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A METHOD FOR PREPARING TEXTS FOR DIACHRONIC COMPARISON

WITH AN EXAMPLE — A CRITICAL EDITION OF C. SCHÖNNING’S GIA 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 emendations 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 con-
temporary 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 spel-
ling, will generally permit the eventual identification of the morpho-
mes 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 com-
pletely satisfactory reconstruction. Evidence from older word-lists —
as these are cumulatively integrated into my Ga Dictionary Project fil-
es — 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 i-
diosyncratic still, because of our deliberate retention of the morpho-
logical 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 in-
ventories (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, suggest-
ing 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 compi-
ler 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 Rask'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 Sealand (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 Sealand, 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]

Det ti Bud,
det apostoliske Symbolum
og
Fader Vor,
oversatte
i det Accraiske Sprog,
an
C. Schjønning,¹
[Capitaine.²]

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 Symbolum¹ 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 aqj. cognoscitur'.
1. O ka fno Jongma klokkko aka mi 'komé.
   Du ikke tien Gud en anden end mig allene.
   'komé pro škomé.

2. O ka tia' Aula-Jongma 'dbié' o fá:
   Du ikke forkaste Herren Guds Befaling foragtelig:
   Jongma₄ ngāh₃ nokko e khê monah e
   Gud tager ikke noget, eftergiver ikke den som
   tia₄ o dbiele₅ o fá.
   foragter hans Befaling.
   Verb. tia₄ o fá, at kaste fra sig, at ringeagte,
   at begegne med Ligejldighed. Det skilles
   ad saaledes at Substantivet sættes i Midten,
   s.s. tia₄ talle o fá J: Kast Stenen fra dig.

3. Dbi 'diyno' o hihe ahno o ba djalle₁.
   Dage højtidelige din Hu lad staae til, at du dyrker.
   diyno₁² god, højtidelig, højre. Ahno, imperativ
   af verb. hihe, at sidde. Hihe, Ansigt, For-
   siden af en Ting, Sind, Agtbaagivenhed.

4. O hihe a bo o Tia₃₄ km o
   Dit Aaayn lad nødsæaes for din Fader og din
   nhie;

---

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

1. O ka sumo nyombo krokoo' ake' mi 'kome.
   Do not serve another God but me alone.

2. O ka tse owula nyombo gbele ofo:
   Do not reject the Lord God's command contemptuously:
   nyombo enoo noko ake he moni e-
   God does not let pass anything, does not pardon those who
   tse egbele ofo.
   treat with contempt his command.
   The verb tse ef, 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. tse te le ofo, or: throw the stone away.

3. Gb1 dzuro ohie ahi no [ni] oba dza le:
   On solemn days/festival days let your mind be set on worshipping.
   edzuro: good, solemn, right (hand). ahi no, imperative
   of the verb hii fo, to be (at). hifi, face, front
   (-side) of a thing; mind, attention.

4. Ohie abu otse ke o-
   Dye
   Let your countenance be cast down before your father and your
   mother
nhje; fi o Fehle,1 o ba áje fsjyne,
Móder; dersom du gjør det, du vil nyde godt,
o ba ájë2 tuhtu e djin.3
du vil v. skal eldes længe i Verden.

O hihe a be! &c. Hav Undsælse for Erbs-
dighed for,4 saaledes at du nedalser Øynene i
dine Forældres Nærværelse.

Verb. ájë,5 at vare længe, gielser om levende
og døde Ting.

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

6. O ka fe adjamång.
Du ikke var løseagtig 6 hoeragtig.

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

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

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

dasafó er både subst. 1 adjektiv.

9. O ka tåo moklokko ve8 [.]
Du ikke efterstræbe en andens Hus.

tåo, verb. at ønske med Heftighed, at hige ef-
ter. Moklokko, pro mokko klokko, nogen
anden. Ve,9 subst. 5; Hus og Hjem, huuslig
Eyendom, Børn, Slaver &c. inclusive.

10. O ka tåo moklokko ngå.10 ngåong.11
Du ikke forlang en andens Kone, hans Slave-


1 Printed: "fehle".
2 Printed: "ájë".
3 Printed: "djim".
4 Printed: "for Erbs-/dighed", with second "for" omitted.
5 Printed: "ájë".
6 Printed: "e." [ = eller,'or']; in conformity with other instan-
ces it ought to have been printed in Roman type.
7 Printed: "diu".
nye; /i [ke] ofee lc, obaaye edzuro, mother; if you do that, you will receive good, obaaye tuutu ye dzen.: you will, or shall, live long in the world.

okize abu 8c. 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. Okatao moko roko we.
Do not strive after another's house.

tao, verb, to desire intensely, to crave for. moko roko, for moko kroko, somebody else. we, substantive: house and home, domestic property, children, slaves, etc. included.

10. Okatao moko roko na, enyan-nuu
Do not desire/demand another's wife, his slave-

8 Printed: "veh".
9 Printed: "Veh".
10 Printed: "ngâ e".
11 Printed: "ngionsa".
12 Correction; printed: "du".
13 Correction for conformity; cf. 1 and 4 on the following page; printed: "nuku".
nuhn,\textsuperscript{1} e ngiong-jo,\textsuperscript{2} e kinå, e  
Mand, hans Slave-Qvinde, hans Oxe, hans  
toh, aloh mokko nå, nå fei\textsuperscript{3} nå.  
Faar, eller nogens noget, noget ethvert noget.  

Nuhn,\textsuperscript{4} substant. en Mand, ethvert masculinum.  
Jo, en Qvinde, ethvert feminin.\textsuperscript{5}  
NB. Accraeren kiender ikke et Asen, Mange-
len er substitueret med toh, et Faar.  

\begin{center}
\textbf{Det apostoliske Symbolum.}
\end{center}

1. \textit{Ni tro Tje Jongmå, monsh fe}  
Jeg troer paa Fader Gud, han som skabte  
nghoi ke tipong-rå.\textsuperscript{6}  
Himmel og Jordens Støv.  

Troer er ikke Accraisk men Dansk, som iblandt de ellerfleste Danske Negre er adopteret og bruges i samme Meening som de Danske tager det. Accra-Sproget har intet Ord, som udtrykker Troer eller troer. Verbum \textit{dialle}\textsuperscript{7} betyder: ærere, dyrker, venererer, men bliver det Meeningen her? Nghoi, subst. Himme-
len, enhver Ting, som er meget hø, Torden, Luften.  

\textsuperscript{1} Printed: "nuku"; this correction should also apply to the last word on the preceding page.  
\textsuperscript{2} Printed: "ngiong-jo".  
\textsuperscript{3} Printed: "fei".  
\textsuperscript{4} Printed: "Nuhn"; cf.\textsuperscript{1} above.  
\textsuperscript{5} Printed: "fememin.".  
\textsuperscript{6} Printed: "tipong-rå".  
\textsuperscript{7} Printed: "dialle".
nuu, anyon-yoo, atsina, a-
man, his slave-woman, his ox, his
Too, aloo moko no, nofoeno.
sheep, or anything of [belonging to] anybody, something all something
nuu, substantive, a man, anything masculine.
yoo, a woman, anything feminine.
W.B. Ga's do not know the ass, the lack
of which is substituted for by Too, a sheep [/goat].

The Apostolic Symbolum [i.e. Apostle's Creed].

1. Mi 'tro' [now: mibee miyso] tse-nyonng, moni fee
I believe in God-Father, (him) who created
nwei ke fikpon-su.
heaven and the dust of the earth.

Tro (tro) is not Ga, 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 Ga language has no word which
expresses belief or believe. The verb dza le
signifies esteem, worship, venerate, but does
that meaning arise here? nwei, substantive, hea-
ven, anything which is very high, thunder,
sky.

2. Mi

1 An absurdly literal translation of the Ga idiomatic construct-
ion which means 'anything/everything'.

2 "Tafi" (now: tedzi) 'donkey' is on record as early as 1764 in
Christian Protten's grammar, page [27], cf. my edition ('Ga Dic-
tionary Project: Documents & Studies' no. 1, London: Lusac 1971,
page 21. Schjønning was evidently misinformed.

3 That is: Osu (or Christiansborg).
2. **Ml tro Jefua Chrietus, a Tjé Jongma.**

Jeg troer paa Jesus Christus, Fader Guds

blie ’kom, vo ’uladé, 1 oblejo 2 Marie 3

Sen eeneste, vor Herre, Jomfru Maria hun

følle, e die 3 Helligaand 4 e

fødte ham, han kommer fra den Helligaand, man

vøj o he gjerēhemo 5 Pontiūs Pilatuš 6

tilførte hans Krop Pindler i Pontiī Pilati 6

jinno, e fingle, e bē, e fulle, 7

Tid; han blev korafæstet, han døde, man begrov ham,

e plikkesi kāja abonsam 8 e veh, dhī otte

han nedsteg til Døvelenes Boelig. Dage tre

etēfin 9 kadiē bündja, ëte ubo, e tasi 10

osted han fra Graven, han gik i Luften, han sidder

Tjé Aula Jongma o nindo ’djyno, 11 le aba

Fader Herre Guds hans Haand høre, han skal

adje iet okko hung, ne fe o ha 11

komme fra der eengang endnu, for at afgøre for

hecshloj 12 ke bōhi.

levende og døde.

5. **Ml**

*a Auladēe, subst. første og øverste Befalings-

Hånd. Oblajo, 13 subst. en Høe.

** Om Conceptionen har Accraeren intet Be-

greb, følgelig intet Udtryk, saavidt mig er be-

kiendt.

*** verb. fe o ha, at giøre noget for, at skiel-

ne imellem, at fuldende.

---

1 Printed: "'uladēe".
2 Printed: "oblejo".
3 Printed: "girēhemo".
4 Printed: "Pontius Pilatus".
5 Printed: "Pontius Pilatus".
6 Printed: "fulle".
7 Printed: "oblajo".
8 Printed: "abonvām".
9 Printed: "etēfin".
10 Printed: "tasi".
11 Printed: "nindo 'djyno".
12 Printed: "hecshloj".
13 Printed: "Oblajo".
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
vino; assen le, egbo, afu le,
time, he was crucified, he died, one buried him,
eple ke 'i ke ya abonsam awe. Gbî etë
he went down to the residence of the devil. Three days [later]
ete 'i ke dze gbohî adzen, etse nwe, ete fi
he rose up from the grave, rose into the sky, he sits
[ye] tse owula nyonmo (e)nine dzurô, le ebah-
at the Lord God-father's higher hand,¹ he shall
dze dzel ekonn hu, ni efe eha***
come from there again one day, in order to decide on
h(i)kalol ke gbohî.
[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 'ee eha, 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 e djin
Mennesker gode helligholde deres Person i Verden
pläh, ke o fe fong, *mi tro ake Jongmà* ganske, naar du gør ilde, jeg troer at Gud
o a ke² o, *mi tro ake boli ba ásteftin,*
han vil eftergive dig, jeg troer at Døde skal opståe,
aboné blef sák** mokko bòch' dong.
saa og at Døden efter ikke nogen døer ikke aldeles.

---


** aboné blef sák** &c. at efter Døden skal ingen døer mere.

---

**Fader. Vor.**

Vå Tia, monanh o jâve nghoi, o dbai a
Vor Fader, som du er i Himmelen, dit Navn lad
*tia.* † O lummo jèle a ba vå 'tin,
slades. Dit Herredømme lad komme os iblant,
nonne

† Verb. etje, at være længe, at hædre, at venerere.

---

1 Printed: "bdjommel".
2 Printed: "keh".
3 As this word is Gà, it should have been printed in roman, not in italic type.
4 Printed: "blesfàh", an obvious misprint.
5 Printed: "jáv a".
6 Printed: "tie".
3. Mi 'tro' 'helligaand',* mi 'tro' ake
I believe in the Holy Ghost. I believe that

*aomel kpakpal solee anohe ve dzen
good people keep holy/sanctify their persons in all the world,

*pian [fër] ke ofee efon, mi 'tro' ake nyonmo
when you do bad, I believe that God,

*aakok bo, mi 'tro' ak gbokhi baate fi,
he will pardon you; I believe that the dead shall arise,

*agbene ghee fët** moko gbóo donn.
and then that after death nobody shall die, not absolutely.

*a 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. kpakpal, adjective,
plural: good, honest, sole, verb, to keep holy,
to be devout, to hold devotional exercises.
**agbene ghee fët etc. that after death nobody shall
die any more.

Our Father (The Lord's Prayer)

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

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

1 The Ga means literally: 'their bodies, themselves'.

nonne o fino a fe ngoai ke sipong.
Det du behager lad sko i Himlen⁵ og Jorden.
Ha va monne abullo nonne ësje⁵ vå
civ os i Dag Brød det som jan være nok for
na,°° Ugå vå ësje⁵ femma⁶ okeh vå, tanke
os. Tag vore onde Gierninger tilgiv os, ligesom
va ësiale⁶ vå keh mekrokken, ha
tage det onde og eftergive andre, ikke
ha mokko lakka vå. diem⁺⁺ ësja⁷ o
lad nogen forføre os. Borttag det onde fra
va ha. Bo ji lummo. Bo føo nাম⁸
vor Person. Du er Herren, du skaber Ting.
Bo ji onupa' dian ke nahoo.
Du er hedret nu og stedse.

°° ësja⁵ vå na, verb. ësja⁹ na, at være tilstræk-
kkelig for Munden. Det skilles ad og sætter
Personen imellem.
na ësja⁵ femma, sidste er Participium af
verb. føo, at gøre.
⁺⁺⁺⁺ Har Magt at gøre alt.
nani osumoo afeeo [ye] nuui ke fikpan.
That which pleases you let happen in heaven and on earth.
Hä wo nee re aboloo nani a/e wo
give us for [the] day [the] bread that will be sufficient for our
naa,** joo wo e/afeemo*** oke wo, tææk
mouth. Take our evil deeds, forgive us, just us
wono e/ai le woken mekrokokom, kaa
we take the evil and forgive others, do not
hā moko leka wo. Dziemo e/ai ye
let anyone lead us astray. Remove the evil from
wo he. Bo dei lumu, bo ofeo no.****
your person. You are the Lord, you create [all] things.
Bo dei onakpa bian ka naa
You are exalted now and forever.

** a/e wo naa, verb, e/e [e]naa, to be sufficient
   for the mouth. This is separated, and the person
   placed in the middle.
*** e/a feemo, the last [word, i.e.] is the participle of
   the verb feeo, to do/make.
**** Has power to do/make everything.