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A METHOD FOR PREPARING TEXTS FOR DIACHRONIC COMPARISON
WITH AN EXAMPLE — A CRITICAL EDITION OF C. SCHÖNING’S
GA CATECHISM OF 1805

I. A METHOD FOR RESEARCH

Over the years I have attempted to apply certain 'philological' strategies to the study of the Ga language, and now that the results are beginning to appear in print the time has come to present an account of this aspect of my work.

It was begun when my bibliographical research on writings in and on the language brought to light an amount of diachronic documentation (from the sixteenth century down to the present) that made this particular approach desirable, and indeed imperative. I am convinced that similar research strategies are applicable to other well-documented African languages, and to facilitate such developments I shall try to present a concise account of my approach.

After establishing the existence of an interesting sequence of documents, including a chain of grammatical writings on Ga (starting with C. Protten's work of 1764), I decided to edit these, in order to make them more readily accessible to the community of scholars.

The systems of graphic representation of Ga material employed in these old sources were generally based on the then current orthographic conventions of a number of West European languages (predominantly Dutch and Danish, but also German and English), and only in the latter half of the nineteenth century on ideas of a 'universal alphabet' and/or on phonetic principles of any consistency. They were furthermore frequently inconsistent even within one and the same documentary source, so that the most important task proved to be that of devising a means by which every document could be re-transcribed in a consistent fashion that would at the same time prepare the ground for later comparison.

In the total absence of diachronic studies it was considered most worthwhile to base the re-transcription on the present-day sound-patterns of the language, while at the same time reprinting the document as it stood (with amendments where necessary reversible by providing the original readings in footnotes) to facilitate the interpretation of its individual characteristics. As most sources had text in European languages other than English accompanying the Ga material, this
was most usefully achieved by providing (on facing pages) the source-text and an English translation-key to it, which could easily be made to incorporate the re-transcribed Ga material.

Whenever the old Ga words can be readily identified with contemporary ones of the same morphemic makeup no further difficulties arise. When words, phrases, and constructions no longer in use in modern Ga are encountered, the meaning which is usually recoverable from the European language 'versions', glosses, and/or explanations, together with the sound-sequence as roughly indicated by the old spelling, will generally permit the eventual identification of the morphemes involved. Usually, though, this cannot be obtained in the first run through the text, but has to be arrived at by successive stages of approximation, a process that may literally take years to yield a completely satisfactory reconstruction. Evidence from older word-lists — as these are cumulatively integrated into my Ga Dictionary Project files — is proving an indispensable aid in such reconstruction.

At the end of this process of reconstructive re-transcription stands a consistently transcribed text, in a sound-pattern belonging to modern Ga. Syntactically and lexically it may often appear a little idiosyncratic still, because of our deliberate retention of the morphological and syntactic characteristics of the original document. To go further and substitute modern usage as well would exceed the intentions and limitations of scholarship, though it might be of some interest to the contemporary native speaker of the language, and if such a popular version were desired it could be produced from our text without too much effort.*

My new text (as defined above) I shall call a text-analogue. From each analogue text of this kind word- and morpheme-inventories, based on the fully consistent transcription, can now be made. Such inventories (or indexes) permit the identification of inconsistencies of spelling within the individual source-document itself, and often render recognizable printer's errors or similar corruptions of texts, suggesting emendations and improved readings, and eventually leading to a well-established text of the original document.

* The need for such a fully modernized text may be felt by the compiler of school-books, literature courses, and anthologies who wants to present the common reader with a fully modernized version which may be useful to convey the feeling of a literary tradition.
The Ga texts in my edition of Christian Protten ('Ga Dictionary Project: Documents & Studies' no. 1, London: Luzac 1971), as well as the critical edition of Schjønning's Ga Catechism of 1805 presented below, will serve to illustrate my approach. Work on other documents is in hand, in particular on Rasm's 1828 grammar, the 1853 Zimmermann/Christaller Ga grammar manuscript, and the Christaller/Bohner grammar of 1893. All resulting word-indexes are of course fed back into the G.D.P. files in order to facilitate future work.

Once a sufficiently large quantity of sources fairly evenly distributed over time has been processed in the manner described, it will then become feasible to proceed to the setting-up of development-sequences for particular sounds and combinations of sounds. This will have great significance for the validation of reconstructive hypotheses arrived at by other techniques. Also one hopes to be able to make well-founded statements about the speed of sound-change for an African language which until around a century ago had neither schools nor an accessible written literature to slow down such change.

II. PREFACE TO THE TEXT (Schjønning 1805)

Early in the nineteenth century Denmark still possessed a number of forts on the Gold Coast with Danes resident there. Ecclesiastically these forts belonged to the diocese of Seeland (DAN. Sjælland), and the bishop of that diocese was responsible (among other things) for the schools established there, which were intended mainly for mulattoes, though some negro children were also admitted. From time to time efforts had been made to use the Ga language, considered to be the most widely understood one in the region of Danish influence, for spreading Christianity, and some attempts at producing Ga versions of Christian documents of faith were supported by the Danish authorities — the first instance on record was of course the book by Protten of 1764 mentioned above; see in this connection especially its dedicatory preface.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century the then Bishop of Seeland, Frederik Münter, was responsible for having printed at Copenhagen first (in 1805) the translation into Ga of parts of the Catechism made by C. Schjønning, Interims-Governor (and former Captain), and later (in 1826) supported the publication of Major von Wrisberg's Ga translation of the Sermon on the Mount according to Matthew. Münter mentions that the edition of Schjønning (the only one that was ever produced) consisted of as few as one hundred copies; and it is difficult
to ascertain whether indeed it was ever actually used in Danish schools on the Gold Coast, as had been intended.

The Royal Library at Copenhagen preserves (among others) a unique copy of this rare printed edition with what on internal evidence appear to be the author's own manuscript corrections. The edition that follows takes account of these changes. I express my special gratitude to the librarian, Birgitte Hvidt, for bringing this annotated copy to my attention, and also for her assistance in verifying certain doubtful readings.

My text preserves the form of the original as far as possible (paginatim et lineatim).

III. CRITICAL EDITION, WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATION AND GA TEXT ANALOGUE

[ 1 ]
De ti Bud,
det apostoliske Symbolum
go
Fader Vor,
oversatte
i det Accraiske Sprog,
af
C. Schjønning,¹
[Capitaine²]

----------------------------------------
København, 1805.
Trykt i det Kongl. Vaisenhuses Bogtrykkerie
af C. F. Schubart.³

¹ Printed: "Schønning".
² Printed: "Capitaine"; MS correction says: delete.
³ The following verso of the titlepage ([2]) is blank.
The Ten Commandments,
the apostolic Symbolum\(^1\)
and 'Our Father' [i.e. the Lord's Prayer],
translated
into the Accra [i.e. Ga] language,
by
C. Schjønning,
[Captain.]

Copenhagen, 1805.
Printed at the print-shop of the Royal Orphanage
by C. F. Schubart.

\(^1\) The word is clearly used here (and again below, on page 5)
in the original sense of the Greek σύμβολον 'signum ex quo aq.d. cognoscitur'.
Dette Bud

1. O ka fno Jongmå klokko eka mi 'komē.
   Du ikke tien Gud en anden end mig allene.
   'komē pro økomē.

2. O ka tia' Aula-Jongmå 'dbē² o få.'
   Du ikke forkaste Herren Guds Befaling foragtelig:
   Jongmå ngāh³ nokko ekēhe monah e
   Gud tager ikke noget, eftergiver ikke den som
   tia⁴ o dbole⁷ o få.
   foragter hans Befaling.
   Verb. tia⁴ o få, at kaste fra sig, at ringeagte,
   at begejne med Liguegyldighed. Det skilles
   ad saaledes at Substantivet sætter i Midten,
   s.s. tia⁹ telle o få 3. Kast Stenen fra dig.

3. Dbi 'diyno¹⁰ o hihe ahino o ha djalle¹¹.
   Dage højtidelige din Hu lad staae til, at du dyrker.
   idiyeno¹² god, højtidelig, høire. Ahino, imperativ
   af verb. hihe, at sidde. Hihe, Ansigt, For-
   siden af en Ting, Sind, Agtpaaegivenhed.

4. O hihe a bo o Tia¹³ ke o
   Dit Aaayn lad nødlaaes for din Fader og din
   nhje;

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1 Printed: "tia".
2 Printed: "dbē".
3 Printed: "få"; MS correction was cut off when the binders
cropped the margins of the copy, but there is no room for doubt,
as "få" is the form used four and again six lines further down
the page.
4 Printed: "Jongmå".
5 Printed: "ngāh".
6 Printed: "tia".
7 Printed: "dbole".
8 Printed: "tia".
9 Printed: "tia".
10 Printed: "diyno".
11 Printed: "djalle".
12 Printed: "diyno".
13 Printed: "Tie".
The Ten Commandments

1. O ka sumo nyonmo krokoo: akə'mi 'kome.
   Do not serve another God but me alone.
   'kome for ekome.

2. O ka tæc owula nyonmo gbëe ofō:
   Do not reject the Lord God's command contemptuously:
   nyonmo enss nokə nkə hə moni e-
   God does not let pass anything, does not pardon those who
   tæc egbele efō.
   treat with contempt his command.
   
   The verb tæc efō, to throw away, to think little of,
   to meet with indifference. This is broken up in this
   in this way, that a noun is placed in the middle=
   e.g. tæc te le ofō, or: throw the stone away.

   On solemn days/festival days let your mind be set on worshipping.
   dzurō: good, solemn, right (hand). ahĩ nɔ, imperative
   of the verb hii /i, to be (at). hĩ, face, front
   (-side) of a thing; mind, attention.

4. Ohĩs abu otæc ke o-
   
   Let your countenance be cast down before your father and your
   mother
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nji; li o Fehle,1 o ba åje idjyno,
Nøder, dersom du gør det, du vil nyde godt.

o ba åje2 tühru e djin.3
du vil v. skal eldes længe i Verden.

O hihe a bele &c. Hav Undseelse for Ærbe-
dighed for,4 saaledes at du nedaler Øynene i
dine Forrådres Nærværelse.

Verb. åje,5 at være længe, gie der om levende
og døde Ting.

5. O ka dhéh mokko!
Du ikke dreh. nogen.

6. O ka fe adjamang.
Du ikke var løagtig e.6 hoeragtig.

Verb. fe, at gøre, blive, vise sig som.

7. O ka diu7 mokko ni.
Du ikke stiel nogens Ting.

8. O ka die dassafé fong.
Du ikke udgiv Vidnesbyrd falsk.

dassafé er både subst. & adjectiv.

9. O ka tåo moklokko ve8 [.]
Du ikke efterstrebe en andens Huus.

tåo, verb. at ønske med Heftighed, at hige ef-
ter. Moklokko, pro mokko kløkkø, nogen
anden. Ve9 subst. J. Huus og Hjem, //huuslig
Eyendom, Børn, Slaver &c. inclusive

10. O ka tåo moklokko nga9 eg10 ngjøng11
Du12 ikke forlang en andens Kone, hans Slave-

nuhn,13

1 Printed: "fehle".
2 Printed: "åje".
3 Printed: "djyno".
4 Printed: "for Ærbe-dighed", with second "for" omitted.
5 Printed: "åje".
6 Printed: "e." [= eller, 'or']; in conformity with other instan-
ces it ought to have been printed in Roman type.
7 Printed: "diu".
nyny; fi [ke] ofee lc, obaaye edzuró, mother; if you do that, you will receive good, obaate tuutu ye dzèn.: you will, or shall, live long in the world.

ohè! abu! &c. Have modesty before, respect for, so that you lower your eyes in the presence of your parents.
The verb tse, to be/last long, applies to living and dead things.

5. Okagbe moko.
   Do not kill anybody.

6. Okafee adzwaman.
   Do not be loose, or adulterous.

7. Okadzu moko nii.
   Do not steal anybody's things.

8. Okadze odasefo fon [better Gâ; Okaye odase fon].
   Do not give false testimony.
   odasefo is both substantive and adjective [SIC!].

9. Okato mokroko we.
   Do not strive after another's house.
   tse, verb, to desire intensely, to crave for.
   mokroko, for moko kroko, somebody else.
   we, substantive: house and home, domestic property, children, slaves, etc. included.

10. Okato mokroko na, enyong-
    nuu
   Do not desire/demand another's wife, his slave-

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8 Printed: "veh".
9 Printed: "Veh".
10 Printed: "ngâ e".
11 Printed: "ngiona".
12 Correction; printed: "du".
13 Correction for conformity: cf. 1 and 6 on the following page; printed: "nuku".
nuhn, a ngiong-jo, a kiná, e
Mand, hans Slave-Qvinde, hans Oxe, hans
toh, aloh mokko ná, ná fei ná.
Faar, eller nogens noget, noget ethvert noget.
Nuhu, subst. en Mand, ethvert masculinum.
Jo, en Qvinde, ethvert femenin.
NB. Accraeren kiender ikke et Asen, Mange-
len er substitueret med toh, et Faar.

Det apostoliske Symposium.

1. Ni tro Tis Jongmá, monsh fe
Jeg troer paa Fader Gud, han som skabte
nghoi kwa tipong-ffo.
Himmel og Jordens Støv.
Troe er ikke Accraisk men Dansk, som iblandt
de eller fleste Danske Negre er adopteret og
bruges i samme Meening som de Danske ta-
erg det. Accra-Sproget har intet Ord, som
udtrykker Troe eller troer. Verbum dialle
betyder: erer, dyrker, venererer, men bliver
det Meningen her? Nghoi, subst. Himme-
len, enhver Ting, som er meget hø, Torden,
Luften.

2. Ni

1 Printed: "nuku"; this correction should also apply to the last
word on the preceding page.
2 Printed: "ngiong-jo".
3 Printed: "fei".
4 Printed: "Nuhu"; cf.1 above.
5 Printed: "femenin.".
6 Printed: "tipong ffó".
7 Printed: "dialle".
nuu, ayen-yoo, atsina, eman, his slave-woman, his ox, his

too, aloo moko no, nufene, sheep, or anything of [belonging to] anybody, something all something

nuu, substantive, a man, anything masculine.

yoo, a woman, anything feminine.

*n.b. Gâs do not know the ass, the lack of which is substituted for by too, a sheep [/goat].

The Apostolic Symbolum [i.e. Apostles' Creed].

1. *Mi *tro* [now: miheo miyoe] tse-nyonno, moni fee

I believe in God-Father, (him) who created

nwee ke tsepou-nu.

heaven and the dust of the earth.

Troe [tro] is not Gâ, but Danish, which, among most of the Danish negroes has been adopted and is used in the same meaning as the Danish use it. The Gâ language has no word which expresses belief or believe. The verb dza le signifies esteem, worship, venerate, but does that meaning arise here? nwee, substantive, heaven, anything which is very high, thunder, sky.

2. Mi

1 An absurdly literal translation of the Gâ idiomatic construction which means 'anything/everything'.


3 That is: Osu (or Christiansborg).
2. **Mj tro Jesu Christus, a Tje Jongma.**
Jeg troer paa Jesus Christus, Fader Guds
bli 'komé, vo 'uladé,1 oblájo2 Marie og
Sen eneste, vor Herre, Josefu Maria hun
fölle, a die³ Helligaand⁴ a
fødde ham, han kommer fra den Helligaand, man
vu e he gieréhemo⁵ Pontius Pilatus⁶
tilførte hans Krop Pincier i Pontif Pilati⁷
jiao; a fengie, a bob, a fulle,⁸
Tid; han blev koraførtet, han døde, man begrov ham,
e plikkese kéja abonesm⁹ a voh, dbé otte
han nedsteg til Døvelenes Boelig. Dage tre
etéfin⁹ kadié bundjalo, éte nabo, a taafi¹⁰
opstod han fra Graven, han gik i Luften, han sidder
Tje Aula Jongma a ndëa 'dyno,¹¹ le abá
Fader Herre Guds hans Haand høire, han skal
adje fjt ekko hung, na fe e he¹²
komme fra der eengang endnu, for at afgåere for
hacshloj¹² ke póhi.
levende og døde.

3. **Mj**

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1 Printed: "'uladéë".
2 Printed: "oblájo".
3 Printed: "giréhemo".
4 Printed: "Pontius Pilatus".
5 Printed: "Pontius Pilatus".
6 Printed: "fulle".
7 Printed: "etéfin".
8 Printed: "etéfin".
9 Printed: "etéfin".
10 Printed: "taafi".
11 Printed: "nindé 'dyno".
12 Printed: "hacshloj".
13 Printed: "Obáijo".

---

* Auladée, subst. første og øverste Befalinge-
  Haand. Obio,¹³ subst. en Nøe.

* Om Conceptionen har Accraeren intet Be-
  greb, følgelig intet Udtryk, saavidt mig er be-
  kiendt.

* verb. fe e he, at gøre noget for, at skiel-
  ne imellem, at fuldende.
2. **Mi 'tro' Jesus Christus,** *tse-nyonmo*
   I believe in Jesus Christ, God-father's
   bi kome, wo owulade, oblayoo Maria e-
   only son, our Lord, the Virgin Mary has
   fo le, edze 'helligaand';** a-
   born him, he comes from the Holy Ghost, one
   wo ehe dze la hemo [ye] Pontius Pilatus
   supplied(provided for) tortures of his body in Pontius Pilate's
   yino; assn le, egbo, afu le,
   time, he was crucified, he died, one buried him,
   eple ke 'ji ke ya abonsam awe. Gbë etë
   he went down to the residence of the devil. Three days [later]
   ete 'ji kedze gbôhî adzen, etee nwei, ete 'ji
   he rose up from the grave, rose into the sky, he sits
   [ye] tse owula nyonmo (e)nine dzurô, le ebaa-
   at the Lord God-father's higher hand,¹ he shall
   dze dzôi ekonn hû, ni efeè shë***
   come from there again one day, in order to decide on
   h(i)kâloj ke gbôhî.
   [the] living and [the] dead.

3. **Mi**

* Owulade, substantive, first and highest commanding officer/
  governor. oblayoo, substantive, a maid, virgin.
** Of this concept the Gâs have no notion, [and]
  consequently no expression, as far as is
  known to me.
*** The verb *feè shë*, to do something for, to distin-
  guish/discriminate between, to finish.

¹ The Gâ means literally: 'right hand'.
3. **Mi tro Helligaand**, *mi tro ake*

Jeg troer paa den Helligaand. Jeg troer, at **bdjommel** papal forre ame he o djin.

Mennesker gode helligholde deres Person i Verden pišb, ke o fe long, 'mi tro ake Jongmâ
ganske, naar du gør ilde, jeg troer at Gud

o a ke² o, mi tro ake bohi ba åteffin,
han vil eftergive dig, jeg troer at døde skal opståe,

**aboné blese fah** mocoh boch'dong.
saa og at Døden efter ikke nogen dør ikke aldeles.

* Om den Hellig Aand kan Accraeren ikke dæne noget Begreb. Jeg veed ikke at udtrykke
Ordet og har derfor beholdt det. Papal, adj. **plur. gode, redelige. Sørre** verb, at helligholde,
at være andeglig, at holde Andgts-øvelser.*

** aboné blese fah** &c. at efter Døden skal ingen døe mere.

---

**Fæder. Vor.**

Vå Tja, monéh o jäve⁵ nghoi, o dbei a
Vor Fader, som du er i Himmelen, dit Navn lad
tje.⁶ † O lummo jelé a ba vå 'tin,
sides. Dit Hervredsomme lad komme os iblant,

† Verb. etja, at være længde, at hædre, at
eværsere.

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¹ Printed: "bdjommei".
² Printed: "keh".
³ As this word is Ga, it should have been printed in roman, not in italic type.
⁴ Printed: "blesfah".
⁵ Printed: "jáv e".
⁶ Printed: "tie".
3. **Mi 'tro' 'helligaand',** mi 'tro' ake
I believe in the Holy Ghost. I believe that
gbomei kpakpa soleo amche ye dzen
good people keep holy/sanctify their persons in all the world,
pise [fẹ] ke ofe 'efon, mi 'tro' ake nyoomo
when you do bad, I believe that God,
shaake bo, mi 'tro' ak gbohī baate ści,
he will pardon you; I believe that the dead shall arise,
agbene gbea fẹ etc. moko gbo dopp,
and then that after death nobody shall die, not absolutely.

* Of the Holy Ghost the Ga are not able to form
any idea. I do not know how to express
the word and have therefore retained it. kpakpa, adjective,
plural: good, honest. sole, verb, to keep holy,
to be devout, to hold devotional exercises.

** agbene gbea fẹ etc. that after death nobody shall
die any more.

**

Our Father [The Lord's Prayer]

Wo tay, moni oyoo nwei, ogbe a-
Our Father, you who are in heaven, your name let
tay.† Olumayal aba woten,
be honoured. Your government let come among us,

† The verb tay, to be/last long, to honour, to
venerate.

1 The Ga means literally: 'their bodies, themselves'.
nonne o fino a fe nboir ke sipong.

Det du behager lad ske i Himlen og Jorden.

Ha va monna abullo nonne åfsia2 vå

Giv os i Dag Brød det som jan være nok for

na.** Æg vå åfsia1 femm3 oke4 vå. tank9 os. Tag vore onde Gierninger tilgiv os, ligesom

vå nå åfsiale5 vå keh meiklokke, ha

vi tage det Onde og eftergive andre, ikke

ha mokko lakka vå. diem6 åfsia7 vå

lad nogen forføre os. Borttag det Onde fra

vå ha. Bo ji lummo. Bo f6o nå8***
vor Person. Du er Herren, du skaber Ting.

Bo ji onu9 biana ke námno.

Du er hedret nu og stedse.


** åfsia2 vå na, verb. åfsia3 na, at være tilstræk-

kelig for Munden. Det skiller ad og sætter

Personen imellem.

æst åfsja10 femm, sidste er Participium af

verb. f6h, at gøre.

*** Har Magt at gøre alt.
That which pleases you let happen in heaven and on earth.

Give us for [the] day [the] bread that will be sufficient for our

Take our evil deeds, forgive us, just as we take the evil and forgive others, do not let anyone lead us astray. Remove the evil from our person. You are the Lord, you create [all] things.

You are exalted now and forever.

** sa/e wo naa, verb, e/e [en]naa, to be sufficient for the mouth. This is separated, and the person placed in the middle.

*** sa/e faamo, the last [word, i.e.] is the participle of the verb fee, to do/make.

**** Has power to do/make everything.