

# Digital approaches to the historiography of missionary linguistics: Contextualizing French missionary analyses of African languages, c. 1850-1920

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# Digital approaches to the historiography of missionary linguistics

Contextualizing French missionary analyses of African languages, c. 1850–1920

Doyle Calhoun

Linguistics, French

Advisor: Margaret Thomas

## Overview and objectives

What is missionary linguistics and why does it matter?

Why go digital?



## Research Questions

**Q:** What is involved in managing and managing a corpus of older linguistic texts?

**Q:** How do the object of study and the methodologies employed participate in a process of mutual shaping?

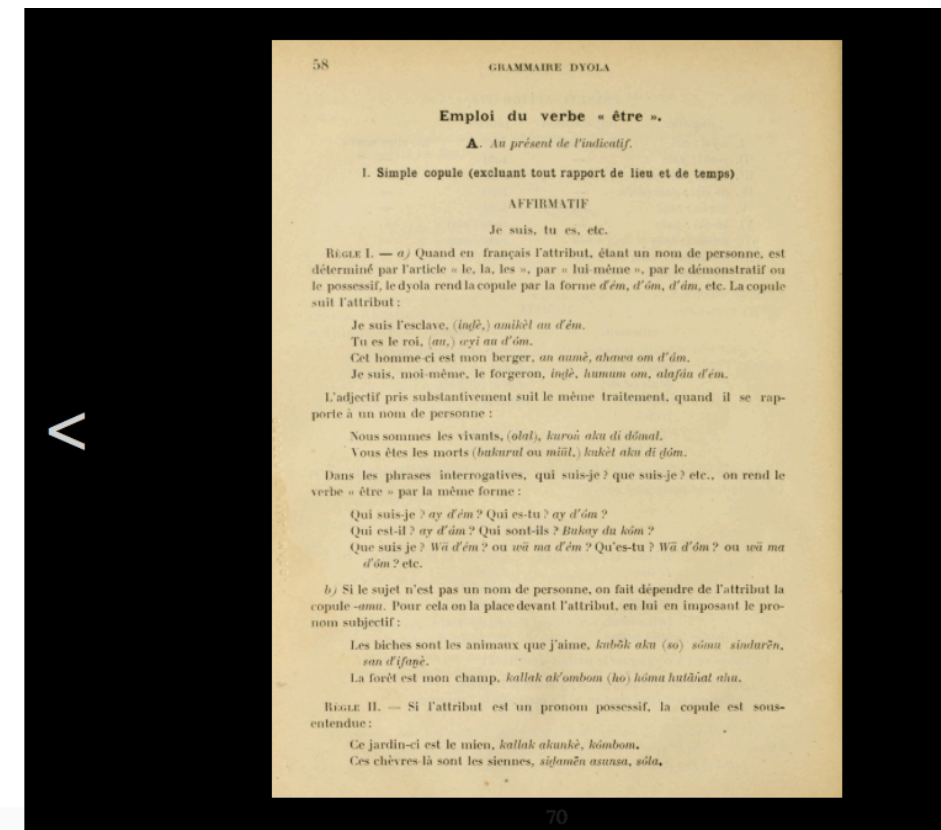
**Q:** What are the advantage/disadvantages of presenting older linguistic documents digitally?

## Building a corpus: materials and methodology

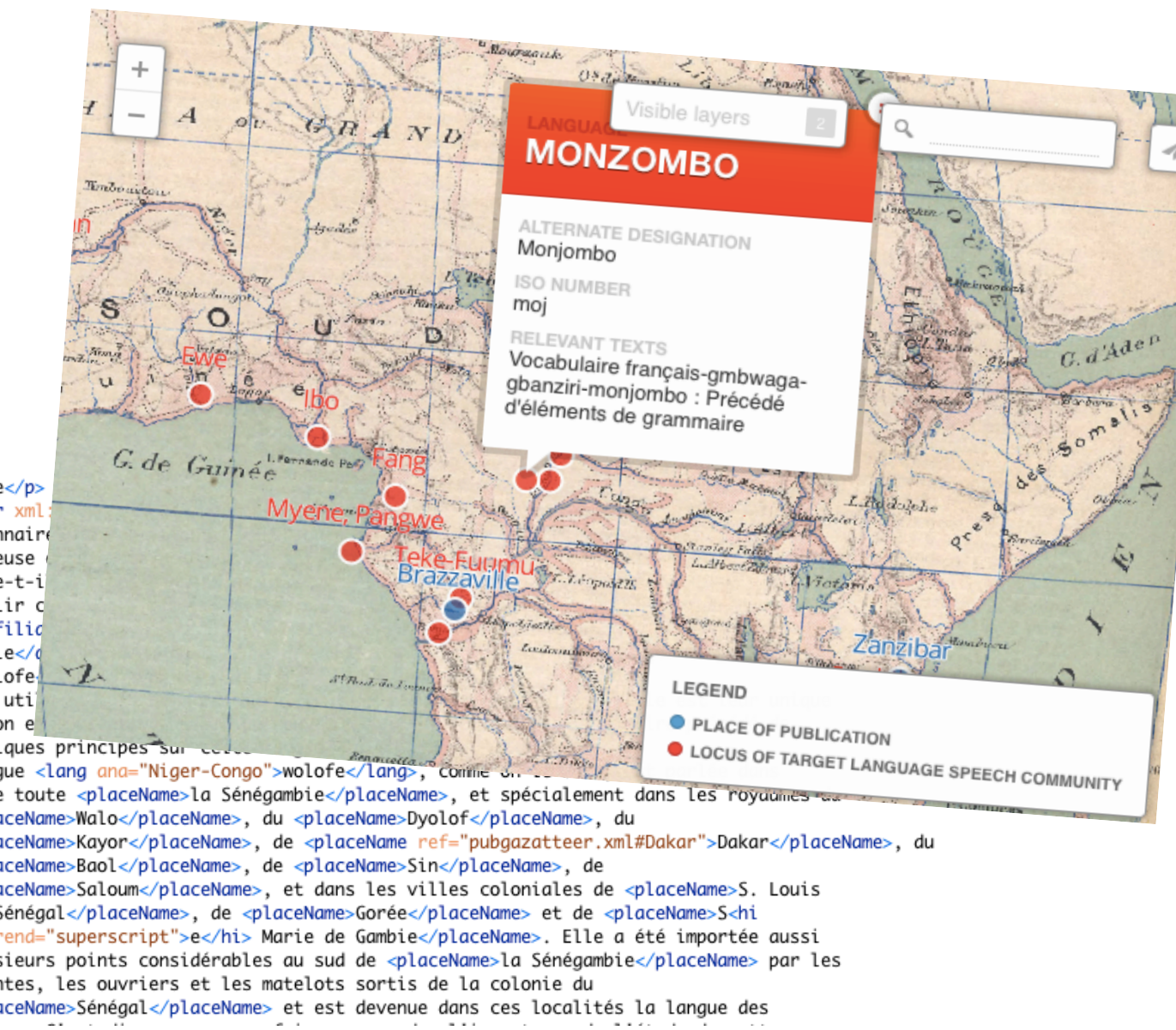
- Delimitation of the corpus
- Assembling *metadata*
  - ✓ Bibliographic
  - ✓ Ethnolinguistic
- Conservation and digitization



Dictionnaire Français-Dyola et Dyola-Français: précédé d'un essai de grammaire  
É. Wintz  
Titre  
Préface (Edouard Wintz, auteur)  
Préface (Charles Sacleux)  
Alphabet +  
Essai de Grammaire Dyola +  
Nom ou substantif +  
Article +  
Adjectif +  
Verbe +  
De la conjugaison +  
Verbe (affirmatif et négatif)  
Verbe être +  
Emploi du verbe "être".  
A. Au présent de l'indicatif +  
B. À l'imparfait de l'indicatif  
Négatif  
C. "Être" en dehors du présent et de l'imparfait de l'indicatif  
Adverbe  
I. Adverbes indépendants



- Corpus visualization
- Presentation, publicity & outreach



## Language, mission, and Africa

Contextualizing French missionary linguistic analyses of African languages, c. 1850–1920

Introduction

Corpus

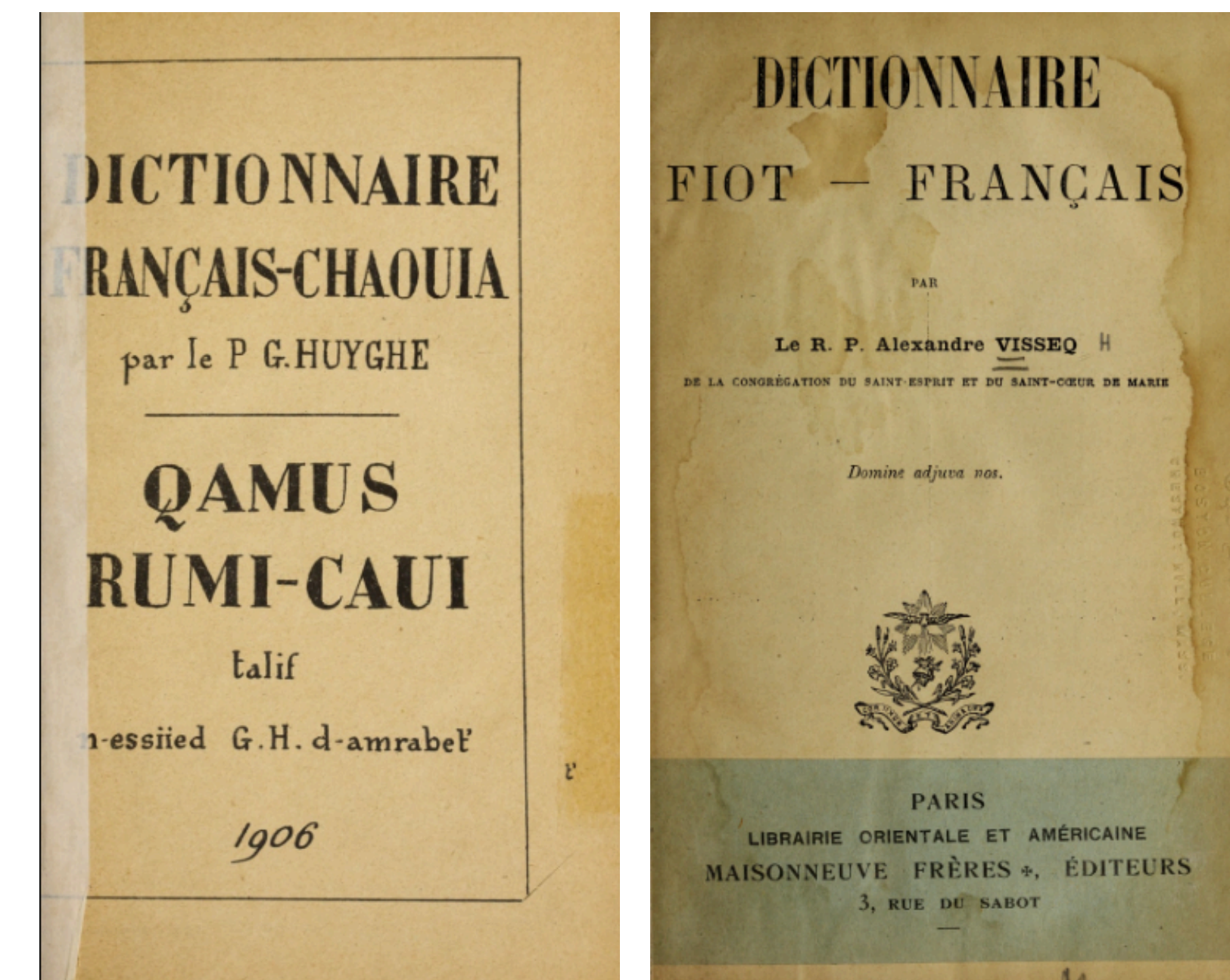
## Preliminary Findings

- Missionaries' contributions to language study are of a deeply **mixed** and **complex** nature: At times, the texts reveal their authors' deep appreciation for a language or speech community; at other times, they are miniature arenas of colonial and post-colonial processes of subordination exploitation, and (mis-)representation.
- Missionary dictionaries/grammars participate in a broader textual tradition, insofar as they inflect the rhetorical strategies attested in literary *paratexts* (Genette 1987).
- Digital corpora need to prioritize *portability*, *compatibility*, and *longevity*, over considerations like presentation and user-interaction (Bird & Simons 2003).
- Representations of data always encode a particular *point-of-view*:

## Technical infrastructure

- *Applications*: Ruby on Rails, JavaScript
- *Languages*: HTML, CSS, Markdown, XML (TEI)
- *Theme*: Helios HTML5up
- *Additional software*: CartoDB

## Documenting indigenous languages



## Acknowledgments

### Project Team

Primary Investigator: Doyle Calhoun

Project Manager: Anna Kijas

Web Developer: Benjamin Florin

Faculty Advisor: Margaret Thomas (Department of Linguistics)

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