

The Portuguese Language on the Gold Coast, 1471-1807: Addenda¹

M. E. Kropp Dakubu

Since the paper referred to in the title went to press, a few omissions have come to light. Quite possibly there are more, but in the meantime it seems useful to bring the record up to date, especially since two of the four items are rather unexpected.

comer² Port. ‘eat’; Ga *kómi* ‘kenkey’. This may seem surprising, since this food is quintessentially Ga, but note that the Ga word occurs in no other language. The older Ga-Dangme term for this food seems to be *otimi*. The word was presumably adapted from the Portuguese verb in the context ‘something to eat’.

escamotear Port. ‘filch, steal, get by tricks’; Gold Coast (and other) English *kómɔt* ‘get, remove, extract, by force or by stealth’, eg. *the wind kómɔt my zingli* ‘the wind tore off my roofing sheets’. English ‘come out’ is commonly assumed to be the source, but the Portuguese verb seems a better semantic and discursive fit. At one time a version of the word seems to have been current in at least some varieties of British English, for in the mid 19th century Thackeray has an English lady, supposedly of a cosmopolitan 18th century background, write, “...my niece Maria Esmond hath escamote a promise [of marriage] from Harry.” (Thackeray 1859, Chapter XLI; underline mine.)

mercador Port. ‘merchant’. This word was cited in the article, but only European documentary sources were mentioned. It is the most likely source of Twi *mánkrádò*, Ga *mánkráɔ̀*, the title of a town official.

saber Port. ‘know’. It was noted in the earlier paper that this word is still used in coast English as *sabi*, ‘know’. It also occurs as the base of two Ga nouns, *sàbé* ‘inquisitiveness’ and *sàbéɔ̀* ‘inquisitive person’ (Dakubu 2009).

¹ See Dakubu (2012).

² I am grateful to Karen Akiwumi Tanoh for drawing this item to my attention.

References

- Dakubu, M. E. Kropp, 2012. The Portuguese language on the Gold Coast, 1471-1807, *Ghana Journal of Linguistics* 1.1: 15-34.
- Dakubu, M. E. Kropp, ed., 2009. *Ga-English Dictionary with English-Ga Index*. Accra: Black Mask Ltd.
- Thackeray, William Makepeace, 1859. *The Virginians, a tale of the last century*. London.