloth today', chaka cha mawa ndabanga ulendo (*chaka cha mawa n'tapanga ulendo*) 'next year I shall make a journey'.³⁸

8. In the Past Simple tense, for which *-na-* and *-da-* are used more or less interchangeably in modern Chichewa, there is a clear distinction: *-na-* generally refers to today or a very recent time,³⁹ e.g. ina pfumbidsa mpfura rero (*inabvumbitsa mvula lero*) 'it rained heavily today', madsí ana dera (*madzi anatera*) 'the water has subsided', kúdia dinádia (*kudya*

³⁶ See the entries Alimo, Dsiku, Mabasa, Mabira, Madhenda, Maere, Mamina, Mankaka, Mamba, Mano, Maro, Maronda, Marungo, Masano, Masiku, Nunka, Pada, Yawili. According to S.J. Nthara, *Mbiri ya Achewa*, 145, pronunciations such as *madzi yanga* are characteristic of the Dowa region.

³⁷ It seems that *-ku-* is sometimes added if the verb is monosyllabic: *a-ta-ku-dza*.

³⁸ For future *-ta-* (spelled *-da-*) see the entries Amba, Banga, Dandara, Dsa, Du, Eda, Kibuaana, Kinchenche, Mbombo, Mpumbi, Mpuno, Ni, Rera, Ta, Ulendo, Wamba. (The Perfect participle *-ta-* seems to have been *-da-*: *madsí adhadaika si waora* 'spilt water can't be picked up', entry Iba.)

³⁹ Even today in schools Chichewa teachers teach that *-na-* should be used for recent events, *-da-* for remote ones. However, few people outside the Central Region observe this rule in practice. Note that Salimini's Recent Past tense *anápita* 'he has gone (and is no longer here)' is to be distinguished from the modern Recent Past tense *anapita* (with tone on the third syllable) 'he has been (and is now back)'. The former is a true Perfect tense, implying that the effects of the action are still relevant; the latter implies that the action has been reversed.

tinádyá) ‘as to eating, we have eaten’. The -na- tense often seems to be equivalent to a Perfect tense, but there is a slight difference: *niama i yapvunda (nyama iyi yabvunda)* ‘this meat smells’ but: *niama i inapvunda (nyama iyi inabvunda)* ‘it smells (said when actually decomposed)’.⁴⁰

9. -da- (spelled da or dha) on the other hand refers to the remote past (yesterday or earlier): *dsuro didabagana (dzulo tidapangana)* ‘we agreed yesterday’; *nchira uda-i-bida kamodsi muona udhodhoma dhodhoma? (njira udaipita kamodzi muona udodomadodoma)* ‘have you passed this way (only) once, as you keep hesitating so much?’, *Chiuda adha-m-lenga nkuiro kode kode anadsera mu buáro (Chiuta adamlenga ngwiro, khotekhote anadzera mu bwalo)* ‘God created him entire, the crooked came from without (by an injury)’.⁴¹

10. Other tenses found in the dictionary, but less commonly, are the Imperfect with -ma-: *nimadenga nkawa (ndimatenga nkawa)* ‘I was afraid’;⁴² ‘would have’ with -kada-: *saka dadere aba ku lákua kua dsiku limodsi (sakadateré apa kulakwa kwa tsiku limodzi)* ‘he would not have behaved thus to one who was faulty just once’; ‘if/when’ with -ka-: *ukabuera (ukabwera)* ‘when you return’;⁴³ and, if it is correct, one example of a strange use of -ki- to mean ‘if I had’: *ine nikidsiwa, sikapfomerera* (modern Chichewa: *ine ndikadadziwa, sikadavomerera*) ‘if I had known it, I should not have assented’.⁴⁴

11. The sounds pf- and bv- generally still kept their p and b: *pfungo (fungo)* ‘a smell’, *nchopfu (njovu)* ‘elephant’. Salimini also pronounced (n)ts- in n’dsomba (*nsomba*) ‘fish’, *dsúngui (nsungwi)* ‘bamboo’, n’dsima (*nsima*) ‘maize porridge’, *dsanamira (nsanamira)* ‘pillar’, etc.

12. Verbs which begin with y- in modern Chichewa generally have no y- except at the beginning of a sentence, e.g. *amba (yamba)* ‘to begin’, *ankula (yankhula)* ‘to speak’, *edsémūra (yetsemula)* ‘to sneeze’, *enda/yenda (yenda)* ‘to go (walk)’. In a couple of verbs, w- can be dropped: *erama/werama (werama)* ‘to stoop’, *erenga/werenga (werenga)* ‘to count’. Similarly *aba (apa)* ‘here’ alternates with *yaba (yapa)*.

13. The words for ‘is’ and ‘I’ are ni rather than ndi in Salimini’s Chichewa: e.g. *ni mbale wanga (ndi mbale wanga)*, ‘he is my brother’; *nchoka ana-ni-ruma (njoka inandiluma)* ‘a snake bit me’; but *ndiye, ndine* etc. retain their d.

14. ‘And/with’ is usually na, not ndi as in modern Chichewa, e.g. *isano na idadu (isanu ndi itatu)* ‘five and three’; although Rebmman points out that ‘ni’ was sometimes used for ‘na’.⁴⁵

15. Words which end in -be/-je/-ja in modern Chichewa such as

⁴⁰ For -na- see the entries *Amba, Bo gona, Burumuka, Dera III, Donora, Dsansa, Dsirisa, Duba, Dukana, Dumoa, Dura, Dsa, Dsansi, Gona, Kobue, Mansa mansa, Mbango, Pfumidsa, Pfunda, Psa, Rume, Usa*, etc.

⁴¹ For -da- see the entries *Amba, Du, Fungo, Kamodsi, Mlongo, M’ mangidue, Mpuno, Muona, Nkuiro, Pfundo I, Ukuadi*.

⁴² *ndimatenga nkawá*. See entries *Denga, Kale, Pöa*.

⁴³ Entry *Uina*.

⁴⁴ See the entry *Pfomera*.

⁴⁵ See the entries *Isano, Ni*.

chabe/chaje ‘empty’, palibe ‘there is not’, ndilibe ‘I do not have’, paja ‘there’, uja ‘that man’, uje ‘so and so’ become chaye/chaje, paliye, ndiliye, paya, uya/uja, uye/uje etc.; that is, they are usually written with y (sometimes j). Possibly this is merely a feature of Rebmann or Krapf’s spelling, but apparently there are still a few people in villages who use these forms.⁴⁶

16. Words for certain animals of the I-Zi- class could optionally take the concords of class 1 in the singular (as in Swahili), e.g. *gnombe wa mkasi* (*ng’ombe wamkazi*) ‘a (female) cow’, *mbusi wanga* (*mbuzi wanga*) ‘my goat’, *kosa mmodsi* (*nkhosa mmodzi*) ‘one sheep’. In modern Chichewa only concords of the I-Zi- class can be used (i.e. *yaikazi*, *yanga*, *imodzi*).

17. The prefix *bvo-* (written *pfo-*) was used to make adverbs where modern Chichewa generally uses *mo-*: *pfodele* (*bvotere*) ‘thus’, *pfokoma* (*bvokoma*) ‘well, orderly’.⁴⁷

18. There are some irregular plurals which are not in use today, e.g. *mako* (*maiko*) ‘countries’, *madu* (*matu*, i.e. *makutu*) ‘ears’, *marambo* (*madambo*) ‘meadowy grounds’, (mi)gniendo (*miyendo*) ‘feet’.

19. *kuna* is used for modern *kuli* ‘there is/are’: *kuna miombo ya nkani ku Midawa* (*kuna miombo yankhani ku Mitawa*) ‘there are numerous brachystegia trees in Mitawa’.⁴⁸

20. *ana* (*kina*) etc. are used for modern *ali ndi* (*chili ndi*): *kiko kina chea* (*chikho china cheya*) ‘the gourd has hair’.⁴⁹

Vocabulary

With some 30 or so words on each page, Rebmann’s dictionary contains over 5000 entries, and it is a treasure house of words which are now becoming rare or obsolete. Very few of the words appear to be borrowed from other languages. The following, however, seem to come from Portuguese:⁵⁰

Fódia, s. (wa) Tobacco, but which is never smoked, but only taken as snuff. The expression for both smoking and taking snuff is however one and the same, viz. *ku góga*, because each is a kind of drawing; *ku góga fodia*, to take snuff, but *ku goga chamba* is “to smoke hemp;” *Fódia wa muisi*, green or unripe tobacco; *pande sa fodia*, the small round leaves of tobacco, just shooting forth (from their resemblance to a kind of thing,

⁴⁶ p.c. from Cliff Kalonga, a Chichewa teacher. The sound ‘j’, unaccompanied by n, is rare even in modern Chichewa, except in the final syllable of words.

⁴⁷ One such adverb used today is *dzolimba* ‘hard’, using the Southern Region *dzo-* for *bvo-*.

⁴⁸ See entries *M’ombo*, *Mdsisi*, *Msasa*, etc.

⁴⁹ See entries *Chea*, *Kabeifa*, *Mimbu*, *M’pada*, *Usiwa*, *Wanche* etc.

⁵⁰ Rebmann suggests that (m)fudi (*mfuti*) ‘a firelock’ (i.e. gun) is also ‘probably a Portuguese word’ (entry *Fudi*). However, this is unlikely.

round shells worn as ornaments by the natives.)⁵¹

Barasugu or *mbarasugu*, s. (wa) (pl. wabarasugu) A bottle; barasugu uyu, this bottle; wabarasugu awa, these bottles; kisiwo cha m-barasugu, the stopper of a bottle.⁵²

Kama, s. (wa) (no pl.) A native sleeping place made of sticks, which rest on little forked posts, fixed into the ground. The sticks are made of a tree called dsoyo (Kis. kilalo cha mtu). kama wa dsinta dsinta.⁵³

Kàba, s. (wa) (pl. wakàba) a scarlet cloth (worn by royalty only).⁵⁴

Mbadada, s. (ya) (pl. id., with sa). The sweet potato (Kis. kiasi pl. viasi). Prov. muana wa m-pfuru ni mbadada, ukongóra (contr. from uka ongora), watshora,⁵⁵ meaning: the son of a free man does not (easily) allow himself to be corrected or blamed.

There is also a Swahili word *kanso* (from *kanzu*), a chief's robe. The inclusion of the word dogo (*doko*) 'a landing place' proves that this word does not come from the English 'dock' as is sometimes assumed.⁵⁶ Another interesting word is the word for 'maize' (or 'Indian corn', as Rebmann calls it), which is *pamanga* rather than *chimanga*. Curiously, despite starting with pa-, it takes the concord cha-:⁵⁷

Bamanga (s. pl. id.) Indian corn (Kis. mahindi); bamanga changa⁵⁸ 'my Indian corn'. One would expect banga. Bamanga cha kucha, Indian corn of to ripe, i.e. Indian corn which is ripe.

Cultural Information

Rebmann's dictionary is not only of interest for those studying the Chichewa language as it was spoken in the 1840s, but also is a mine of fascinating information about life in Malawi at that time. Here are some examples:

⁵¹ Modern *fodya*, from the Portuguese *folha* 'leaf'. ku góga = *kukoka* 'to pull'; *fodya wamwisi* 'green tobacco'; *mphande za fodya* 'discs' of tobacco.

⁵² Modern Chichewa *balasuku* 'fragment of broken glass'. Scott & Hetherwick record the word as *palasuku*, meaning 'bottle'; the original Portuguese is *frasco*.

⁵³ Tsoyo is *Vernonia amygdalina* 'tree vernonia'. In the entry (N')dsinta n'dsinta, Rebmann explains *tsinthatsintha* as meaning 'unequal (one stick longer than another)'. The Portuguese for 'bed' is *cama*.

⁵⁴ No doubt from the Portuguese *capa* 'a cape'.

⁵⁵ *Mwana wa mfulu ndi mbatata, ukaongola wathyola*. The Portuguese for potato is *batata*.

⁵⁶ E.g. the dictionary *Mtanthauziramawu wa Chinyanja* s.v. doko.

⁵⁷ Kamuzu Banda, whose Kasungu speech was recorded by a Chicago professor in the 1930s, also used *pamanga*, but with the concord vya-. (Watkins, M. H. (1937). 'A grammar of Chichewa: a Bantu language of British Central Africa', *Language*, Vol. 13, No. 2; for *pamanga* see pages 74, 92, 134).

⁵⁸ By a misprint 'changa' is printed as 'danga' in this entry, but see the entries Kafumbu, (M-)pada, Ramba, where the phrase is repeated.

Asamidisa (v.int.) to open (the mouth) very wide (as for instance is required for widening the space between the two front-teeth, which is their custom).⁵⁹

Chanzi, n. (cha) (pl. psansi). The name of a small tree, with which they brush the walls and roofs of their cottages, the scent keeping off mosquitoes.⁶⁰

Chomba m-mancha, s. a hand-clapper, a nick name given to one who does not himself know, when to clap his hands for giving applause, but always waits for others.– 2) something given in addition to a purchase (marensi) it being their custom always to clap their hands after a bargain, niengesa chamba m-mancha, add a something for clapping our hands.⁶¹

Edsemūra (v.n.) to sneeze. *kuatu muntu aka edsemura-sudi atshure pfugorake dikose ku-m-dsiwa*,⁶² with us, when one sneezes, he must name his tribe, that we know him. The reason for this custom is their aversion to a man being married to a woman of his own tribe.

Kadse or *nkādse*, s. (ya, pl. id.) a kind of tree, used for planting live-hedges round their villages (Kis. utúba); – there are different kinds, such as may be transplanted with the roots, and more commonly such as are planted by slips.⁶³

Kakisi, s. (wa) (pl. wakakisi), a very diminutive temple (too small for a man to enter) at which they pray to the Chiuda and Wazimu, to perform their superstitious practices. It is erected at the entrances of their towns and villages.

Kisambo, name of a country 1½ days' journey to the S. of Mpande. The people of Kisambo have a peculiar art in shooting arrows which consists in an arrow repeatedly touching the ground and leaping further (see tadsa). They are therefore frequently hired by different chiefs in war. (Wakisambo wadsiwa ku bonia mipfiyao ku omba n-tadsa).⁶⁴

Mānda, s. (ya) pl. (contract. from maanda); 1) tokens of mourning for a deceased relative, exhibited by not shaving the head, or bathing the body, nor wearing any ornaments; the wife also separates from her husband. This is continued till the deceased has been paid for, from the belief, that all who die in the prime of life, have been bewitched It is in childhood

⁵⁹ = *yasamitsa*. Apparently a gap between the teeth was a sign of beauty.

⁶⁰ Chanzi is *Lippia Javanica* or *Clematis uhehensis*.

⁶¹ *Ndionjeza choomba m'manja* 'add something for clapping our hands'. *Kuomba m'manja* means to clap hands with another person. – *malenze* is 'something added to a bargain for goodwill' (Scott-Hetherwick).

⁶² *Kwathu munthu akayetsemula kuti atchule pfuko lake tikhoze kumdziwa*.

⁶³ *Nkhadze* (*Euphorbia tirucalli*). Livingstone explains: 'the village of Chitimba ... like all other Manganja villages, is surrounded by an impenetrable hedge of poisonous euphorbia. This tree casts a deep shade, which would render it difficult for bowmen to take aim at the villagers inside. The grass does not grow beneath it, and this may be the reason why it is so universally used, for when dry the grass would readily convey fire to the huts inside; moreover, the hedge acts as a fender to all flying sparks (*Expedition to the Zambesi*, ch. 3). – The tree is unusual in having green twigs instead of leaves. It is not much found in Malawi these days, but is mentioned at least 12 times in the dictionary.

⁶⁴ *Wachisambo wadziwa kuponya mibvi yawo kuomba nthadza* 'the people of Chisambo know how to shoot their arrows so that they bounce'.

only and age that death is considered natural, and in such cases the show of mourning is only of short duration. – 2) ku manda, to the grave (= Kis. ku simu) usaone lidsiro, kuna manda kuao, do not see dirt (do not say, they are dirty or uncleanly) there is mourning with them (they are in mourning).

Mbedede, s. (ya, pl. with sa), a sort of trumpet (made of the tree called mbuabua).⁶⁵

Mbina, s. (ya and sa), an uncommon projection of the bottom (Kis. kombo), Prov. ukenda na (muntu wa mbina) mbina, nawe udatsora mbina.⁶⁶

Meidaniro (contract. from maidaniro, and derived from “ku idana”), s. (ya) the expressed but only pretended reason for calling anyone; e.g. the woman in calling for her husband will say: madsy yafunda, the water is warm (come and bathe), while the true reason may be any thing else (see at marunga).⁶⁷

M'lega (or *mrega*), (wa) (pl. mi-), lit. a yielding, a leaving; 1) The track made by rats and other animals in the thatching of a cottage and in the standing grass or reeds; – 2) a small furrow cut with a hoe; ku lima mileka or mileka mileka, is to cut small furrows in a piece of ground to be cultivated, which run parallel to each other and divide the place into narrow strips, each of which is taken up by a different person to finish it. This way of agriculture seems to be peculiar to the Waniassa.

Mpiga, s. (wa) (pl. mi-), a small pot (for cooking meat only). The kali is used for the Dsima, and is therefore larger.⁶⁸

Mbodo s. (wa) the north; ku mbodo, at or towards the North. The ku with the m is pronounced as one syllable, kumbodo (Kis. kibuda); mpfura ya mbodo inapfundira,⁶⁹ a rain from the north is warm. Pakumbodo, the of the north, the northern people. Of the Wakamunda N. of Mpande, Salimini said that they never fight, going without bows and arrows, while their spears are only the ornamental ones of women, called msama. Their country being lower and warmer, they raise much cotton (for which it is too cold with the Wakamunda); they also weave their own clothes, and are in the habit of washing them. Usa-ku-gnienge mbodo kuliye mpfura ya mpfumbi,⁷⁰ let the north not deceive you, there will be no heavy rain (because in this country rain from the north is soon over and never cold).

M'maravi, s. (pl. wa-), the name given by the tribes E. of the Niassa to those in the west, including not only the Wamaravi proper but also the Wakamunda.

⁶⁵ *Mbetete*. The mbwabwa is the octopus cabbage tree, *Cussonia arborea*. Scott-Hetherwick on the other hand say of *mbetete*: ‘a trumpet made of horn of a small *gwape* [duiker], used in calling dogs in hunting’.

⁶⁶ *Ukayenda ndi munthu wa mbina, nawe utathyola [= udzathyola] mbina* ‘if you go with a person with a protruding bottom, you’ll waggle your bottom too’. Strangely, Scott-Hetherwick describe *mbina* as an incurved back, rather than a protruding bottom.

⁶⁷ *Kuitana* = to invite or call; *madzi* = water.

⁶⁸ *Mphika, nkhal, nsima* in modern Chichewa.

⁶⁹ *Mbvula ya mpoto inabvundira*.

⁷⁰ *Usakunyenge mpoto kuliye (= kulibe) mvula ya mbvumbi*.

Msámiro, s (wa) (pl. mi-), a wooden pillow (similar to those used in Egypt); *msámiro ni mdengo wa-u-sema*, wa ku samirira, lit. the *msamiro* is a tree which they hew (for) of to recline on.⁷¹

Msasa, s. (wa) (pl. mi-), a booth hastily put up of branches and grass. This is peculiar to the Wavisa, who, when coming for trade in large numbers, are said never to sleep in other people's houses. kuna miganda yoo churuka ku *msasa*.⁷²

Ngésa, s. (ya) (pl. sa), small round cakes, procured by the Waniassa from the Portuguese and valued for the stimulant properties ascribed to them.

Niada, s. a clammy place, i.e. a place where the earth is clammy. Bamanga cha *niada*, Indian corn of a clammy soil (i.e. grown in a clammy soil; also: bamanga cha *mniada* of in); yaba ni *baniada*, *dichide n-tuntu*, *dikogere chamba*. Wabusa wakoga chamba ku *niada*, boys who tend cattle make a hole in the mud to smoke hemp, because they are not allowed a proper pipe.⁷³

Niara (v.n.) to exercise shame (by keeping out of sight) i.e. sons and daughters in law will strictly avoid being seen by their fathers and mothers in law and vice versa.

Nsembe, s. (pl. id) (ya, sa) offerings, but only consisting in flour mixed with water (Kis. ku *gonia koma*, *sadaka*), put on the ground near the “*gagisi*”⁷⁴ for the “*wazimu*”, in order to procure their favour and assistance. This is done before they go into battle or set out on a journey, and on behalf of sick relatives. The workman also in ivory brings this offering that he may be successful in cutting his arm-rings (*makosa*).

Psidi psidi, s. (uyu) (pl. wa-), an apparition, a ghost, being different from the *kiwanda*, *kidsodókua* and *kisúkūa*, which are only seen at a distance, while the *psidipsidi* pays visits in their houses, and looking like a common man, is only known to be a ghost by his not speaking nor accepting of any food. They also believe, that in one town he appears as a

⁷¹ *Mtsamiro ndi mtengo wausema, wa kusamirira*.

⁷² *Kuna mikanda yochuluka ku msasa*, ‘there are numerous beads in the *msasa*’. – Dr Livingstone met them at various points in his travels: ‘We meet with these keen traders everywhere. They are easily known by a line of horizontal cicatrices, each half an inch long, down the middle of the forehead and chin. They often wear the hair collected in a mass on the upper and back part of the head, while it is all shaven off the forehead and temples. The Babisa and Waiau or Ajawa heads have more of the round bullet-shape than those of the Manganja, indicating a marked difference in character; the former people being great traders and travellers, the latter being attached to home and agriculture. The Manganja usually intrust their ivory to the Babisa to be sold at the Coast, and complain that the returns made never come up to the high prices which they hear so much about before it is sent. In fact, by the time the Babisa return, the expenses of the journey, in which they often spend a month or two at a place where food abounds, usually eat up all the profits.’ (*A Popular Account of Dr. Expedition to the Zambesi and its Tributaries and the Discovery of Lakes Shirwa and Nyassa 1858-1864*, chapter 14.)

⁷³ *Pamanga cha m'nyata; apa ndi panyata, tichite nthunthu, tikokere chamba. Wabusa wakoka chamba ku nyata*: ‘maize of (in) clammy soil; here is a damp place, let's make a ?pipe, and smoke chamba. The herdsman smoke chamba in a damp place.’

⁷⁴ *kachisi*. See the entry *kakisi*..

man, and in the next as woman. He is prognostic of epidemics.

Sámbisa (v.a.) to let or make swim (Kis. *ogolésa, osha*), to take across by swimming. When the rivers are swollen and boats become useless from the force of the current, small huts are constructed at fording places by men expert in swimming, where they station themselves to help over those who cannot swim; *mda-m-ta ku-mu-sámbisa?* can you 'swim' him over?

One surprising omission from the dictionary is that although there are words describing warfare, weapons, food, agriculture, trade, travel, relationship terms, domestic utensils, cooking, burial practices, religion, trees, crops, animals, social customs, superstitions, musical instruments, and numerous other features of African life, there is no reference at all to the Chewas' famous masked dances (*Gule wamkulu*), apart from the following solitary entries:

Dambue ?⁷⁵

Gúre, s. name of a kind of play.

Pfina (v.a. & v.n.) to play (implying dancing and drumming). *ku pfina mariro*, *ku pfina ku masewera* (ba *konde*). – *pfinira* (v.d.) to play to, e.g. to a relative who has safely returned from a journey; *ku-m-pfinira namwali*.⁷⁶

A possible explanation for this omission is that Salimini was himself an initiate, and because of the traditional vow of silence he completely omitted to tell Rebmman about this important aspect of Chewa culture.

⁷⁵ The *dambwe* is the place (usually a graveyard) where the initiates met.

⁷⁶ *Kuvina maliro* = to dance at a funeral; *kumvinira namwali* = to dance for an initiate.