INTRODUCTION

The Grebo occupy a coastal strip some 50–70 miles deep between the Rivers Cavally and Cess in the extreme south-west of Liberia. To the west, along the coast, their neighbours are the Kru, and inland, the Kran.

Grebo belongs to the Kru group of languages, all spoken in Liberia, and whose most important member is Kru, which has given its name to the group. The Kru languages are classified by Westermann and Bryan¹ as an isolated unit, but Greenberg² includes them in his Kwa group, which includes several of the major languages of Ghana and Nigeria such as Twi, Ewe, Yoruba and Ibo.

Grebo was one of the earliest West African languages to be studied by European and, American scholars, and the following bibliography³ testifies to the considerable amount of grammatical and lexicographical work done on the language by early missionaries:

Wilson, J. L. A BRIEF GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS OF THE GREBO LANGUAGE. Cape Palmas, 1838.
Wilson, J. L. DICTIONARY OF THE GREBO LANGUAGE. Cape Palmas, 1839.
Payne, J. GREBO GRAMMAR. New York, 1864.
Müller, F. DIE SPRACHEN BASA, GREBO UND KRU. Vienna, 1877.

Since 1877 no further works on Grebo have appeared and interest in the language seems to have waned, though there has been some revival of interest in recent years, mainly associated with an adult literacy campaign. The material for the present dictionary was collected in the course of work which I did on Grebo in London with an informant, Mr. J. Y. Dennis, who was a Research Assistant at the School of Oriental and African Studies from 1955 to 1957. The dictionary is based entirely on Mr. Dennis's speech; all words listed are in current use, except those marked 'obsolescent', which are familiar to Mr. Dennis in the speech of people of an older generation, but which he himself and others of his generation do not use. The present work incorporates all those entries in Payne's dictionary which Mr. Dennis was able to identify.

I wish here to express my appreciation of the energy and enthusiasm which Mr. Dennis displayed in the collecting of material for this dictionary; to him I am greatly indebted, for without his co-operation this book could not have been written.

Orthography

Although it is over 100 years since the first dictionary of Grebo was published,⁴ the quantity of Grebo literature is slight, and there was a long period from the 1870's until after the last war when virtually nothing was written in Grebo. There is as yet no agreement among the Grebo on how their language should be written, but dispute centres on only a few points, mainly the use of ė and ş, which were introduced some years ago, but which have met with considerable opposition. I have followed the orthography of Bishop Auer, whose hymn-book of 1873 has been widely used and which in large measure

¹ HANDBOOK OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES, PART II. London, 1952.
⁴ J. L. Wilson, DICTIONARY OF THE GREBO LANGUAGE. Cape Palmas, 1839.
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established the written form of the language. The main points of difference from Auer are the use here of the three letters ŋ, ñ and ŋ.

The consonants are written with the following letters and digraphs:

\[ p \ b \ t \ d \ k \ g \ kp \ gb \ ky \ gy \ hm \ n \ ny \ ŋm \ hl \ ]fs h hw w ŋw y.\]

Notes:

ky and gy are palatal plosives

ň is a velar nasal

hm, hn, hl, hw are the voiceless correlates of m, n, l, w respectively

ŋm is a voiced labio-velar nasal

ŋw is a voiced nasal semi-vowel

l has a nasal variant which occurs in syncopated forms (see p. 3) like:

flá [flá] < fona wood-boring insect

klē [klē] < kene wickerwork basket

h and hw have each a nasal variant which occurs before nasal vowels:

hō [hō] shark

hwāō [hwāō] shoulder

The oral vowels are written with the following letters:

\[ i \ e \ ę \ a \ o \ ź \ u.\]

Notes:

ę and ę are both half-close front vowels, o and ź are both half-close back vowels. In the terminology used by Sapir to describe comparable pairs of vowels in Gweabo, ę and ź are ‘muffled’ vowels, e and o are ‘bright’ vowels.

There are no nasal correlates of ę and ź, but there are nasal correlates of the seven other oral vowels.

Nasality

Nasal vowels are marked where necessary by a tilde: pñ 'cook'. Where the phonetic context permits only a nasal vowel, nasality of the vowel is not marked. There are two such contexts:

1. Following a nasal consonant (hm, m, hn, n, ŋm, ŋw, ny):

mu [mʊ] go

2. In CVCV words where C₂ is nasal; V₁ and V₂ are both nasal:

fona [fōnä] wood-boring insect

pina [pınä] cooked cf. pñ cook

Vowel Sequences

Phonetically long vowels are regarded as sequences of like vowels and are written with a double letter:

muu door

In a sequence of two vowels, both are oral or both are nasal, except that ę and ź may follow a nasal vowel:

hię paint cf. hi paint

pťę cook cf. pť cook

E. Sapir, 'Notes on the Gweabo Language of Liberia', LANGUAGE 7, 1931.
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Consonant Clusters

Consonant clusters are confined to those whose second consonant is l or w. Most consonant clusters whose second consonant is l occur in the syncopated forms of CVCV words whose C2 is d or n. For example, geda 'divide' has a syncopated form gla which occurs in quick speech. In the dictionary the unsyncopated form is listed, but in the case of certain words whose syncopated form is very common, the latter is also listed, with cross-references. There are a few words like fli 'flea' where a consonant cluster occurs even in slow speech; these are mostly, if not all, loanwords.

The following consonant clusters are found in syncopated forms:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{pl} & \quad \text{plē} < \text{pedia} \quad \text{bald patch} \\
\text{bl} & \quad \text{blo} < \text{bodo} \quad \text{chalk} \\
\text{kl} & \quad \text{kle} < \text{kidé} \quad \text{chest} \\
\text{gl} & \quad \text{gla} < \text{geda} \quad \text{divide} \\
\text{kpl} & \quad \text{kpla} < \text{koda} \quad \text{sew} \\
\text{gbl} & \quad \text{gblo} < \text{gbodo} \quad \text{room} \\
\text{fl} & \quad \text{flo} < \text{fodo} \quad \text{emptiness} \\
\text{hml} & \quad \text{hmla} < \text{hmona} \quad \text{a fish} \\
\text{ml} & \quad \text{mil} < \text{mune} \quad \text{wild beast} \\
\text{pl} & \quad \text{plā} < \text{nuna} \quad \text{melt}
\end{align*}
\]

Tone

Four tone levels are distinguished. The tone of each headword is shown immediately after it; the system of tone marking is by numerals, as follows:

- High tone is marked by 1: kē 1 chief
- High-mid tone is marked by 2: bi 2 beat
- Low-mid tone is marked by 3: ya 3 bring
- Low tone is marked by 4: pō 4 swell

Gliding tones are marked by a combination of two (or, rarely, three) numerals: hu 3–2 throw.

Some examples of the tone marking of longer words are:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{yiba} 21 & \quad \text{face} \\
\text{bōde} 22–1 & \quad \text{swamp} \\
\text{pōbo} 3–23 & \quad \text{owl} \\
\text{gbudōnu} 333 & \quad \text{box}
\end{align*}
\]

The numerals marking tone are usually written after the word or phrase to which they refer, but in the case of longer citations, they are written underneath, in order to make it easier for the reader to see with which vowel each numeral is associated.

The order in which the entries are listed is strictly alphabetical and calls for little comment; the following points are, however, to be noticed: the order of the three E-vowels is e, ë, ê, and the order of the three O-vowels is o, ō, ɔ; the tilde is disregarded in determining word order; where two or more words have the same spelling they are listed according to tone, with the higher tone words preceding the lower tone words, e.g.
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pa 2-1 adv. outright
pa 2 v. enter
pa 3-1 n. defiance
pa 3-2 n. large crayfish
pa 3 id. with the sound of a sharp blow
pa 4 n. good natured irony, banter

For verbs, the citation form is the 2nd singular, imperative mood.

Nominal and Verbal Affixes

The word class to which each headword belongs is indicated after the numeral (or numerals) marking tone. The word classes recognised here are those distinguished in my AN INTRODUCTION TO GREBO,6 where a brief morphological and syntactical description of the main word classes will be found. It may be useful for reference purposes to list here the affixes which occur with nominal and verbal stems.

The following suffixes occur with nominal stems:

1. -a ~ -ã 'plural':
   di spear 
   dia.
2. {-l} 'plural'; {-l} has realizations -l ~ -ã ~ -ë ~ -è:
   ku devil
   kui.
3. -no 'plural':
   buq father
   buqno.
   Only four examples found.
4. -bo ~ -bõ 'plural'. Only with stems denoting persons:
   ke chief
   kebo.
5. -du 'plural':
   yu child
   yudu.
   Only one example found.
6. -γο ~ -γ 'several individuals'. With stems having collective meaning:
   hûn stars (collectively)
   hûnγ several (individual) stars.
7. -γς, -ς 'one individual'. With stems having collective meaning:
   hûn stars
   hûnς a star.
8. -ε ~ -ë ~ -è 'one individual':
   ti halves
   tiè half.
   Only nine examples found.
9. -a ~ -ã 'one individual':
   kebe slices
   kebea slice.
   Only five examples found.
10. -b̥ 'person':
    gedegb a Grebo
11. -pep 'person'. With names of towns and countries, and with bët 'up country':
    pâpëp a Pan.
12. -we 'persons'. With names of towns:
    monroviae citizens of Monrovia.

It is not possible to predict the plural form from the singular, and therefore in the case of all words where there is a singular/plural opposition, the plural form is also given in

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the dictionary. In the case of words with collective meaning like hnE 'stars', the singulative form is also given; by 'singulative' is meant a form consisting of stem + suffix 7, 8 or 9.

The following affixes occur with verbal stems:

1. {-e} 'secondary stem'; {-e} has realizations -i ~ -i ~ -e ~ -ẽ ~ -e ~ -ẽ:
   dui be pounding  cf. du 'pound'

2. -e ~ -ẽ ~ -e ~ -ẽ 'dative, causative, passive':
   duĩ̮ duĩ̮ duĩ̮ duĩ̮ duĩ̮ make Do swim
   luĩ̮ luĩ̮ luĩ̮ luĩ̮ luĩ̮ swim Do
   weĩ̮ weĩ̮ weĩ̮ weĩ̮ weĩ̮ it was broken (by someone)

3. -di ~ -de ~ -ni ~ -ne 'instrumental':
   duĩ̮ duĩ̮ duĩ̮ duĩ̮ duĩ̮ pound rice with a pestle

4 and 5. CV - and -de,....., -n·e 'reciprocal':
   a fofo̩de ne we have awaited each other
   a 'we'; fofo is secondary stem of fo 'await'; -de 'reciprocal';
   ne is a particle.

   The values of C and V are:

   C is the same as the stem-initial consonant.

   V is:

   (i) the same as the first vowel of the stem, except where this ɛ, a, ɔ (or their nasal correlates);

   (ii) ɔ/ɔ where the first vowel of the stem is ɛ/ɔ or a/ ámb, and the stem-initial consonant
       is kp, gb, nm, f, ɔ, ɔw;

   (iii) ɛ/ɔ where the first vowel of the stem is ɛ/ɔ or a/ ámb and the stem-initial consonant
       is any consonant other than those listed in (ii);

   (iv) ɔ/ɔ where the first vowel of the stem is ɔ/ɔ.

6. -de I 'here':
   o nede they are here
   o 'they'; ne 'be'.

7. -de ~ -dẽ 'there' (of a wide or unspecified area):
   o muđẽ they have gone there.

8. -o ~ -o 'there' (of a particular place):
   o muq they have gone there.

9. -de 2. This occurs after -de 1, -de and -o, and specifies the location more exactly:
   muđẽ θo there (to that precise spot)
   cf. muđẽ θo there.

10. -da ~ -na 'before yesterday tense':
    ne duda bla ne 11 4 3 1 pounded rice before yesterday
     ne 'I'; du 'pound'; bla 'rice'; ne is a particle.
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11. -d\(\) -n\(\) 'yesterday tense':
    ne dud\(\) bl\(\) ne 1 11 4 3 I pounded rice yesterday.

12. -e -\(\) 'today tense':
    ne d\(\) bl\(\) ne 1 12 4 3 I pounded rice today; I shall pound rice today.

13. -a -\(\) 'tomorrow tense':
    ne dua bl\(\) ne 1 12 4 3 I shall pound rice tomorrow.

14. -d\(\) -n\(\) 'after tomorrow tense':
    ne dud\(\) bl\(\) ne 1 12 4 3 I shall pound rice after tomorrow.

15. -RC\(\) -V 'verbal noun', corresponding roughly in meaning to the English
    verbal noun in -ing:
    du\(\) pounding cf. du pound
    du\(\) yakla ne pounding is difficult.

    The values of R, C and V are:
    R: For R read:
        (i) \(\) replaces \(\) after all consonants; it replaces \(\) after b, f, kp, gb,
            \(\) m, w, ny. (Exception: e replaces \(\) after b).
        (ii) \(\) replaces \(\) and \(\) after all other consonants.

    C is:
        (i) the same as the stem consonant where this is b, d, l, m, n
        (ii) the voiced correlate of the stem consonant where this is (i) hm, hn, or (2) p,
            t, hl and the stem vowel is oral;
        (iii) the voiced nasal correlate of the stem consonant where this is p or t and
            the stem vowel is nasal;
        (iv) zero where the stem consonant is other than p, b, hm, m, t, d, hl, l, hn, n.

    V is:
        (i) \(\) where the stem-final is \(\);
        (ii) \(\) where the stem-final is other than \(\).

16. -da -na 2-\(\) 'verbal noun denoting place':
    duda 22-\(\) a place where pounding is done.

17. -da 3 -na 3 -\(\) 'verbal noun denoting act':
    duda 23 the act of pounding.

18. -\(\) -\(\) (pl. -\(\) -\(\)) 'verbal noun denoting performer':
    du\(\) a person who is pounding.

19. -RC\(\) -V 'verbal adjective':
    du\(\) bl\(\) pounded rice cf. du pound
    pema k\(\) a a rich chief cf p\(\) be rich.

    The values of R and C are the same as those of R and C in suffix unit 15; V is the same
    as the stem-final vowel.

20. -Vb\(\) -\(\) 'verbal adjective':
    bl\(\) duub\(\) pounded rice cf. du pound.

    Since derivative verbs, verbal nouns and verbal adjectives have such a high degree of
    regularity both of form and meaning, for the sake of brevity none is listed in the diction-
    ary, except for a few cases where the meaning is somewhat different from what might
    have been expected.
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a 2nd pl. possessive pr. your: a kae 14 your house; adūi 133 yourselves (reflexive); a nyibetu 1 132 you yourselves.
a 2nd pl. subject pr. you; a duda bla ne you pounded rice.
a 2 genital link: kē a kae 1 2 14 the chief’s house; kēbo a kla 1 2 14 the chiefs’ houses.
a 1 3rd pl. possessive pr. our: a kae 3 14 our house; adūi 333 ourselves (reflexive);
a nyibetu 3 233 ourselves, we ourselves.
a 3/4 1st pl. subject pr. we: a duda bla ne we pounded rice.
aa 33 interj. all right! Expression of agreement with what has been said: na honede Q. aa, Don’t be long. All right.
Also aa k~ 33 2.
amo 2nd pl. object pr. you.
amo 13 2nd pl. emphatic subject pr. you.
amo 14 2nd pl. pr. (antecedent of a relative clause) you.
amo 32 1st pl. object pr. us.
amo 33 1st pl. emphatic subject pr. we.
amo 44 1st pl. pr. (antecedent of a relative clause) we.
at 32-1 n. husband of a female relative, pl. atabo 321: commonly used as a term of address.
awe 32 interj. yes (with the connotation that the speaker is impatient with the question, or in some way displeased): ple 3 wodt neef? awe has he been here? Yes (with the connotation that the speaker was displeased with the visitor).
ba 1, only with o ‘their’ as in: o ba 1 1 their beloved;
ob a yu 1 2–1 their beloved child.
ba 2nd pl. subject pr. (subjunctive mood) you: ba nu ne 2 2 4 do it.
ba 3rd pl. subject pr. (subjunctive mood) we: ba nu ne 3 2 4 let’s do it.
ba 2–1 v. hook, hang up, lift up (the leg); (of soldiers) drill; exempt: bao 21 go to one side, give way, stand aside; ba no 2 1 skulk, keep out of sight, lurk in corners; ba yr 2 1 stand aside, conceal oneself, set aside; na bada yē ke kē mō I stood aside for the chief; ba yu 2 21 hang up; bebaka 221 fiercely, daringly, boldly; beba kē 22 1 an arrogant, headstrong chief.
ba 2 v. be maimed, be blind.
baa 14 n. namesake: na baa’no 2 14 4 he is my namesake; baa is used as a term of address by people having the same name.
baa 41 adv. perhaps, probably: baa nu mi hla mō 41 2–1 3 perhaps it will rain, it may rain. cf. bla 1, blane 41.
baa 44 conj. even though, even if, whether or not: a mī hw5 mō baa kē yi nwe we shall fight even though the chief does not agree, we shall fight whether or not the chief agrees. cf. baahmo 443–2, banehm 443–2.
baabg 142–1 n. a relative’s wife. Used as a term of address.
baahmo 443–2 conj. even though, even if, whether or not. cf. baa 44, banehm 443–2.
babō 21 n. branch, bough, pl. babe 21: ni gba a babo branch of a river; tu babo branch of a tree.
bad 41 n. enlarged gland in the groin, pl. bade 41.
bade 23 v. beg, beseech, pray: ne badeda kē ne 1 132 2 2 I begged the chief; ne badeda kē ne ke wudi a ta 1 1 3 2 2 1 2 2 4 1 I begged the chief for money; ne bade mo ne 1 13 2 2 I beg your pardon; bade ṭw3 23 3 prayer, petition for forgiveness. cf. tedaa 412 pardon me.

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bae 21 n. companion, comrade, pl. bino
13. cf. bahēē 2–133.

bae 31 n. burial, funeral:
 ké a bae kpana ne 1 2 31 12 2 the funeral of the chief was not up to expectations; bi bae woda 2 31 33 play funeral songs.

bae 33 n. bar, pl. baesa 333: pini bae 21 33 a bar of lead; seme bae 44 33 a bar of soap.

bagyē 2–14 n. kick, stamp of the foot, heavy footstep, pl. bagyi 2–14: hla bagyē 2 2–14 to kick; po bagyē 2 2–14 walk heavily, aim a kick.


baka 21 adv. exceedingly, greatly, very much: ne nOEne nE ne baka 1 113 4 1 21 I like it very much; kyE di n:> baka 2 2 3 21 it is very cold.

banana 313 n. smallest variety of banana, sing. bananayē 3133.

banehm:> 443–2 conj. even though, even if, whether or not:
 a mi hw5 m:> banehm:> ke yi IJWE 3 3–2 3–2 3–2 3 3–2 3 we shall fight even though the chief does not agree. cf. baa 44, baahm:> 443–2.

bād 44 n. big drum (of European manufacture), pl. bāē 44: bāē 44 band, orchestra; bāē tutu 44 33 drumstick for a big drum.

bapīle 23 n. a reddish coloured rat, pl. bapīle 23.

batī 44 interj., as in: batī 3! 44 2 oyez! Expression used by a person addressing an audience when he wishes to claim their attention; the audience replies batī. Also a batī 2 44.

baya 21 n. clay mould in which metal is cast; crucible: k0 baya kudi 2 22 11, kye baya 2 21 have a protruding abdomen.

bayiwa 333 interj. Expression used to mark the end or climax of a speech; also used by the audience as an expression of agreement (< ba yi wa 3 3 3 may we see favour).

bebaka 221, see ba 2–1 v.

bebē 23 n. grope, run one's hands over: o bebēda o o pena woda no they groped their way out; o bebēda no o tu a te he groped for his walking-stick; ne bebēda no fe no 1 132 4 2 1 I ran my hands over him.

béo 23 n. toes, sing. béo 23:
 béo kpdē 23 44 big toe, pl. béo kpdē 23 44; béo kye 23 12–1 heel, pl. béo kyiil 23 12–1; béo k0 23 3 toenail, pl. béo kōē 23 33.

béo 21 n. male; leader in war, leader of a group taking strong action, pl. béo 21. Commonly added to the names of animals to denote the male; bli béo 2 33 bull; béo no it is a male (animal); he is a warrior, he is a leader of a gang; ba béo 3 21 distinguish oneself; ya béo 3 21 be barren, sterile; béo yao 21 33 a barren woman, a sterile plant.

bé 2 v. spring like a monkey from tree to tree; o béda ti lO no 2 22 2 2 3 he sprang from tree to tree; o bé ti lO no 2 22 2 2 3 o bé teble lO no 2 22 3–23–2 2 3 he pokes his nose into everything, he wants to have a hand in everything; o bé ywa lO no he is a wanderer, he 2 2 2 1 1 goes from doctor to doctor.

bé 3 conj. whether:
 ne yi ne yibQ bé o dido ne 1 2–1 4 2 3 3 2 2 2 1 I don't know whether he came; ple 4 . . . bé 3, bé 3 . . . dē dē 2–1–2 3, bé 3 . . . dē dē 3 2–1–3, bē 3 . . . bé 3, bé 3 . . . dē dē 2–1–3, bé 3 . . . dē dē, whether . . . or whether.

bé 2 adj. other: é bé 3 2 something else, pl. é bé 3 2; d0/d8 dē another one; (in specific questions) which?, what kind?: kä bé no? which house is it?, what sort of house is it?

bé 2 v. knock, rap, pester (somebody for something); take honey out of a hive:
bèda muu 2 22 14 he knocked at the door; bèda do 2 22 2 he took honey from the hive; bèda mo ne wudi (a) te 2 22 2 1 22 3-2 he pestered me for money; bè 2 22 2 collide with, knock against; bèda mo ye 2 22 21 he collided with me, knocked into me; bèda mo ye 2 22 21 it happened to me too; bètade 22-1 cluck in contempt or defiance (with tongue slowly sucked from roof of mouth); bètade n::> tade n::> I clucked at him; bèkle 2 2 tap one's chest to emphasize the 'I' in an utterance; bèkl; kp::>kp::> 2 2 knock (at a door), say kp::>kp::> at a door to make one's presence known; bèb~da rno IJWiE he gestured to me to stop talking; bèb~da rno kwa yE he gestured to me to stop. bèb~ 33 n. doubt: po bèb~ 2 33 be doubtful; te ne no e ne yeda bèb~ 2 32 2 22 21 3 3 this matter does not call for doubt. bèb~ ye 23 2, see bè 2 knock. bèdèg 23 2 swear, take an oath: bèdèg mo curse; na bèdèg mo mo my mother cursed me. bèdèg 323, obsolete: bèdèg 33 is now used. bèdèg 22, as in bèdèg ye 22 21 up country. bèe 44 n. beetle in the grub or larva state, sing. bèe ye 443: bèe 3makò 44 33 insect found in excreta and rubbish dumps. Also bèe yò 443 (obsolete). bèg 2-13 n. one of the tribes of the Liberian hinterland, Bewe tribe. bèg 2-13 n. up country, the interior of the country. bèghèbèhè 23-223-2 n. eight. bè 2-1 v. be of a certain size: hā ne ò bèt? how big is it?; ke ò be it is this size; tene bè ke ne ò bè 41 4 14 2-1 2-1 he is as big as you; ke kpè 2-1 be big enough, old enough; ke kè bèda kpè this is how big the chief was, this is how powerful the chief was. bè 2-1 v. cut down, fell; be alright, be ignited, catch fire: bè de ke 21 2 make a detour to avoid someone or something, take a short cut; bède nya 2 21 2 go to meet; bè mo 2 2 be alone, be isolated; be distinguished (by name etc.); ne bèda mo ke na bino nye I was separated from my companions; ò nyene bèda mo no his name distinguished him; dè ò nyene 2 22 21, mo no ò nyene 2 22 21 a distinguished name; kè kpèla 2 21, kè kpoda 2 21 be bold; bètie 2-1 41 pass through, cut through. bè 2-1 n. boldness, fearlessness, courage: nèe 2 11 very keen ears; bèyì 2 2 very sharp eyes; dìè 2 2 21 be bold, fearless. bè 2 v. lick, suck, eat (soup, palm butter etc.); wear out (trans.), become worn out: bè 2 2 2 2 lick. bè 2 n. a white clay used in pottery: bètemaya 2 333 clay pipe; moa 2 33 potter, pl. bèmoa 2 333. bè 4 n. an edible plant. bèdèkà 212-11 n. a shrub or herb used in witchcraft and believed to cause sudden death. bède 43 n. belt, pl. bède 43: po bède 2 43 2 make a bed. bèdo 21 n. load, burden; wooden and wickerwork hamper in which loads are carried, pl. bède 21: ò nu bèdo ke mo mo he is a burden on me; kè kpè 4 21 a hamper of one kè (half bushel) capacity. bèdèo 33 n. unfinished state, pl. bède 33: ka bède 2 2 33 an unfinished building; nu bède 2 33 be unfinished. bèteete 1333 n. belt, pl. bèteete 1333. bèkpò 22-1 n. a large red ant, sing. bèkpoye 22-13.
bekte 41 n. a material similar to velvet.

benja 21 n. a small animal slightly larger than a guinea-pig, pl. benwe 21.

bene 41 n. a plant whose leaves are used by women for hair washing.

bekey 43 n. bench, pl. bekeya 43.

bekeya 433 n. a material similar to velvet.

betes 144 conj. if.

bewo 21 n. a grey animal with white spots, larger than a cat, pl. bewe 21.

bi 2–1 n. hold of a ship; interior of anything hollow: mu bi go into the hold.

bi 2 v. beat, play (a musical instrument); start: bi occurs as a colourless verb with a great variety of objects, e.g. bi gbq 2 2–1 be well defined, clear; bi kq 2 2 follow on, join, support; bi kya 2 2–1 become jealous; phrases consisting of bi + noun object are listed under the noun: big 22 begin, start; big 21 be included; a ppe ké biq amo muna 3 2 2 21 3 3 3 2 all of us, including the chief, went; mo big 1 21 including me.

biabo 143 n. pl. relatives.

biabo 221 n. pl. friends.

big 22pp. under, underneath: ka big 1 44 in the house; kaë big 14 33 under the house; pa big 2 22 support, help, back someone up; pa big nò 2 22 2 probe a person's character, undermine a person's position; pode ne big 21 4 33 put it underneath.

biss 23 v. thank, congratulate, salute or bow as an expression of thanks: ne bissirá kë ne I thanked the chief; bissída 233 thanksgiving, gratitude, appreciation; hf bissída show gratitude, give thanks.

biyu, biu 21 n. friend, pl. biabo 221: biyu de 22 1 friendship.

bla 1 adj. perhaps, probably, maybe: bla ne nwe ne ne perhaps I shall do it. cf. blane 41.

bla 2 v. work in metal: blao 23 metal-worker, blacksmith, goldsmith, silversmith; bla na 2 2 put more wood on the fire; blasea 233 anvil.

bla 2 v., as in bla no 2 2 chase, drive, run after: blade 23 make a grab at; blade nò 2 2 spring at, spring upon, leap upon; bladeo m: > 2 2 limp.

bla 2–1 n. a flashing past, momentary appearance: nu bla 2 2–1 appear momentarily, flash past; po bla 2 2–1 dodge quickly out of sight; kyini bla 22 2–1 turn over.

bla 4 n. rice: bla du 4 3 a heap of unhulled rice; bla fæ 4 33 unhulled rice; bla gbbo 4 33 stale rice; bla ha 4 3 nine bundles of rice, pl. bla he 4 3; bla ka 4 3 handful of cooked rice, pl. bla ke 4 3; bla kóbé 4 21 crust of burnt rice left in the pot; bla kóne 4 21 shoots of rice; bla kye nyen 4 2 2 2 33 time of rice harvest; bla ga 4 3 3 clump of rice, pl. bla ge 4 3; bla ge 4 3 3 broken grains of rice; bla tane 4 44 second crop of rice. (The stubble is left and new heads grow, or else stalks left at harvest because they were unripe are harvested later); bla wugi 4 33 stalk of rice; a fresh-water fish, pl. bla wudi 4 33; bla yibi 4 33 pounded rice; bla püü