1. Introduction. Mandombe (دارة/ماندمب), which means “for the Blacks”, is a modern African script which was invented in 1978 by David Wabeladio Payi (*15.07.1957 – †04.04.2013). It is one of very few scripts which were invented south of the equator. It was first designed to write Kikongo and Lingala, the most important languages of Congo, and then developed further so that basically any language can be written with this script.

Unlike other modern African scripts, Mandombe does not copy the type of letters which are known the Roman or Arabic alphabets, but the symbols are designed according to strong geometrical rules, on the basis of the stylized cyphers 2 (2) and 5 (5), which give the script an outstanding appearance. These shapes are based on the observation of the uncoated portion of the brick wall of his room.

David Wabeladio Payi was a member of the Kimbanguist church. The inventor was given a professorship at the Kimbanguist University in Kinshasa, where he taught the script to numerous students. On December 22, 2011 he was granted the title Doctor honoris causa at the University of Kinshasa.

The Mandombe script primary function was to write religious texts (see Figs. 1–3); presently also secular texts appear in this script, cf. Figs. 4–7.

The script is also taught in the Kimbanguist centers overseas, e.g. Brussels, Paris. There is hope among those who master the script that it will get a communicative function at least within the Kimbanguist church.

The Mandombe script has also an important function as a medium of writing is the graphical use of the letters whose shapes can be combined to create fascinating pictures.

2. Structure. Mandombe is written left to right. Structurally, the script is an abugida or an alphasyllabary. A sign orientation is used as a distinguishing feature. For syllables having a more complex structure than CV a special set of diacritical signs and other marks are used.

3. Collating order. Collation order is that in the code chart. It is based on the traditional arrangement according to letter shapes: DA-BA-GA-FA, MA-KA-PA-LA, VA-NA-TA-SA, RA-WA-YA-ŻA.
4. **Character names.** The usual UCS conventions are used, with SH representing /ʃ/, TSH representing /tʃ/, DJ representing /dʒ/, and UE representing /y/ (French u or German ü).

As the consonant shapes are used mainly for two different consonants (depending on where the vowel is attached), it is suggested that the consonants are named as follows:

**MANDOMBE JOINED CONSONANT B OR D**

The “joined” addition is due to the fact that Mandombe provides also shapes for consonants in syllable coda (as opposed to syllable-initial consonants), which are useful for writing languages other than Kikongo or Lingala, e.g., for Wolof. For those syllable-final shapes the following name is suggested:

**MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT B**

Note that some “isolated” shapes can be used for syllable-initial foreign sounds (like GB, KP).

**Vowels.** Each Mandombe vowel occurs in four different shapes being rotations or flips of the basic shape. These might be provisionally named as follows:

**MANDOMBE VOWEL A BASIC**
**MANDOMBE VOWEL A MIRRORED (meaning, horizontally)**
**MANDOMBE VOWEL A FLIPPED (meaning, vertically)**
**MANDOMBE VOWEL A ROTATED (meaning, 180 degrees)**

5. **Linebreaking.** Linebreak can occur after a punctuation sign, including syllable separator and word separator. Characters forming a syllable cannot be broken.

6. **Punctuation and digits.** In Mandombe, script-specific punctuation is used, including a syllable separator, which is a blank space, and a word separator, which is a dot resting on the baseline.

Of ten Mandombe digits, five have the shape similar to vowels (I = 1, U = 2, E = 3, O ≈ 4, A = 5). {NB: this order can be an alternative for ordering vowels, instead of the A-E-I-O-U one}.

However, it seems that the vowels and digits require separate codepoints as – at least in some texts – the digits are taller than the respective vowels when resting on the baseline (see Fig. 1).

7. **Additions and extensions.** Possible additions include calendar characters for a recently devised Kimbanguist calendar (7 symbols for days of week and 12 symbols for combining days of week and months); such calendar characters can be named starting with KIMBANGUMUNA, not MANDOMBE, as suggested in the list below.

There is a potential possibility that other symbols to reflect phonology of some other African languages will be introduced in future (tone marks, letters for click consonants, etc.), and they can be placed in the reserved codepoints.
8. Bibliography


9. Character repertoire

- 10F00  MANDOMBE JOINED CONSONANT B OR D
- 10F01  MANDOMBE JOINED CONSONANT F OR G
- 10F02  MANDOMBE JOINED CONSONANT K OR M
- 10F03  MANDOMBE JOINED CONSONANT L OR P
- 10F04  MANDOMBE JOINED CONSONANT N OR V
- 10F05  MANDOMBE JOINED CONSONANT R OR W
- 10F06  MANDOMBE JOINED CONSONANT S OR T
- 10F07  MANDOMBE JOINED CONSONANT Y OR Z
- 10F08  MANDOMBE JOINED CONSONANT DJ
- 10F09  MANDOMBE JOINED CONSONANT J
- 10F0A  MANDOMBE JOINED CONSONANT SH
- 10F0B  MANDOMBE JOINED CONSONANT TSH
- 10F0C  MANDOMBE INDIVIDUAL VOWEL CARRIER
- 10F0D  MANDOMBE INTERVENING CONSONANT R
- 10F0E  MANDOMBE INTERVENING CONSONANT L
- 10F0F  MANDOMBE INTERVENING CONSONANT L FLIPPED

- 10F10  MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT B
- 10F11  MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT F
- 10F12  MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT K
- 10F13  MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT L

- 10F14  MANDOMBE YIKAMU
  - vertical stroke used in illustrations of Mandombe characters composition
  - similar to MANDOMBE COMMA but different in meaning
  - can be positioned on different levels above the baseline unlike the comma
10F15 MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT S (= KT)
   • also used as joined consonant KT

10F16 MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT R

10F17 MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT Y

10F18 MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT DJ

10F19 MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT J

10F1A MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT SH

10F1B MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT TSH

10F1C MANDOMBE MVUALA ZA PILUKA-1
   • used in illustrations of Mandombe characters compositions
   • similar to MANDOMBE DIGIT SIX

10F1D MANDOMBE MVUALA ZA PILUKA-2
   • used in illustrations of Mandombe characters compositions
   • similar to MANDOMBE DIGIT NINE

10F1E MANDOMBE MVUALA ZA PILUKA-3
   • used in illustrations of Mandombe characters compositions
   • similar to MANDOMBE DIGIT SEVEN

10F1F MANDOMBE MVUALA ZA PILUKA-4
   • used in illustrations of Mandombe characters compositions
   • similar to MANDOMBE DIGIT EIGHT

10F20 MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT D
   • also used as joined consonant GB

10F21 MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT G

10F22 MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT M
   • also used as joined consonant KP
10F23  MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT P
10F24  MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT V
10F25  MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT T
10F26  MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT W
10F27  MANDOMBE ISOLATED CONSONANT Z
10F28  MANDOMBE VOWEL A BASIC
       • similar to MANDOMBE DIGIT FIVE
10F29  MANDOMBE VOWEL A MIRRORED
10F2A  MANDOMBE VOWEL A FLIPPED
10F2B  MANDOMBE VOWEL A ROTATED
10F2C  MANDOMBE VOWEL E BASIC
       • similar to MANDOMBE DIGIT THREE
10F2D  MANDOMBE VOWEL E MIRRORED
10F2E  MANDOMBE VOWEL E FLIPPED
10F2F  MANDOMBE VOWEL E ROTATED
10F30  MANDOMBE VOWEL I BASIC
       • similar to MANDOMBE DIGIT ONE
10F31  MANDOMBE VOWEL I MIRRORED
10F32  MANDOMBE VOWEL I FLIPPED
10F33  MANDOMBE VOWEL I ROTATED
10F34  MANDOMBE VOWEL O BASIC
       • similar to MANDOMBE DIGIT FOUR
10F35  MANDOMBE VOWEL O MIRRORED
10F36  MANDOMBE VOWEL O FLIPPED
10F37  MANDOMBE VOWEL O ROTATED
10F38  MANDOMBE VOWEL U BASIC
• similar to MANDOMBE DIGIT TWO
10F39  MANDOMBE VOWEL U MIRRORED
10F3A  MANDOMBE VOWEL U FLIPPED
10F3B  MANDOMBE VOWEL U ROTATED
10F3C  MANDOMBE VOWEL UE BASIC
10F3D  MANDOMBE VOWEL UE MIRRORED
10F3E  MANDOMBE VOWEL UE FLIPPED
10F3F  MANDOMBE VOWEL UE ROTATED
10F40  MANDOMBE DIGIT ZERO
10F41  MANDOMBE DIGIT ONE
10F42  MANDOMBE DIGIT TWO
10F43  MANDOMBE DIGIT THREE
10F44  MANDOMBE DIGIT FOUR
10F45  MANDOMBE DIGIT FIVE
10F46  MANDOMBE DIGIT SIX
10F47  MANDOMBE DIGIT SEVEN
10F48  MANDOMBE DIGIT EIGHT
10F49  MANDOMBE DIGIT NINE
10F4A  MANDOMBE SYLLABLE SEPARATOR
• it is a blank space
MANDOMBE WORD SEPARATOR

- it is a dot resting on the baseline

MANDOMBE DOT

MANDOMBE COMMA

MANDOMBE COLON

MANDOMBE SEMICOLON

MANDOMBE EXCLAMATION MARK

MANDOMBE EXCLAMATION MARK MIRRORED

MANDOMBE QUESTION MARK

MANDOMBE ELLIPSIS

MANDOMBE COMBINING A DIPHTONG MARK

MANDOMBE COMBINING A DIPHTONG MARK FLIPPED

MANDOMBE COMBINING E DIPHTONG MARK

- these are short vertical strokes, not dots as in 10F5C

MANDOMBE COMBINING E DIPHTONG MARK FLIPPED

MANDOMBE COMBINING I DIPHTONG MARK

MANDOMBE COMBINING I DIPHTONG MARK FLIPPED

MANDOMBE COMBINING O DIPHTONG MARK

MANDOMBE COMBINING O DIPHTONG MARK FLIPPED

MANDOMBE COMBINING U DIPHTONG MARK

- these are dots, not short vertical strokes as in 10F56

MANDOMBE COMBINING U DIPHTONG MARK FLIPPED

MANDOMBE COMBINING NASALIZATION MARK

MANDOMBE COMBINING NASALIZATION MARK FLIPPED
MANDOMBE SYMBOL MANDOMBE
KIMBANGUMUNA MPANGALA DAY SYMBOL
KIMBANGUMUNA NSONA DAY SYMBOL
KIMBANGUMUNA MBASA DAY SYMBOL
KIMBANGUMUNA NKENGE DAY SYMBOL
KIMBANGUMUNA KONZO DAY SYMBOL
KIMBANGUMUNA NKANDU DAY SYMBOL
KIMBANGUMUNA NDELE DAY SYMBOL
KIMBANGUMUNA KINTOMBO MONTH PLACEHOLDER
KIMBANGUMUNA NKIIELA MONTH PLACEHOLDER
KIMBANGUMUNA LUANZA MONTH PLACEHOLDER
KIMBANGUMUNA SIVU MONTH PLACEHOLDER
KIMBANGUMUNA LUNKIESA MONTH PLACEHOLDER
KIMBANGUMUNA SENZA KIAMASANZA MONTH PLACEHOLDER
KIMBANGUMUNA MBANGALA MONTH PLACEHOLDER
KIMBANGUMUNA KUMPUA MONTH PLACEHOLDER
KIMBANGUMUNA VILA MONTH PLACEHOLDER
KIMBANGUMUNA AKUNDE MONTH PLACEHOLDER
KIMBANGUMUNA KUNDI MONTH PLACEHOLDER
KIMBANGUMUNA KUNDI KIANENE MONTH PLACEHOLDER
KIMBANGUMUNA MVUALA VELELA BASIC
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10. Figures

Figure 1: An excerpt from the book teaching Mandombe
Figure 2: Lord’s Prayer in Kikongo written in the Mandombe script
Figure 3: Lord’s Prayer in Duala written in the Mandombe script
Figure 4: Book page in Kikongo written in the Mandombe script
Figure 5: Book page written in the Mandombe script

Figure 6: A specimen of the Mandombe handwriting
Figure 7: Mandombe class (source: Script Mandombe at Facebook, 30 December 2013)