ANIMACY IN NKAMI

Krobea Rogers Asante and *George Akanlig-Pare*[1]

Abstract

Drawing from a large corpus of synchronic natural data, this paper provides a detailed descriptive account of animacy distinctions in Nkami, an endangered Ghanaian language, spoken in the Afram Plains of Ghana. It demonstrates the remarkable linguistic resources that speakers employ to distinguish animates from inanimates, to a large extent, and humans from non-humans, to a lesser extent. The phenomenon is ubiquitous in forms and behaviours of pronouns, demonstratives, nominal affixes, nominal modifiers, dispositional verbs in basic locative constructions, inter alia. Some cases of animacy neutralization are also discussed.

Key words: animacy, nominal affixes, pronouns, dispositional verbs, neutralization.

1. Introduction[2]

This paper attempts to provide a comprehensive description of animacy distinctions in Nkami. Animacy distinction is one of the most characteristic features of Nkami, and we believe of other Kwa languages of Ghana, particularly those of the Tano branch (Williamson and Blench 2000), which have not been given the needed attention. While almost every linguist who has discussed Akan pronouns talks about animacy distinctions in Akan (cf. Christaller 1875, Stewart 1963, Boadi 1976, Saah 1992, 1995; Osam 1994, 1996), perhaps one of the most comprehensive and systematic assays is Osam (1996). Osam (1996) presents evidence from the forms of pronouns and nominal affixes to demonstrate how Akan speakers distinguish between animate and inanimate entities. On the basis of the linguistic closeness of the two languages, Osam's account forms a good reference point for our discussion and it is severally referred to where necessary. Howbeit, this paper is not meant to be a comparison between Nkami and Akan; neither does it seek the provenance of the

structures/forms of Nkami, though we acknowledge that, looking at some of the striking lexical/structural similarities between the two langauges, as would be observed in this paper, any future work in those directions may be necessary to ascertain how much of the similarites shared by the two languages are cognates or result from diffusion.[3]

The paper comprehensively enumerates and systematically canvasses linguistic resources that Nkami speakers employ to distinguish humans from non-humans and animates from inanimates. It would be evident that these distinctions are particularly overwhelming in forms and behaviours of pronouns, demonstratives, nominal affixes, nominal modifiers, and some dispositional verbs in basic locative constructions (BLCs). Domains in the language where some of the animacy distinctions have been neutralized are also canvassed. Due to the endangered nature of Nkami, as we observe in the ensuing section, our primary purpose in this paper is aimed at descriptive adequacy (cf. Dixon 1997, 2010). Portions of the data are taken from an on-going PhD dissertation which is part of a larger documentation project on Nkami. The database includes spontaneous spoken and elicited texts collected from about hundred speakers of varied backgrounds in the field. Annotation and verification of media data and texts were done in conjunction with a team of two adult Nkami speakers and several other language consultants.[4]

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Sections three and four respectively discuss the forms, nature and behaviours of linguistic resources that Nkami speakers employ to distinguish between humans and non-humans, and animates and inanimates. Section five examines data from three domains where animate-inanimate distinctions have been neutralized, while section six provides a summary of the entire piece. Since Nkami is a little-known endangered language, the ensuing section briefly introduces the background of the language and people.

2. Nkami Language and People

The name 'Nkami' refers to both a group of people and an endangered language spoken by about four hundred people residing in Amankwa, a resettlement community, which is a few kilometres away from the western shore of the Volta Lake in the North Afram Plains constituency of Ghana. There is however a greater number of **Nkamifʊɔ** 'Nkamis' living outside the language region. Currently, the majority of Nkami children do not acquire Nkami as their first language; they first acquire Akan and

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[3] Such an enterprise would require not only an adequate knowledge of Nkami and Akan, but also of other Guang and Tano languages in general, and probably Ewe, another dominant language in the Nkami speaking community.

[4] The first author is indebted to my team members, Enoch Akuamoah and Kwaku Ketewa, and the entire people of Nkami for their warm reception and cooperation during the period in the field.

sometimes Ewe before they acquire Nkami.[5]

The orthography being used in this article conforms to the orthography developed recently for the Nkami language project, and is one of the efforts to present the language to the linguistic world. Until the first author started documenting Nkami very recently, linguists including foremost Ghanaian language documenters did not know the name 'Nkami'.[6] There is enough linguistic evidence that supports the fact that Nkami should be placed in the South branch of the Guang languages group, a sub-family of the Kwa branch of the Niger-Congo phylum (Asante, in preparation). Apart from the language or more probably before it, the greatest thing that unites the Nkami people is the institution of Afram.[7] Presently, it is only through the worship and matters related to the Afram deity that the Nkami language is always used as the only medium of communication.

Linguistically, Nkami shares with neighbouring languages most of the areal-typological linguistic features. Like other South-Guang, but unlike North-Guang languages,[8] Nkami has both phonemic oral and nasal vowels. Consonants are produced at seven different places of articulation, and it has a phonemic voiceless double-articulated stop /kp/, unlike most Guang languages which have the voiced counterpart /gb/ too. It has two basic level tones (high and low) and manifests both lexical and grammatical functions of tone. It has a dominant CV syllable structure with other minor types: V, CVC and VC (where final C is a nasal or /w/) in descending frequency. It shows evidence of three major vowel harmonic processes, ATR, labial, and height, where the first is the dominant and the last two are epiphenomenal. Typical of most Guang languages (cf. Casali 2002, 2008), [+ATR] is the dominant feature, manifesting archetypical regressive assimilation within and across word boundaries. Words belonging to the well-known major word classes and several others such as adpositions, ideophones, interjections, routines and particles are all available in the language. It has no synchronic viable noun class system; one can at best talk about remnants of it. Like in other Kwa languages (cf. Dakubu 1988), affixation, reduplication and compounding are the dominant morphological processes, with verb features expressed by prefixes and verbal particles. The position of nominal modifiers, both word-level and clause-level, is post-nominal. Coding of 'predicative' properties is prototypically expressed through possessive/locative constructions (and

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[5] Notwithstanding, almost all adult Nkamis in Amankwa speak at least a little Nkami.

[6]The first author acknowledges the help of Mr. and Mrs. Peacock and the Nkonya Language Committee members for introducing Nkami to him.

[7] Afram is the name of a river and a powerful deity in Ghana. It is worshipped in many parts of Ghana but the head of Afram, Aframhemaa 'wife of Afram', comes from Nkami.

[8] We use South-Guang to refer to languages belonging to the Southern branch (e.g. Awutu, Efutu, Anum (Gwa), and North-Guang to refer to those belonging to the Northern branch (e.g. Gonja, Nawuri, Chumburung, Krachi) of the Guang family.

less via adjectives, verbs and nouns), while 'attributive' properties are mainly expressed through relative clause constructions. It has dominant AVO and SV clause types, and it is basically isolating with some agglutinating and a handful of fusional tendencies. It shows rich and archetypical cases of constructions involving multi-verbs and clause combinations such as serial verb, relative clause, complement clause and adverbial clause constructions. For instance, it manifests the very rare feature of relative clause constructions, known to occur in a handful of languages (probably less than ten universally and mainly Kwa languages), where the resumptive pronoun retention strategy is employed to obligatorily state relativized NPs in subject function within the relative clause.

3. Animate-Inanimate Distinctions

This section focuses on areas in the grammar where animate and inanimate distinctions are made. It is divided into two broad parts: the first relates to nouns and related items and the second is on dispositional verbs in basic locative constructions.

3.1 Nouns and Related Items

3.1.1 Subject pronoun

Nkami has a subject pronominal system that makes 1st, 2nd and 3rd person distinctions. Number distinction is also made for all persons. In (1) is a list of the subject pronouns in the language.[9]

(1)   Subject Pronouns

Person	Singular		Plural	
1st	mɪ	'I'	anɪ	'we'
2nd	wʊ	'you'	mmɪ	'you'
3rd animate	ɔ-	'she/he'	bɛ	'they'
3rd inanimate	ɛ-	'it'	ɛ-	'they'

As we observe in (1), Nkami distinguishes between animates and inanimates based on the forms of the third person subject pronouns. Thus, whenever a pronoun substitutes for a singular animate noun in subject slot of a clause, the pronominal form ɔ- 'she/he/ it' is employed, while ɛ- 'it' replaces inanimate referents. This is exemplified in (2-3).

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[9] The following abbreviations are used: AGR = agreement, ANM = animate, ATR = advanced tongue root, DEF = definite article, DDD = distal demonstrative determiner, DDP = distal demonstrative pronoun, DEM = demonstrative, FOC = focus, FUT = future, HAB = habitual, IDENT = identity, INANM = inanimate, INDEF = indefinite, INTJ = interjection, NEG = negation, NOML = nominalizer, OBJ = object, PDD = proximal demonstrative determiner, PDP = proximal demonstrative pronoun, PDP = proximate distal prefix, PST = past, PRF = perfect, PL = plural, POSS = possessive, PRS = present, PROG = progressive, REL = relative marker, SG = singular subject.

(2) a. ɔkplɪ   amʊ   bɛ-ba.   →   b. ɔ-bɛ-ba.
      dog DET   FUT-come   3SG.ANM-FUT-come
      'The dog will come.'   'It will come.'

(3) a. ɲaw   amʊ   bɛ-ba.   →   b. ɛ-bɛ-ba.
      rain   DET   FUT-come   3SG.INANM-FUT-come
      'The rain will come/it will rain.'   'It will rain/come.'

Thus, in (2b) ɔ- is used to replace the subject ɔkplɪ 'dog' in subject position because *dog* is animate, while ɛ- replaces ɲaw 'rain' in (3b) because *rain* is inanimate. Note that, out of context, the instigator of the event in (2b) can only refer to an animate entity while that of (3b) can only refer to an inanimate entity.

3.1.2   *Lack of number distinction*

Another animacy contrast that can be made about the personal subject pronominal system relates to number distinction of the third person. As shown in (1), whereas the third person animate subject pronoun has distinct forms ɔ- and bɛ- for singular and plural contrasts respectively, the inanimate counterpart has one form ɛ- for both singular and plural functions. Consider (3-4).

(4) a. **Oyebi   amʊ**   bɛ-dɪ.   →   b. ɔ-bɛ-dɪ.
      child   DET   FUT-sleep   3SG.ANM-FUT-sleep
      'The child will sleep.'   'He will sleep.'

(5) a. **ɲ-ɲebi   amʊ**   bɛ-dɪ.   →   b. bɛ-bɛ-dɪ.
      PL-child   DET   FUT-sleep   3PL.ANM-FUT-sleep
      'The children will sleep.'   'They will sleep.'

Thus, because the subject position of (4a) is occupied by a singular animate noun **oyebi** 'child', it is replaced with the singular animate pronoun ɔ-. On the other hand, the plural subject animate pronoun bɛ- substitutes for **ɲɲebi** 'children' in (5) because *children* is a plural animate noun. Conversely, in (6-7) the same form ɛ- is employed to supplant both the singular and plural subject nouns **oyi** 'tree' and **ɲɲi** 'trees' because *tree(s)* is inanimate.

(6) a. **Oyi amʊ**   bɛ-duidui.   →   b. ɛ-bɛ-duidui.[10]
      tree DET   FUT-burn   3SG.INANM-FUT-burn
      'The tree will burn.'   'It will burn.'

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[10] As we mentioned earlier, Nkami exhibits ATR harmony. As a result, there are two sets of vowels, [+ATR] [**i, e, o, u**] and [-ATR] [**ɪ, ɛ, ɔ, ʊ**], based on tongue root position. Typically, only vowels of a set pattern together in a phonological word. The dominant [+ATR] feature may assimilate regressively to preceding [-ATR] vowel(s). So, for instance, **ɛ-bɛ-duidui** is expressed as [**ebeduidui**] in surface form. However, for the purposes of clarity and consistency, this and many other phonetic details that do not have direct bearing on the discussion are ignored.

(7) b. ɲ-ɲi   amʊ   bɛ-duidui.   →   b.   ɛ-bɛ-duidui.
      PL-tree   DET   FUT-burn   3SG.INANM-FUT-burn
      'The trees will burn.'   'They will burn.'

3.1.3   Concordant subject marking

Another related distinction concerns subject agreement marking in Nkami. The third person plural subject pronoun **bɛ-** may be prefixed to a verb stem in a clause that already has a full plural noun in subject position, as shown in (8).

(8) a.   Anansɪ   **mma**   obʊ   amʊ   yʊ
      spider   stick/be fixed   building   DET   self
      'There is spider is on the wall.'

   b.   Anansɪ   bebiree   **bɛ-mma**   obʊ   amʊ   yʊ
       spider   many   3PL-stick/be fixed   building   DET   self
       'There are many spiders on the wall.'

Thus, **bɛ-** can serve as a bound pronoun in (8b) and be attached to the predicate **mma** 'stick/be fixed' to co-reference the plural subject **anansɪ bebiree** 'many spiders'. It must be stated that this system of concordant subject marking is not obligatory in the language. Nonetheless, it is only acceptable if the plural subject NP is animate, as we have in (8b). In cases where the NP is inanimate, as (9b) illustrates, subject agreement marking is unacceptable.

(9) a.   Ntɪntaɪ   bebiree   **mma**   obu   amʊ   yʊ
      cobweb   many   stick/be fixed   building   DET   self
      'There are many cobwebs on the wall.'

   b.   *Ntɪntaɪ bebiree **bɛ-mma** obu amʊ yʊ

Thus, because the subject NP **ntɪntaɪ bebiree** 'many cobwebs' is inanimate, **bɛ-** cannot be attached to the predicate **mma** for cross-referencing. Notwithstanding, speakers may show number agreement between the plural subject and the verb by reduplicating the verb stem, as shown in (9c).

(9)c.   Ntɪntaɪ bebiree **mma.mma** obu amʊ yʊ
      'There are many cobwebs on the wall.'

All things being equal, the use of the reduplicated form **mmamma**, instead of the simple form of the verb **mma**, indicates a greater amount/larger size of cobwebs than vice versa.

3.1.4   Possessive pronouns

Nkami has three persons in possessive pronouns, just like its subject pronouns.

There are also singular-plural number distinctions except for the third person inanimate, as shown in (10).

(10) Possessive Pronouns

Person	Singular		Plural	
1st	mɪ	'my'	anɪ	'our'
2nd	w(ʊ)	'your'	mɪnɪ	'your'
3rd animate	m(ʊ)	'her/his '	amʊ	'their'
3rd inanimate	Ø	'its'	Ø	'their'

Just as Osam (1996) notes on Akan, animacy distinction on possessive pronouns is best demonstrated in a type of possessive phrases that has relational nouns such as ɛyʊ 'body/skin/self' elɔ 'inside' nkɪlelɔ 'side' asɪ 'under/beneath' ama 'back/behind', aɲesɪlɔ 'face/front' as possessed nouns. In such phrases, whenever the possessor noun is animate, an independent possessive pronoun mʊ is overtly juxtaposed after the possessor noun to mark possession; however, when the possessor noun is inanimate, mʊ does not appear. Consider the examples in (11).

(11) a. **Oyebi amʊ mʊ** yʊ lɛ-waa efĩ.
child DET POSS body PERF-wear dirty
'The child is dirty.'

b. **Adaka amʊ** Ø yʊ lɛ-waa efĩ.
box DET body PRF-wear dirty
'The box is dirty.'

Thus, because (11a) has an animate possessor noun **oyebi** 'child', possession is overtly marked by placing an independent possessive pronominal marker **mʊ** after it and before the possessed noun **yʊ** 'body'. However, because the possessor noun **adaka** 'box' (11b) is inanimate, possession is covertly marked, indicated by the null symbol "Ø". Moreover, the possessor NPs **oyebi** 'child' and **adaka** 'box' can be omitted and replaced with pronouns, as in (12a-b).

(12) a. **Mʊ** yʊ lɛ-waa efĩ.
POSS body PRF-wear dirty
'She/he is dirty.'

b. **Ø** ɛyʊ lɛ-waa efĩ.
body PRF-wear dirty
'It is dirty.'

Predictably, in (12a) because the antecedent possessor NP **oyebi** 'child' is animate, the possessive pronoun **mʊ** substitutes for it; however, in (12b) **adaka** 'box' attracts null representation because it is inanimate. In other words, out of context, the antecedent of **mʊ** in (12a) can only refer to an animate entity, but speakers will

understand the possessive construction in (12b) ɛyʊ lɛwaa efi 'it is dirty' to be talking about an inanimate referent because it does not have an overt possessive pronoun. The analysis here is quite different from that by Osam (1996) for similar data in Akan. Making an observation about the phenomenon, Osam (1996: 195) notes that "when the possessor noun is animate, a full pronoun is used; but when it is inanimate we only get a pronominal prefix which incidentally is of the same form as the subject pronominal prefix". He went on to provide the following set of examples (13-14) to demonstrate the difference.

(13) a. **Kofi** ho a-yɛ fi.　　→　　b. **Ne**　　ho a-yɛ fi.
　　　Kofi body PRF-be dirty　　　　　　3POSS
　　　'Kofi is dirty.'　　　　　　　　　'He is dirty.'

(14) a. **Adaka no** ho a-yɛ fi. →　　b. **ɛ**-ho　　a-yɛ fi.
　　　box DET body PRF-be dirty　　　　it-body
　　　'The box is dirty.'　　　　　　　'It is dirty.'

The difference between the two analyses lies in the treatment of the representation of the inanimate antecedent **adaka** 'box' in (12b) and (14b). If we were to go by Osam's analysis, the initial vowel ɛ- of ɛyʊ 'body/skin' would be treated as a pronominal prefix just as it is done for Akan in (14b). For us, the initial vowel is an inanimate nominal prefix and not a pronominal prefix. Just like other nominals beginning with the nominal prefix ɛ- in both languages, ɛ- is deleted in (11, 12a) and (14a) because ɛyʊ and ɛho appear within utterances. However, in cases where nominals containing the prefix ɛ- appear at sentence-initial position, such as those in (12b) and (14b), ɛ- is always overtly realized. This analysis is given further support when additional data involving possessed relational nouns that do not begin with the ɛ- prefix in both languages are brought forth in (15-16).

(15)　　Nkami
　　a.　waasɛ　amʊ ama　lɛ-waa efi. →　　a[1]. ama lɛ-waa efi.
　　　　dress　　DET back　　PRF-wear dirty
　　　　'The back part of the dress is dirty.'　　　　'It (back) is dirty.'

　　b.　waasɛ amʊ nkɪlɛlɔ lɛ-waa efi.　　→　　b[1]. nkɪlɛlɔ lɛwaa efi.
　　　　　　　　　side
　　　　'The side of the dress is dirty.'　　　　　　'It (side) is dirty.'

(16)　　Akan
　　a.　ataade　no akyi　a-yɛ　fi.　→　　a[1]. akyi a-yɛ fi.
　　　　dress　　DET back　　PRF-be dirty
　　　　'The back part of the dress is dirty.'　　　'It (back) is dirty.'

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b.   ataade no nkyem a-yɛ fi.   →   b[1]. nkyem a-yɛ fi.
               side
    'The side of the dress is dirty.'   'It (side) is dirty.'

In (15-16) the possessed nouns (i.e. **ama** 'back' and **nkɪlɛlɔ** 'side' in Nkami; and **akyi** 'back' and **nkyem** 'side' in Akan) maintain their forms when they occur both within utterance and sentence-initial positions, because they inherently do not contain the nominal prefix ɛ-. If ɛ- was a pronominal prefix, rather than a nominal prefix, then one would have expected that it would have been prefixed to the possessed relational nouns in (15b[1], 16b[1]) when they occur without their possessor nouns. For instance, **nkɪlɛlɔ** 'side' and **nkyem** 'back' should have been realized as **ɛ-nkɪlɛlɔ** (15b[1]) and **ɛ-nkyem** (16b[1]) in Nkami and Akan respectively. Thus, the difficulty in treating ɛ- as either a pronominal prefix or nominal prefix is erased when further data are added.

3.1.5   *The quantifier fɛɛfɛ 'all'*

One intriguing distinction that struck me[11] at the initial stages of fieldwork relates to the behaviour of the quantifier **fɛɛfɛ** 'all'. Like the possessive construction, whenever an animate subject NP modified with **fɛɛfɛ** in a clause is pronominalized, an independent 3PL pronominal form **amʊ** replaces it. However, when the subject NP is inanimate, it receives zero marking. This is exemplified below where **mmʊɪ** 'animals' is replaced with **amʊ** (17b), while **kããsɛ** 'car' is supplanted by Ø (18b).

(17) a. **Mmʊɪ amʊ** fɛɛfɛ lɛ-ba.   →   b. **Amʊ**   fɛɛfɛ   lɛ-ba.
        animals DET all   PRF-come   3PL.POSS/OBJ
        'All the animals have come.'   'They have all arrived.'

(18) a. **Kaãsɛ amʊ** fɛɛfɛ   lɛ-ba.   →   b. Ø fɛɛfɛ   lɛ-ba.
        car DET   all   PRF-come
        'All the lorries have arrived.'   'They have all arrived.'

Nkami's behaviour is distinct from Akan's. There is no difference when the subject is animate since Akan also replaces animate entities in subject position with an independent 3PL pronoun **wɔn**, as shown in (19).

(19) a. **Mmoa no**   nyinaa a-ba. →   b. **Wɔn**   nyinaa a-ba.
        animals DET all   PRF-come   3PL.POSS/OBJ
        'All the animals have come.'   'They have all arrived.'

However, unlike Nkami which uses zero marking when the subject NP is inanimate, in Akan the 3SG possessive pronoun **ne** 'his/her/it' is overtly employed to replace its antecedent, as (20) illustrates.

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[11] First author.

(20) a. **Kaa no** nyinaa a-ba.   →   b. **Ne** nyinaa a-ba (***nyinaa** a-ba).
      car DET all PRF-come   3SG.POSS
      'All the cars have arrived.'   'They have all arrived.'

Thus, whereas Nkami employs zero marking, Akan overtly marks inanimate subject NPs modified by the quantifier **fɛɛfɛ** 'all' with the 3SG possessive pronoun **ne** 'his/her/it'.

3.1.6   *The third person object pronouns*

One source of animacy distinction that has received much attention, especially in Akan (cf. Christaller 1875, Stewart 1963, Boadi 1976, Saah 1992, Osam 1994, 1996) is the behaviour of the third person object pronoun. Nkami's object pronominal forms are the same as those of possessive pronouns in (9). As occurs in Akan (and probably in most Tano languages of the Kwa branch), whenever an animate object noun is pronominalized, the pronoun is always overt and co-references its antecedent in number; however, when an inanimate object is pronominalized, it is always null. Consider the examples in (21-22).

(21) a. Kofi bɛ-sɔ **ɔkplɪ amʊ**.   →   Kofi bɛ-sɔ   **mʊ**.
           Kofi FUT-buy dog DET   Kofi FUT-buy   3SG.ANIM.OBJ
           'Kofi will buy the dog.'   'Kofi will buy it.'

      b. Kofi bɛ-sɔ **m-kplɪ amʊ**.   →   Kofi bɛ-sɔ   **amʊ**.
           Kofi FUT-buy PL-dog DET   Kofi FUT-buy   3PL.ANIM.OBJ
           'Kofi will buy the dogs.'   'Kofi will buy them.'

(22) a. Kofi bɛ-sɔ **ɔfɔdʒɪ amʊ**.   →   Kofi bɛ-sɔ   **ø**.
           Kofi FUT-buy broom DET   Kofi FUT-buy
           'Kofi will buy the broom.'   'Kofi will buy it.'

      b. Kofi bɛ-sɔ **mfɔdʒɪ amʊ**.   →   Kofi bɛ-sɔ   **ø**.
           Kofi FUT-buy PL-broom DET   Kofi FUT-buy
           'Kofi will buy the brooms.'   'Kofi will buy them.'

As the data reveal, while the animate object pronouns **mʊ** 'she/he/it' and **amʊ** 'them' replace their antecedents **ɔkplɪ** 'dog' and **mkplɪ** 'dogs' in (21a-b), both **ɔfɔdʒɪ** 'broom' and **mfɔdʒɪ** 'brooms' receive zero marking in (22a-b) because *broom* is inanimate.

Osam (1996) makes an interesting observation about a limitation on this distinction in Akan which is worth commenting. Like Nkami, in Akan the animate noun **odwan** 'sheep' is replaced by **no** 'him/her/it' in (23), but the site of the antecedent **dua** 'tree' is null in (24) because *tree* is inanimate.

(23)   Kofi bɔ-tɔn **odwan no**.   →   Kofi bɔ-tɔn **no**.
        Kofi FUT-buy sheep DET   Kofi FUT-buy 3SG.ANM.OBJ
        'Kofi will sell the sheep.'   'Kofi will sell it.'

(24)   Kofi bɔ-tɔn **dua no.**   →   Kofi bɔ-tɔn **ø.**
        Kofi FUT-buy tree DET   Kofi FUT-buy
        'Kofi will sell the tree.'   'Kofi will sell it.'

Osam observes that this distinction is compromised when an inanimate direct object noun is immediately followed by a temporal or locative adverb in a sentence, as shown in (25).

(25) a. Kofi bɔ-tɔn **dua no** ɔkyena.   →   b.   Kofi bɔ-tɔn **no**   ɔkyena.
         Kofi FUT-buy tree DET tomorrow   K. FUT-buy 3INANM.OBJ tomorrow
         'Kofi will sell the tree tomorrow.'   'Kofi will sell it tomorrow.'

Thus, because the inanimate object **dua** 'tree' is followed by the temporal adverb **ɔkyena** 'tomorrow', its site is required to be overtly expressed by the pronoun **no** in (25b). In other words, out of context, **Kofi bɔtɔn no ɔkyena** is ambiguous in Akan since **no** could either refer to an animate or inanimate antecedent, contrary to the observation in (24) that **no** substitutes for only animate object antecedents. Following Givon's (1984) functional framework on pragmatic notion of topicality, Osam offers an explanation for the phenomenon. He notes:

> The reason the presence of an adverbial element in the post object position … triggers the presence of the inanimate object pronoun is that since the direct object is more topical than an adverbial item, and since the immediate postverbal position defines direct objecthood in Akan, if the pronoun is not overtly present it would create the impression that the adverbial element is more topical than the direct object NP. It is as if the inanimate object pronoun finds its topicality status threatened and so it has to make a physical appearance in order to assert its status. (Osam 1996: 162).

Though the functional explanation provided by Osam sounds apt for the phenomenon in Akan, it is inappropriate for Nkami since the site of an inanimate object in Nkami is always covertly marked even when it (the object) is immediately followed by an adverb. This is exemplified in (26).

(26) a. Kofi bɛ-fɛ   **oyi amʊ**   ɔtʃɛ.
         Kofi FUT-buy tree DET   tomorrow
         'Kofi will sell the tree tomorrow.'

     b. Kofi bɛ-fɛ   **ø**   ɔtʃɛ   (*Kofi bɛ-fɛ **mʊ** ɔtʃɛ).
         Kofi FUT-buy   tomorrow
         'Kofi will sell it tomorrow.'

Thus, in Nkami the presence of the temporal adverb **ɔtʃɛ** 'tomorrow' does not

trigger the presence of the inanimate object pronoun **mʊ**, with the view of entrenching the object's position as more topical than the adverb's position. Thus, the distinction is necessitated by the different rankings of two constraints by the languages:

i. TOPICALITY- requires that the overt statement of constituents in a clause be based on topicality hierarchy.

ii. ANIMACY - requires that the overt statement of constituents in a clause be based on animacy hierarchy.

Thus, whereas Akan considers the constraint on TOPICITY to be 'very crucial' and therefore ranks it higher than the constraint on ANIMACY, Nkami considers the constraint on TOPICALITY to be 'less crucial' and thus ranks it lower than the 'more crucial' one on ANIMACY.

3.1.7   Demonstrative Pronouns

The next source of animacy distinction is based on the structure and behaviour of demonstrative pronouns. Demonstrative pronouns in Nkami are deictic words that can function as the only element in an argument position of a clause (cf. Diesel 1999, Dixon 2010). Nkami has a relatively large set of four demonstrative pronouns which are divided into two pairs, proximal: **ɛɲa/ɔɲa** and distal: **mʊ/maamʊ**, based on their spatial semantics. The proximal demonstrative pronouns (PDP) **ɛɲa/ɔɲa** indicate some relative closeness to the deictic centre while the distal demonstrative pronouns (DDP) **mʊ/maamʊ** denote the opposite. More importantly, based on the semantic notion of animacy, a distinction can be made for each pair, as (27) illustrates.

(27) a. Mɪ-kpa **tɪlɪ ɲa.**   →   Mɪ-kpa **ɔɲa.**
         1SG-like goat PDD   1SG-like ANM.PDP
         'I like this goat.'   'I like this.'

    b. Mɪ-kpa **waasɛ ɲa.**   →   Mɪ-kpa **ɛɲa.**
        1SG-like dress PDD   1SG-like INANM.PDP
        'I like this dress.'   'I like this.'

Thus, the PDP **ɔɲa** is used for animate referents, while **ɛɲa** is used for inanimate referents, as shown in (27a) and (27b) respectively. Likewise, an identical distinction can be made for the distal demonstratives; **mʊ** and **maamʊ** are used for animate (28a) and inanimate (28b) referents respectively.

(28) a. Mɪ-kpa **tɪlɪ amʊ**   →   Mɪ-kpa **mʊ**
         1SG-like goat DDD   1SG-like ANM.DDP
         'I like that goat.'   'I like that.'

b. Mɪ-kpa **waasɛ amʊ** →   Mɪ-kpa **maamʊ**
    1SG-like dress DDD   1SG-like INANM.DDP
    'I like that cloth.'   'I like that.'

Thus, **ɔɲa** and **mʊ** replace the animate referent **tɪlɪ** 'goat' in (26a and 27a), while **ɛɲa** and **maamʊ** substitute for the inanimate **waasɛ** 'dress' in (26b and 27b).

3.2   Dispositional Verbs in Basic Locative Constructions

Ameka (2007: 1066) defines a basic locative construction (BLC) as "a non-elliptical clause that represents the answer to a 'where-search' question". Nkami employs approximately twenty contrasting locative verbs in BLCs and hence may be classified as a multi-verb language on the basis of the number and types of verbs used in BLCs (cf. Levinson and Wilkins 2006, Ameka and Levinson 2007). Similar to an essay by Ameka (2007) on Likpe, there are several factors that come into play when deciding on 'competing' verbs to localize specific locative scenes: number, speaker's competence, speaker's desire to be referentially precise, animacy, inter alia. We only examine the role animacy plays in the selection of verbs for localizing entities (Figures) on reference objects (Grounds).

3.2.1   *Tɪgɛ versus tie 'be.located on base'*

Both **tɪgɛ** and **tie** 'be.located on base' are 'sitting' verbs that are used to talk about Figures that take support on the surface from their base. Thus, the Figure is generally seen as one that assumes a sitting position. The difference between the two is that **tɪgɛ** is used to talk about inanimate Figures while **tie** is employed for animate Figures. Typically, **tɪgɛ** is used to describe locative configurations such as 'utensil on fire', 'chair on its base', 'cup on a table', as (29) illustrates.

(29) **Kɔɔpʊ/adʒuro   amʊ   tɪgɛ**   ɔkpʊnʊ/odʒa   amʊ   sʊ.
    cup/food   DET   be.located   table/fire   DET   on
    'The cup/food is on the table/fire.'

Conversely, **tie** localizes a person on a sitting position, whether on a wall, chair, table, tree, etc., or an animal sitting on its base.

(30) **Naaɲɪnɪ   Anto/ɔkplɪ   amʊ   tie**   obu   amʊ   ɔnɔ.
    grandfather   NAME/ dog   DET   be.located   building DET   mouth
    'Grandpa Anto/the dog is sitting at the entrance of the house.'

3.2.2   *Yɪrɪ versus yi 'be.standing/stand'*

Nkami has two 'standing' verbs **yi** and **yɪrɪ** that are used to characterize entities in relatively upright/vertical positions in relation to horizontal surface. The difference between the two is that generally **yi** is used for inanimate entities, while **yɪrɪ** for

animates.[12]   For instance, **yi** is used to describe trees and erected structures such as buildings, flag poles, and referents of relatively high heights such as vehicles, bicycles, and fridges, as exemplified in (31).

(31) a. **Oyi**   **yi**   bɪpɔ   amʊ   yʊ.
  tree   stand   mountain   DET   self
  'There is a tree standing on the mountain.'

  b. **Obu**   **yi**   ɛbã   amʊ   lɔ.
  building stand   fence   DET   inside
  'There is a building (standing) in the fence.'

Yɪrɪ, on the other hand, is used to localize animates of relatively upright positions such as a person or an animal standing on its feet, as illustrated in (32).

(32) a. **ɔɲɪmɪ**   **amʊ**   **yɪrɪ**   obu   amʊ   sʊ.
  man   DET   stand   building   DET   on
  'The man is standing on the building (roof).'

  b. **ɔkplɪ**   **amʊ**   **yɪrɪ**   ɛfa   amʊ   lɔ
  dog   DET   stand   bush   DET   inside
  'The dog is standing in the bush.'

3.2.3   *Dɛɛ* 'be.lying/lie' versus *wʊdʒɪ* 'lie/spread/coil'

Unlike the previous pair of locative verbs which may be said to constitute animacy or near animacy pairs, **dɛɛ** and **wʊdʒɪ** do not. Among other things, **dɛɛ** 'be.lying/lie' is used to characterize both animate and inanimate objects in horizontal position with whole or larger part of the body touching the reference object (e.g. table top and bed surface). Thus, it typically characterizes scenarios such as 'pen lying on table', 'dog lying on its side' and 'a person lying on a mat', as exemplified in (33).

(33)   **Oyebi/pɛn**   **amʊ**   **dɛɛ**   ɔkpʊnʊ amʊ   sʊ.
  boy/pen   DET   lie   table   DET   on
  'The boy/pen is lying on the table.'

Howbeit, **wʊdʒɪ** 'lie/spread/coil' is prototypically employed to localize flexible entities like a fabric on a surface (34a), and unquantifiable substances and particles such as liquids, grains, and sand/gravels, as (34b) illustrates.

(34) a. **Otʃebi/tʃago**   **amʊ**   **wʊdʒɪ**   mpa   amʊ   sʊ.
  cloth/rag   DET   lie   bed   DET   on
  'The cloth/rag is (lying) on the bed.'

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[12] Birds appear to be exception since speakers generally tend to localize them with **yi** rather than **yɪrɪ**.

b. **Ntʃu/ŋasɪ** **wʊdʒɪ** tankɪ amʊ lɔ.
water/sand   lie   barrel   DET   inside
'There is water/sand in the tank.'

Apart from these prototypical characterizations, it appears that in all other situations the two verbs contrast (Asante, in preparation). For our purpose here, however, we only focus on their difference in terms of animacy. Thus, although we have indicated that **dɛɛ** 'be.lying/lie' is used to localize both animate and inanimate Figures in horizontal configuration with whole or larger part of the body touching the Ground, whenever the inanimate Figure being localized is non-singular or unquantifiable, **wʊdʒɪ**, rather than **dɛɛ**, is employed. For example, observe in (35) that the same verb **dɛɛ** is used for both singular (35a) and plural (35b) referents because the Figure **ɔsa** 'human being' is animate.

(35) a. **ɔsa**   **kʊ**   **dɛɛ**   ɛsʊlɔ.
human being   INDEF   lie   ground
'There is a person lying on the floor.'

b. **Asa**   **bebiree**   **bɛ-dɛɛ**   ɛsʊlɔ.
human being   many   3PL-lie   ground
'There are many people lying on the floor.'

Like animates, if an inanimate Figure (here 'pen') being localized is singular, as shown in (36a), **dɛɛ** is again used. The use of **wʊdʒɪ** is inappropriate in such situations, as indicated by the asterisk on the sentence in brackets. However, whenever the inanimate Figure is non-singular **pen bebiree** 'many pens', as shown in (36b), **wʊdʒɪ** rather than **dɛɛ** is employed.

(36) a. **pen dɛɛ** ɛsʊlɔ.   (*****pen wʊdʒɪ** ɛsʊlɔ.)
pen   lie   ground
'There is a pen (lying) on the floor.'

b. **pen bebiree wʊdʒɪ**   ɛsʊlɔ.   (*****pen bebiree dɛɛ** ɛsʊlɔ.)
pen   many   lie   ground
'There are many pens on the floor.'

In a nutshell, **wʊdʒɪ** complements **dɛɛ** to localize non-singular/unquantifiable inanimate Figures that are deemed to be in lying position.

4. Human versus Non-human Distinctions

This section focuses on items speakers use to talk about and distinguish between human and non-human referents. Specific areas looked at include: nominal prefixes, concordant subject marking, identity suffixes **anaamʊ/nɛɛmʊ**, indefinite pronouns **ɔkʊ/ɛkʊ**, numeral modifier **ba-**, indefinite possessor particle **kɛ**, and the sitting verbs **tie/tʃɪna** 'live'.

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4.1   Nominal Prefixes

In congruence with the general tendency, majority of the linguistic items identified in our database are nouns. Synchronically, there is no clearly distinct noun class system in Nkami; at best, one can talk about residues of it. Most nouns have a nominal prefix, which is a vowel or a homorganic nasal. Generally, the following vowels /e, ɛ, o, ɔ/ are selected for singular nominal prefix marking, while /a/ and homorganic nasals /m, ɱ, ŋ, ɲ, n/ are selected for plural marking.[13] /ɪ, i, ʊ, u/ do not serve as nominal prefixes, unlike other South-Guang languages such as Nkonya where the front high vowels /ɪ, i/ occur as prefixes of some nouns, though sparingly. Looking at the behaviour of nominal prefix marking in Nkami, a generalization can be made that nominals that refer to humans only take ɔ-/o- singular prefixes, while non-human nouns may take any of the singular nominal prefixes. Thus, whereas human nouns do not take e-, ɛ-, a- nominal prefixes[14], non-human nouns do in addition to ɔ-, o-. Consider the following human nouns.

(37)   Human nouns only take ɔ-/o- prefixes:

o-bi	'child'	o-kisi[15]	'god'
ɔ-sa	'human being'	ɔ-fɔ	'visitor'
ɔ-ɲɪnɪ	'man'	ɔ-tʃɪ	'woman'
o-kunu	'husband'	o-ɲi	'mother'
ɔ-ka	'wife	ɔ-sɪ	'father'
ɔ-daamʊ	'friend'	ɔ-sɪa	'in-law'
ɔ-kʊa	'co-wife'	ɔ-tabʊ	'hunter'

Though there are several nouns referring to animals that also take ɔ-/o- prefixes, as exemplified in (38a), there are also some others that take e-/ ɛ- in (38b), and a- in (38c).

(38) a. Nouns referring to animals that take ɔ-/o- prefixes:

o-boobi	'bird'	o-nini	'python'
ɔ-kɪlɛtɪ	'cat'	ɔ-dɔ	'a type of fish'
ɔ-kwaabi	'a type of fish'	ɔ-sratʃɛ	'a type of fish (like mudfish)
ɔ-kplɪ	'dog'	ɔ-tɛtɛ	'a wild animal like tiger'

   b. Nouns referring to animals that take ɛ-/e- prefixes

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[13] The use of vowel (V) nominal prefix similarly to South-Guang languages, rather than the CV nominal prefix system of the North-Guang languages (cf. Stewart 1970, Snider 1990), is one of the reasons we adduce for the placement of Nkami in the South-Guang.

[14] **Adako** 'concubine/girl friend' is an exception.

[15] As in many Ghanaian cultures such as Akan, there are some entities in Nkami such as **okisi** 'god' and **ɔtʃʊma** 'ghost' which are culturally believed to be '(super) human beings' and so do take the human prefixes.

esi	'a type of fish'	elu	'bush animal resembling goat'
emoli	'termite'	ɛfʋɔ	'monkey-like animal'

c. Nouns referring to animals that take **a-** prefix

abɪbɛ	'grasshopper'	apɛsɛ	'porcupine-like animal'
apɪɪ	'a yellowish fish'	akpɛ	'antelope-like animal'
apofra	'a type of fish'	atɛflɛ	'cockroach'

Similarly to nouns referring to animals, inanimate nouns may take **ɔ-/o-** prefixes in (39a), **ɛ-/e-** in (38b) or **a-** in (39c)

(39) a. Inanimate nouns that take **ɔ-/o-** prefixes:

odĩ	'heart'	**osi**	'waist'
ɔdɪda	'chin'	**otugo**	'buttocks'
odʒo	'yam'	**oyi**	'tree/wood'
ofi	'age/year'	**ɔsʋwɪlɪ**	'land'
ofutʃu	'soup'	**okpesie**	'mortar'

b. Inanimate nouns that take **ɛ-/e-** prefixes:

ewiasɪ	'earth/world'	**efũ**	'fear'
ɛbɪ	'time'	**ɛdalɔ**	'metal/money'
ɛka	'debt'	**ɛlʋ**	'song'
eŋu	'head'	**ɛkʋnɔ**	'neck'
ɛwɪɪ	'testicles'	**ɛkpã**	'bow'
ewei	'home'	**emuo**	'clay'

c. Inanimate nouns that take **a-** prefix:

ama	'back'	**atɪlɛ**	'hand'
abow	'thorns'	**adu**	'medicine
aya	'leg'	**abi**	'seeds/pebbles'

To reiterate the point thus far, Nkami shows the human-nonhuman distinction here because while human nouns take only **ɔ-/o-** as prefixes, non-human nouns may take any of the singular nominal prefixes in the language.

A further distinction can be made for the plural nominal prefixes. Generally, whereas human nouns take **a-**, non-human animate nouns take homorganic nasal **N-** as plural nominal prefixes. In (40a) are pairs of singular-plural human nouns, while (40b) are non-human.

(40) a. Human nouns take **a-** plural prefix:

SG	PL	Gloss	SG	PL	Gloss
o-bi	a-bi	'child'	o-kisi	a-kisi	'deity'
ɔ-sa	a-sa	'human being'	ɔ-fɔ	a-fɔ	'visitor'
ɔ-ɲɪnɪ	a-ɲɪnɪ	'man'	ɔ-tʃɪ	a-tʃɪ	'woman'

ɔ-ka	a-ka	'wife'	ɔ-sɪ	a-sɪ	'husband'
ɔ-sɪa	a-sɪa	'in-law'	ɔ-daamʊ	a-daamʊ	'friend'
ɔ-kʊa	a-kʊa	'co-wife'	ɔ-tabʊ	a-tabʊ	'hunter'

b.   Non-human animate nouns take **N-** plural prefix:

SG	PL	Gloss	SG	PL	Gloss
oboobi	m-boobi	'bird'	ɔ-klɛtɪ	ŋ-klɛtɪ	'cat'[16]
ɔ-dabɔ	n-dabɔ	'duiker'	ɔ-kplɪ	m-kplɪ	'dog'
e-moli	m-moli	'termite'	e-lu	n-lu	'bush goat'
a-bɪbɛ	m-bɪbɛ	'grasshopper'	a-hwɪa	n-hwɪa	'a game'

4.2 Loss of Nominal Prefixes

Synchronically, there is a sizable number of nouns in Nkami which do not have nominal prefixes, as exemplified in the following human and non-human nouns below.

(41) a.   Human nouns without prefixes:

blɛɲaw	'chief'	dʒaasɪhɪnɪ	'sub-chief'
nifahɪnɪ	'sub-chief'	benkumhɪnɪ	'sub-chief'
naaɲɪnɪ	'grandpa/chief'		

b.   Non-human nouns without prefixes:

fawie	'tiger'	bamfuru	'vulture'
kɪlɛbɪ	'chicken'	klalɪ	'grasscutter'
klɔgɔlɪ	'mouse'	kpaabuɪ	'rat'
latʃɛ	'gorilla'	lɛŋgɛ	'crocodile'
sɪalɪ	'monkey'	lɔfɔ	'deer'
sɪanɪ	'sheep'	sapa	'a type of fish'
tɪlɪ	'goat'	tʃitʃie	'a type of fish'
frɛlɪ	'bush cattle'	dumura	'monkey-like animal'

As the data in (41) exemplify, the dominant majority of nouns that have lost their prefixes are non-human animate nouns. In fact, except for nouns relating to chieftaincy titles, as exemplified in (41a), one does not find human nouns that have lost their prefixes. Moreover, the chieftaincy nouns may not be considered exceptions at all because with the exception of **blɛɲaw** 'chief' the others are all traceable loanwords from Akan.

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[16] Generally, whereas animals that are close to home, e.g. **ɔklɛtɪ** 'cat, **ɔkplɪ** 'dog' and **oboobi** 'bird', have forms that are different from Akan, those that reside in the forest such as **ɔdabɔ** 'duiker', **abɪbɛ** 'grasshopper' and **ahwɪa** 'a game animal' have similar/same forms with Akan. It looks likely that not only are the names of the latter loanwords from Akan, but also the original settlement of Nkamis did not have those 'forest/wild' animals. Another possibility, though less likely, is that Nkami speakers have replaced the native names of such 'forest/wild' animals with Akan names.

4.3   The Identity Suffixes -anaamʊ/-nɛɛmʊ

Nkami, like some other Kwa languages such as Akan and Nkonya, has some nominals that have dual affixes; that is, some nominals simultaneously take prefix and suffix. This is so because the presence of a nominal suffix is dependent on the presence of a nominal prefix. Thus, all native nouns that have suffixes also have prefixes. There are a couple of nominal suffixes in the language but our attention here is on the identity suffixes **-anaamʊ/-nɛɛmʊ**, which help classify entities that share similar qualities. The suffix **-anaamʊ** is employed to identify nominal categories of human reference (42a), while **-nɛɛmʊ** classifies non-humans (42b).[17]

(42) a.   **-anaamʊ** goes on human nouns:

ayʊ-anaamʊ	'thieves'	**mbɪrɪsɛ-anaamʊ**	'elders'
atʃuma-anaamʊ	'ghosts'	**asɪ-anaamʊ**	'in-laws'
afɔ-anaamʊ	'siblings'	**mbleɲaw-anaamʊ**	'chiefs'

    b.   **-nɛɛmʊ** goes on non-human nouns:

ntɪlɪ-nɛɛmʊ	'goats'	**mkplɪ-nɛɛmʊ**	'dogs'
baagɪ-nɛɛmʊ	'bags'	**amangʊ-nɛɛmʊ**	'mangoes'

The distinction is well captured in an excerpt of a text provided by our main hunting consultant, Wɔfa Kimpo. After a catch of **onini** 'python', he demonstrates in a video the techniques for catching the python and other general information such as their habitat, eating habits and how they prey on other animals including humans. When he was asked about the benefits/uses of pythons, this is what he said:

(43) ãã,   Ntabʊ-anaamʊ kʊ   bɛ-ba   a   baa-bɛ-sɔ.
     INTJ   NAME-IDENT   INDEF   3PL-come   CFM   3PL.HAB-PDP-buy

     Na   mʊ   bɔ   lɔ   kɛ   bɛ-yɛɛ   baa-fʊ   kʊ   bɔ
     CONJ   POSS   do   inside   as.for 3PL-say   3PL.HAB-take INDEF do

     bag-nɛɛmʊ…   ɛna   tɔkʊ   ɲa   ɛɛ   **bɛɛtɪ-nɛɛmʊ**, ɛhɛ̃ɛ̃.
     bag-IDENT   CONJ   thing   DEM   INTJ   belt-IDENT   INTJ

'Well, some of the Northerners when they come, they buy. And as for what they use it to do, they say they use some for bags… and this thing… belts, yeah.'

4.4 Ba- and Numeral Modifiers

Nkami, like many Ghanaian language such as Akan, Logba and Nkonya, employs a decimal (base ten) number system. This is probably because speakers reckon quantities of items using their fingers, though the etymology of the word **edu** 'ten' has

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[17] Note that, like some other words ending with rounded high vowel **U,** final **U** is usually not pronounced in fast speech, as happens in most Guang languages.

no phonetic relation with **atılɛ** 'hand'. The cardinal numbers from one to ten, which have cognates in many Kwa languages, are provided in (44).

(44)
ɔkʊlı	'one'		**asie**	'six'
aɲo	'two'		**asʊnʊ**	'seven'
asa	'three'		**etwe**	'eight'
ana	'four'		**akpʊnɔ**	'nine'
anu	'five'		**edu**	'ten'

When counting or when the cardinal numbers are used as post-head modifiers of non-human nouns, they maintain the same form, as (45) exemplifies.

(45) a.
ɔkplı	**ɔkʊlı**	kɛ	nɔ	nı	ɔ-bɛ-dɛ	tʃıı?
dog	one	as.for	what	FOC	3SG-FUT-be able	catch

'As for only one dog, what (bush animal) can it catch?'

b.
Mı	a-sı-anaamʊ	bɛ-bʊ	**obu**	**aɲo**
1POSS	PL-in-law-IDENT	3PL-have	house	two

'My in-laws have two houses.'

The same forms **ɔkʊlı** 'one' and **aɲo** 'two' are used in (45a-b) because they occur as post-head modifiers of non-human nouns **ɔkplı** 'dog' and **obu** 'house' respectively. However, when the modifying head noun is human, a functional word (a classifier) **ba** is attached to the numeral, as shown in (46).[18]

(46)
Tʃıı-sɛ	**ba-ana**	kɛ	bɛ-bɛ-dɛ	bɔ	nɔ?
catch-NOML	AGR-four	as.for	3PL-FUT-be.able	do	what

'As for four policemen, what can they do?'

Thus, **ba** is attached to **ana** 'four' in (46) because the modifying noun **tʃıısɛ** 'policeman' is a human noun. Moreover, when the numeral slot is occupied by the numeral question word **ammı** 'how many/much', **ba** is introduced provided the head noun has human reference, as (47) demonstrates.

(47)
Mını	**a-sa**	**ba-ammı**	nı	mını-ba?
2PL.OBJ	PL-person	AGR-how.many	FOC	2PL-come

'How many of you (people) did come?'

In most of these constructions, the head noun could be omitted leaving **ba-** alone. Observe, for instance, the omission of **ɔsa/asa** 'person/people' (indicated by ø) in

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[18] Akan has a similar form **ba** with similar function, which according to Osam (1996) traces its source from the Akan noun **ba** [ɔba] 'child'. Looking at their similarity in form and semantics (i.e. **ɔba** 'child' and **ba** 'human agreement marker/classifier'), that thesis sounds reasonable. However, one is not certain if same can be said about Nkami since the word for child in Nkami is **obi,** not **ɔba**. As a reviewer rightly suggests, it looks likely though that **ba** is one of the several items borrowed from Akan. The irony, however, is that it appears to the first author that synchronically the use of **ba** is more frequent and entrenched in Nkami than Akan.

(48a-b).

(48) a. Mɪnɪ   ø   **a-ba**   **amɪnɪ**   nɪ   mɪnɪ-ba?
        2PL.OBJ   PL-AGR   how many   FOC   2PL-come
        'How many of you (people) did come?'

    b. Mɪ   ø   **ɔ-ba**   **ɔkʊlɪ**   kɛ   mɛ-ɛ-dɛ   bɔ   nɔ?
        1SG.OBJ   SG-AGR   one   as.for   1SG-FUR-be able   do   what
        'As for me (alone), what can I do?'

Note that when **ba** occurs without the modifying head nouns **ɔsa/asa** 'person/people' in (48a-b), it acquires the plural **a-** and singular **ɔ-** nominal prefixes of its head nouns. Moreover, **a-ba** and **ɔ-ba** appear more independent in (48a-b) as they are not pronounced as part of the following numeral **amɪnɪ** 'how much' and **ɔkʊlɪ**. Nonetheless, the reader should not misconstrue **a-ba** and **ɔ-ba** as independent nouns meaning 'person/people' since they cannot occur independently without a numeral or the numeral question word **amɪnɪ**. For instance, though the sentences in (49a-50a) are acceptable because **asa** 'people' is the head noun, those in (49b-50b) are infelicitous because **aba** appears alone as the head noun without modifying numeral.

(49) a. **A-sa**   yʊ   bʊ   mfasʊɔ.
        PL-person   body   have   importance
        'Human beings/people are important/useful.'

    b. *****A-ba**   yʊ   bʊ   mfasoɔ.
        PL-AGR   body   have   importance
        'Human beings/people are important/useful.'

(50) a. Kofi   ma-a-kpa   **a-sa**   kʊraa.
        Kofi   1SG -NEG-like   PL-person   at.all
        'Kofi does not like human beings at all (he is antisocial).'

      *****Kofi   ma-a-kpa   **a-ba**   kʊraa.
        Kofi   1SG-NEG-like   PL-AGR   at.all
        'Kofi does not like human beings at all.'

4.5 The Non-human Possessed Particle kɛ

Additional evidence of human-nonhuman distinction comes from one of the several uses of the multi-functional particle **kɛ**. **Kɛ** may be used as a possessed pronoun in place of a possessed noun, as shown in (51).

(51) a. Mɪ   **obu**   nɪ.   →   b. Mɪ   **kɛ**   nɪ.
        1POSS   house   is.this   1POSS   PART   is.this
        'This is my house.'   'This is mine (my own is this).'

c. ɔkplɪ   amʊ   dʒi Kofi   kɛ.
     dog   DET   be Kofi   PART
     'The dog is for Kofi (Kofi's own).'

Thus, **kɛ** here translates to mean something like 'own' and it can substitute for possessed nouns. For instance, it replaces **obu** 'house' (51a) and **ɔkplɪ** 'dog' in (51b). However, this function of **kɛ** is limited to only non-human nouns, as shown in (51). For instance, observe that (52b) and (52c) are infelicitous because **kɛ** substitutes for **obi** 'child' and **ɔtʃɪbi** 'girl' respectively.

(52) a. Mɪ   **bi**[19]   nɪ.   →   b. *Mɪ   **kɛ**   nɪ.
     1POSS   child   is.this   1POSS   PART   is.this
     'This is my child.'   'This is mine (my own is this).'

c. *ɔtʃɪbi   amʊ   dʒi Kofi   kɛ.
     girl   DET   be Kofi   PART
     'The girl is for Kofi (Kofi's own).'

4.6 Indefinite Pronouns ɔkʊ/ɛkʊ

Yet more evidence of human-nonhuman distinction is seen in the behaviour of the indefinite pronouns **ɔkʊ** and **ɛkʊ**. They are based on the form **kʊ** 'indefinite determiner' used to specify unknown or unspecified quantities of entities. **ɔkʊ** is used for entities of human reference while **ɛkʊ** is used for inanimates, as illustrated in (53).

(53) a. ɔkʊ   ba   mɪ.   b. ɛkʊ   baalɛ.
     someone come.PST here   some   be.good
     'Someone came here.'   'Some are good.'

ɔkʊ in (53a) can only index a human being, while **ɛkʊ** in (53b) can only index a non-human item. Moreover, an enclitic **adʒɛ** may be attached to the indefinite pronouns to derive **ɔkʊadʒɛ** 'everyone' and **ɛkʊadʒɛ** 'each one'. Examples (53a-b) are altered here as (54a-b).

(54) a. ɔkʊ = adʒɛ   ba   mɪ.   b. ɛkʊ = adʒɛ   baalɛ.
     someone=PART   come.PST   here   some=PART   be.good
     'Everyone came here.'   'Each one is good.'

4.7 The 'Sitting' Verbs *tie/tʃɪna*

In section 3.2.1, we observed that the two 'sitting' verbs **tɪgɛ** and **tie** differ on the basis of animacy; **tɪgɛ** is generally used to localize inanimate Figures while **tie** localizes animate Figures. Nonetheless, we show here a situation where **tie** localizes only humans but not non-human animates. **Tie** has an allolexical form **tʃɪna** which is used in all other situations save the present continuative. As happens in some

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[19] Human noun prefixes **ɔ-/o-** delete when they occur after possessive pronouns.

languages such as Akan, Logba (Dorvlo 2008), and Likpe (Ameka 2007), **tie** and **tʃɪna** can both be extended to talk about settlements in which case they index 'live/settle in a place', rather than the postural meaning of 'be.located on base/sit', as we saw in section 3.2.1 above. Consider the following.

(55) a. Kofi   **tie**   Shanghai.
         Kofi   live.PRS   Shanghai
         'Kofi lives in Shanghai (?Kofi is sitting in Shanghai).'[20]

    b. Kofi   **tʃina**   Shanghai.
           Kofi   live.PST   Shanghai
           'Kofi lived in Shanghai (*Kofi sat in/at Shanghai).'

When **tie** and **tʃina** are extended to talk about settlements, it appears that the category of referents that can be localized with **tie** is limited to humans. Thus, native speakers generally disapprove of (56a), for instance, where the referent that does the 'living' is **ɔkplɪ** 'dog', a non-human. In order to characterize a similar scenario for animals, the verb **tʃu** 'come from/originate' is used, as (56b) illustrates.

(56) a. *ɔkplɪ   amʊ   **tie**   Kimpo   mʊ   ewie.
         dog   DET   live.PRS   Kimpo   POSS   house
         'The dog lives in Kimpo's house.'

    b. ɔkplɪ   amʊ   **tʃu**   Kimpo   mʊ   ewie.
           dog   DET   come.from   Kimpo   POSS   house
           'The dog comes from/lives in Kimpo's house (It is for Kimpo).'

Thus, Nkami speakers appear to have the conception that *living*, in the sense of *settlement*, is a purposeful act that requires creatures of 'higher minds' to undertake. The dog, as well as all other animals, does not have that capacity and so can only 'originate from' a place (or be owned), and thus cannot be said to be 'living/settling' in a place.

5. Neutralization

This section canvasses three domains where some of the animacy distinctions discussed in this article have been compromised in the grammar. They relate specifically to the forms and behaviours of the third person subject and object pronouns.

5.1 3SG Pronoun *ɔɔ-* in the Habitual

Unlike the future, progressive and perfect, the habitual is not morphologically marked in Nkami. Syllables in a grammatical/phonological word, consisting of a

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[20] This interpretation (sitting) appears to be only appropriate if the distance between Shanghai and the speaker's location is not far, and the Figure (Kofi) will return to the deictic center a short period (most likely within the same day) after the speech.

subject pronoun and a verb stem, generally associate with high tones when a sentence is said in the habitual, as (57) exemplifies, where **pwie** is 'leave/exit' and the initial items are subject pronouns.

(57) a. **mí-pwíé**   'I leave (go out).'

    b. **wú-pwíé**   'You leave (go out).'

Besides, there appears to be an emerging habitual marker **ɔɔ-** which we suspect to be a fusion of the third person singular pronominal prefix **ɔ-** and a previously existing habitual marker. It is incipient because, apart from the third person, many speakers also use it when the subject of a sentence is the first person plural pronoun **anɪ** 'we', as (58) illustrates.[21]

(58) a. Ama *ɔɔ*-pwie.   'Ama leaves (goes out).'

    b. anɪ-*ɔɔ*-pwie.   'We leave (go out).'

Away from the excursus, as we observed in section 3.1.1, Nkami makes animacy distinctions in 3SG subject pronouns through the usage of **ɔ-** for an animate referent and **ɛ-** for an inanimate referent. For convenience, the distinction is further illustrated in (59), where **ɔ-** substitutes for the animate referent **ɔtʃɪ** 'woman' (59a), while **ɛ-** supplants the inanimate **owi** 'sun' (59b).

(59) a. **ɔtʃɪ amʊ**   lé-pwie.   →   ɔ-lé-pwie.
        woman DET   PROG-leave   3ANM-PROG-leave
        'The woman is leaving.'   'She is leaving.'

   b. **owi amʊ**   lé -pwie.   →   ɛ-lé -pwie.
        sun DET   PROG-leave   3INANM-PROG-leave
        'The sun is appearing.'   'It is appearing.'

This distinction is upheld in all tense-aspects save the habitual. Currently, the 3SG subject pronoun for both animate and inanimate referents is realized as **ɔɔ-** in the habitual. Consider (60) which is a reproduction of (59) in the habitual.

(60) a. **ɔtʃɪ amʊ**   ɔɔ-pwie.   →   ɔɔ-pwie.
        woman DET   AGR.HAB-leave   3SG-HAB-leave
        'The woman leaves/goes out.'   'She leaves/goes out/appears.'

   b. **Owi amʊ**   ɔɔ-pwie.   →   ɔɔ-pwie.
        sun DET   AGR.HAB-leave   3SG.HAB-leave
        'The sun appears.'   'It appears.'

Thus, presently speakers of Nkami use **ɔɔ-** for both animate and inanimate

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[21] Some speakers, especially the elderly, show dislike for the use of **ɔɔ-** with the first person plural pronoun **anɪ-** 'we'.
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referents in the habitual, such that **ɔɔpwie** in (60) could either index 'she (woman) goes out /leaves/appears' or 'it (sun) appears'.

5.2 3SG Pronoun *a-* in the Future and the Habitual Negatives

Another source of animacy neutralization in the 3SG subject pronominal forms is evident in the future and habitual negative situations. Precisely, both the third person animate and inanimate subject pronouns **ɔ-** and **ɛ-** are realized as **a-** in both the future and habitual negatives. Consider the following.

(61) a. **ɔtʃɪ amʊ**   mà-ba.   →   a-mà-ba (*ɔ-mà-ba).
         woman DET   FUT.NEG-come   3SG-FUT.NEG-come
         'The woman will not come.'   'She will not come.'

   b. **ɲaw amʊ**   mà-ba.   →   a-mà-ba (*ɛ-mà-ba).
         rain DET   FUT.NEG-come   3SG-FUT.NEG-come
         'The rain (it) will not rain.'   'It will not rain/come.'

As we observe in (61), the distinction between **ɔ-** and **ɛ-** is neutralized in the future negative since both are currently produced as **a-**. Unlike the habitual aspect as treated in section 5.1, the trigger of change from **ɔ-/ɛ-** to **a-** is deducible from the phonological environment. Thus, the pronominal mid vowels **ɔ-/ɛ-** are realized low **a-** because of the influence from the low vowel in the future negative morpheme **mà**.[22] Identical phenomenon occurs in the habitual negative here.

(62) a. **ɔtʃɪ amʊ**   má-ba.   →   a-má-ba (*ɔ-má-ba).
         woman DET   HAB.NEG-come   3SG-HAB.NEG-come
         'The woman does not come.'   'She does not come.'

   b. **ɲaw amʊ**   má-ba.   →   a-má-ba (*ɛ-má-ba).
         rain DET   HAB.NEG-come   3SG-HAB.NEG-come
         'It does not rain.'   'It does not rain/come.'

Observe that the difference between the future and habitual negatives is one of tone; while the future negative morpheme **mà** associates with a low tone, that of the

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[22] The reader should not misconstrue that anytime **ɔ-** and **ɛ-** precede a **Ca** syllable (e.g. **ɔsa** 'human being' **ɔ-ba** 'he should come' and **ɛ-ba** 'it should come'), **ɔ-** and **ɛ-** change to become **a-**. As we have already indicated above, the domain of application of this lowering process is the habitual and future negative clauses, where the trigger of assimilation is the habitual/future negative markers **má-/mà** and the target(s) of assimilation is the third person singular subject pronouns **ɔ-/ɛ-**. We suggest that the low vowel of **má-/mà-** triggers the change of **ɔ-** and **ɛ-** to become **a-** in (62) because when **má-/mà** are replaced with the progressive **mʊnɛ-**, perfect **mʊntɪ-** and the past **mʊn-** negatives, as shown in (1a), (1b) and (1c) respectively, **ɔ-** and **ɛ-** remain unchanged.

(1) a. **ɔ-mʊnɛ-ba**   *[a-mʊnɛ-ba]   'She/he is not coming.'
    b. **ɔ-mʊntɪ-ba**   *[a-mʊntɪ-ba]   'she/he has not come.'
    c. **ɛ-mʊn-ba**   *[a-mʊn-ba]   'It did not come.'
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habitual negative **má** associates with a high tone.

5.3 The 3SG Object Pronoun versus Ambitransitive Verbs

The final source of animacy neutralization adduced here comes from the form and behaviour of the 3SG object pronoun **mʊ**. Recall from section 3.1.6 that, generally, whereas the site of an animate object NP is obligatorily replaced with the object pronoun **mʊ** when pronominalized, that of an inanimate object receives zero marking **ø**. For the sake of convenience, we repeat examples (20a-21a) here as (63a-b), where **mʊ** replaces **ɔkplɪ** 'dog' (animate), and **ø** substitutes for **ɔfɔdʒɪ** 'broom' (inanimate).

(63) a. Kofi bɛ-sɔ **ɔkplɪ amʊ.** → Kofi bɛ-sɔ **mʊ.**
       Kofi FUT-buy dog DET   Kofi FUT-buy 3SG.ANM.OBJ
       'Kofi will buy the dog.'   'Kofi will buy it.'

    b. Kofi bɛ-sɔ **ɔfɔdʒɪ amʊ.** → Kofi bɛ-sɔ **ø.**
       Kofi FUT-buy broom DET   Kofi FUT-buy
       'Kofi will buy the broom.'   'Kofi will buy it.'

This distinction is however curtailed when the main verb in the clause is an ambitransitive verb. The phenomenon is illustrated with the verb **fɪɪ** 'lose/disappear'; where (64a) is the underlying sentence and (64b-c) derive from it.

(64) a. Kofi lɛ-fɪɪ **ɛdalɔ amʊ.**
       Kofi PRF-lose money DET
       'Kofi has lost the money'

    b. *Kofi lɛ-fɪɪ **ø.**
       'Kofi has lost it.'

    c. Kofi lɛ-fɪɪ **mʊ.**
       'Kofi has lost it.

    d. Kofi lɛ-fɪɪ **ø.**
       'Kofi is lost/has disappeared.'

Based on the animacy constraint regarding the 3SG object pronoun, example (64b) **Kofi lɛfɪɪ** which has a null representation of the antecedent object NP **ɛdalɔ** 'money' should have been the appropriate replacement of the underlying sentence **Kofi lɛfɪɪ ɛdalɔ amʊ** (64a). However, this is not so; rather, it is (64c) **Kofi lɛfɪɪ mʊ**, which overtly replaces the antecedent object with **mʊ**, which appropriately indexes the meaning contained in (64a) (i.e. 'Kofi has lost the money'). However, since example (64c) has an overt object pronoun **mʊ** 'him/her/it', it is ambiguous. That is, out of context, **mʊ** could refer to an animate or inanimate referent; hence, **Kofi lɛfɪɪ mʊ** could either index: 'Kofi has lost it (e.g. money: inanimate)' or 'Kofi has lost it (e.g. sheep: animate)'. In other words, the constraint on animacy distinction requiring that

only the site of an animate object NP receives an overt object pronominal marking while that of an inanimate receives zero marking is compromised, since the verb **fɪɪ** 'lose/disappear' requires speakers to obligatory fill the slot of an antecedent object NP with the object pronoun **mʊ** irrespective of its animacy status.

The ambiguity/neutralization created by the violation of the animacy constraint on object pronominalizaton is, however, permitted because of the transitivity value of the verb involved, **fɪɪ** 'lose/disappear'. **Fɪɪ** is an ambitransitive verb which can be used both transitively (64a) and intransitively (64d). Like other ambitransitive verbs in the language, **fɪɪ** has different interpretations depending on whether it is used transitively or intransitively in a clause. For instance, when used intransitively in (64d) (i.e. **Kofi lɛfɪɪ** 'Kofi has disappeared/is lost'), the understanding is that it the intransitive subject (S) **Kofi** who has undergone the change/state expressed by the verb **fɪɪ** 'lose/disappear'. However, when used transitively (64a, c), it is the object argument (O) **ɛdalɔ** 'money' which undergoes the change/state denoted by the verb. Put differently, in order to avoid the ambiguity or difficulty of deciding whether it is the (S) or (O) which undergoes a change/state expressed by **fɪɪ**, Nkami speakers rather violate the constraint on animacy by overtly stating the position of an inanimate antecedent object NP. Thus, the constraint requiring that the transitivity value of **fɪɪ** be obeyed ranks higher than one that requires animacy status of objects be maintained in the language. Other verbs that behave like **fɪɪ** include: **mʊmʊnʊ** 'crumble/squeeze', **kɪlaga** 'tilt', **bie** 'burst', **duidui** 'char' **tɔ** 'burn', **bɪa** 'break', **tʃidʒa** 'spoil', **pira** 'injure/wound', **sʊrʊ** 'be of age/spoil', **dɔŋ** 'soak', **ɲa** 'grimace/go bad', **wili** 'become cold', **tã** 'plug', **wu** 'blunt/die', **pɔŋ** 'close' and **tʃiɲi** 'wake'.

6. Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this paper to reckon and explain in detail the range of linguistic resources that Nkami speakers employ to distinguish humans from non-humans, and animates from inanimates. It has provided rich and varied evidence particularly in forms, nature and behaviours of pronouns, demonstratives, nominal affixes, nominal modifiers, dispositional verbs in basic locative constructions, among others. Areas where some of the animacy distinctions have been neutralized were also canvassed.

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