

## Introducing Nkami: A Forgotten Guang Language and People of Ghana

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### Abstract

This paper introduces a group of people and an endangered language called Nkami. I discuss issues concerning the historical, geo-political, religious, socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds of the people. Among others, it is shown that Nkami is a South-Guang language spoken by approximately 400 people in a resettlement community in the Afram Plains of Ghana. The overwhelming factor that preserves the language and holds its speakers together is the traditional institution of Afram (deity). Linguistically, Nkami is distinct from other regional languages. The data for the study were extracted from a large corpus collected from a documentation project on the language and people. In addition to introducing Nkami, this study also provides valuable data for future research as well as deepens our knowledge of other Guang and other regional languages.

**Keywords:** Nkami, Guang languages, Kwa language family, endangered undocumented language, areal-typological linguistic features.

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### Introduction

The purpose of this article is to introduce to the world of knowledge a group of people and a language called Nkami. The paper discusses issues concerning the historical, geographical, political, religious, demographical, social, economic and linguistic backgrounds of the people. Among other things, it is shown that Nkami is a South-Guang language spoken by about 400<sup>1</sup> people in a resettlement community, Amankwa (also known as Amankwakrom), in the Afram Plains of the Eastern Region of Ghana. The greatest factor that maintains the language and unites its speakers is the institution of Afram (deity). As expected, Nkami shares in the majority of the areal-typological features of neighbouring languages (e.g. Akan, Ga, Ewe and Guang languages). However, among its unusual typological

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<sup>1</sup> This figure does not include those who live in the Nkami diaspora.

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of my article, the editor of the *Legon Journal of the Humanities* (LJH), the participants of 2017 WALC/LAG conference and Charlotte O. Laryea, for their helpful comments and suggestions. For the people of Nkami, this is yours.

features is the fact that a head noun of a relative clause construction is never modified by a definite determiner (cf. Asante and Ma, 2016). It also shares with Akan as being the only two Kwa languages described (at least, as far as I am aware of) that obligatorily employ a resumptive pronoun strategy to mark the default slot of an object NP in focus. However, unlike most Guang (and Kwa) languages which show evidence of stem-controlled rounding harmony in regressive direction, Nkami shows evidence of progressive affix-controlled rounding harmony (cf. Akanlig-Pare & Asante, 2016).

The data for the discussion include observations in Amankwa, the spoken community, and spontaneous spoken and elicited texts, collected from about a hundred speakers of varied backgrounds in a period of one year (2013/2014).<sup>2</sup> Annotation and verification of data were carried out in conjunction with a team of two adult speakers of Nkami, Enoch Akuamoah and Kwaku Ketewa, and several other consultants.

The rest of the paper is divided into two main parts. The first part discusses non-linguistic issues including history and geography; leadership and governance; festivals; land, resources and settler communities; population; education and infrastructure; and economy. The second part concentrates on linguistic issues, where Nkami's linguo-genetic classification is established. It also discusses Nkami's socio-linguistic background, factors that threaten/boost its continuous existence, and existing works and language development. Finally, it provides a typological profile of the general grammatical features of Nkami, and then brings to the fore some of its revealing features that are of cross-linguistic typological and theoretical interests.

### Non-linguistic Issues

This part of the paper discusses non-linguistic issues including history and geography; leadership and governance; festivals; land, resources and settler communities; population; education and infrastructure; and economy of the people of Nkami.

### History and Geography

The name 'Nkami' refers to the language and the people who speak it. Legend<sup>3</sup> has it that the name was derived from the expression **ɲkɛɛ mi** 'I remained here.' Thus, due to wars, like other Guang language speaking groups, they had to migrate from down south to settle at several different places before

<sup>2</sup> Portions of this article are taken from a doctoral dissertation which forms part of a larger documentation project on Nkami. The documentation project was sponsored by the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme (ELDP), SOAS (grant: IGS0228).

<sup>3</sup> Much of the information provided here is common knowledge shared by the majority of the ordinary people of Nkami. I am, however, indebted to Nei Ama Asiedua I, Nei Ama Aseidua II, Naɲɲɲɲ Kwasi Anto, among others, for their beautiful narrations.



In order to give way for the construction of the Volta Lake, in 1964 the Nkrumah government resettled them at Amankwa, which is about eight kilometers away from the lake but about 30 kilometers away from their original settlement, Nkami Didalo. Apart from Amankwa, there is a sizeable number of Nkamis living in nearby communities such as Asikasu, Donkorkrom, Adeembra, Asempanaye, Abomasarefo, Samanhyia and Apesika.

Administratively, the Nkamis belong to the Kwahu North District and the Afram Plains North Constituency, with Donkorkrom as its head. The Nkamis are bounded on the south and west by the Afram River, in the north by the Obosom River, and on the east by the Volta Lake. Beyond the water bodies, they are bounded in the west by the Kwahus, on the east by the Ewes (Kpandos) and Nkonyas, on the south by the Anums, and on the north by the people of Akloso and Bono. The geographical reference for Amankwa, their current settlement, is Latitude 7°03'09.24 and Longitude 01°32.22 (Google Earth).

### Leadership and Governance

Nkami has three major traditional leaders: *Nkami Bleɲaw* 'paramount chief', *Dhɪmaa* 'queen', and *Aframhɪmaa* 'wife of Afram'. The *Nkami Bleɲaw* doubles as the *Kwahu Mponoahene*. In this capacity, he is the representative of the *Ɔmanhene* 'paramount chief' of Kwahu Traditional Area in the several islands around the eastern border of Kwahu. Before the Nkamis settled at Nkami Didalo 'Old Nkami', the land belonged to the Kwahus. However, as a result of their successful exploits in past wars and good relationship with the Kwahus, an agreement was reached between the two groups for the people of Nkami to represent the Kwahus across their eastern border. As a result of that pact, the *Nkami Bleɲaw* assumed the overlordship of Kwahu's eastern territory. It is reported that in order to seal the pact, some Nkami women, mostly royals, were married to some Kwahus in some Kwahu traditional states such as Tafo, Obomeng, Asaaka and Abetifi. In view of that, and in order to reunite with their descendants from the diaspora to help in the development of Nkami, in recent times, some of these royal descendants have been installed as *Nkami Bleɲaw* 'paramount chiefs'. Precisely, all the last three successive paramount chiefs, Okuntun Diawuo, Agyepong Messah and Okuntun Sakyi, have come from their royal descendants in Kwahu. Unlike other Guang groups such as Krakyi, Nkonya, Efutu, Awutu, and Gonja, the Nkamis practise the matrilineal system of inheritance. As with Akans, nephews inherit and ascend the thrones of their uncles when the latter are no more.<sup>6</sup> Like many other cultures of Ghana, the paramount chief of Nkami has other sub-chiefs who support him to lead his people. These include the *Krontihini*, *Akwamuhini*, *ɔɖfiamɪ*, *Dɔaasihini*, *Adɪsiehini*, *Twafɔhini*, *Benkumhini*, *Barimhini*, *Nifahini*, *Mmrantehini* (*Asafoatɛ*), etc.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> This appears to be one of the many things that the Nkamis have 'borrowed' from the Akans.

<sup>7</sup> All these chieftaincy titles are likely loans from Akan, a dominant language and culture in Ghana. Synchronically, I consider them as Nkami words that is why I represent them in Nkami orthography, and not in Akan.

The *Nkami Ohimaa* ‘queen’ is revered as the ‘mother’ of the paramount chief, and she nominates the heir to his throne. She serves as an adviser to the paramount chief and spearheads the development of women and children in the community.

The *Aframhima*, ‘wife of Afram’, is the spiritual leader of Nkami. Afram is the name of both a river and a powerful deity/shrine in Ghana. As the spiritual wife of Afram, the *Aframhima* heads the Afram shrine. Unlike the *Nkami Blegaw* and *Ohimaa*, the selection of the *Aframhima* is not done by mortals; *Naaɲunu Afram*, ‘Afram deity’, does it by himself. In a form of a spirit, *Naaɲunu Afram* pokes whoever he decides on as his wife. Before installation, the designated woman is later taken through some traditional rites and customs upon the death of a sitting *Aframhima*. In real life, the *Aframhima* can marry another man after the performance of some rituals. All meetings between the two must be sanctioned spiritually and ritually. Like the *Blegaw*, the *Aframhima* also has a group of elders who help her to carry out the activities associated with her position. The most authoritative is the chief priest, who is responsible for carrying out all the routine activities at the shrine. It is noteworthy that the language for the worship and service of Afram is strictly Nkami.

## Festivals

Like the Akans, the Nkamis celebrate the *Akwasidai* festival which comes off every forty days. In between the *Akwasidai*, there are other minor celebrations such as *Wukudai*, *BinadaDapaa* and *Fofie*. Besides these, there is a bigger festival called *Odzodzi* ‘yam-eating’, which is normally held annually in the month of September. The significance of *Odzodzi* is to thank *Naaɲunu Afram* ‘Afram deity’ for providing them with good harvest, and to offer him reverence by allowing him to have the first bite of the new harvest. As a result, before the *Odzodzi* is celebrated, all Nkamis are forbidden to eat newly harvested yams. During the period, the *Aframhima* sits in a palanquin, moving to-and-fro Amankwa and the Afram River. There are several mysteries and taboos surrounding the *Odzodzi* festival. Among other things, it is said that it rains all day anytime *Odzodzi* is celebrated. During the celebration of *Odzodzi*, only women are permitted to play a particular type of drums called Afram drums, as any man who dares to play them develops hernia. Secondly, men can dance to the drums but can only do so by dancing backwards, not forwards. Moreover, during the matching to-and-fro Amankwa and the Afram River, anyone who slips and drops to the ground does not live to see the following *Odzodzi* festival. When the queen sits in the palanquin, no one is permitted to take photographs of her. People who act contrarily usually receive one or more of the following as punishment: (i) the image of *Aframhima* never appears, (ii) the camera could get damaged, and (iii) the photographer could suffer serious consequences such as illnesses or even death.

## Land, Resources and Settler Communities<sup>8</sup>

As the occupant of the Kwahu Mponoa stool, Nkami has large resources and several settler communities within and around the Volta Lake to the north of the Obosom River, and to the south of Anum. There are at least thirty four (34) settler communities that come under Nkami's authority. These communities pay timely homage to them by offering cattle, sheep, drinks, etc. All 34 settler communities are listed below with some briefs about them. The list is categorised into four major groups in the following order: (a) inland settler communities, (b) settler communities around the bank of the Volta Lake, (c) settler communities on the Volta Lake (island communities), and (d) settler communities around the Obosom River and close to the borders of the Brong Ahafo Region.

A. Inland Communities: The inland communities total 4 comprising:

No.	Community	Remarks
i.	Asikasu	It is close to Donkorkrom, the district capital. There are pockets of Nkami speakers in Asikasu.
ii.	Apesika I	It is also known as Seebia Akura. It is close to Abomasarefo (Kwahu dominated town). There are a few Nkami speakers there.
iii.	Asempanaye	It comes after Amankwa on the main Amankwa-Donkorkrom road. The occupants are mainly Dagaabas, originally from the Upper West, with a handful of Nkamis.
iv.	Apiabra	It comes after Asempanaye on the main Amankwa-Donkorkrom road. The Asafuatɛ of Nkami, Naajini Anokye Kimpo, doubles as the chief of Apiabra.

B. Around the bank of the Volta Lake: There are a total of seventeen settler communities constituting this group. They are mainly people who speak Ewe (Gbe)-related languages.

No.	Community	Remarks
i.	Amankwa Tornu	It is close to Amankwa.
ii.	Agodeke	It is close to Teacher Korpe and Wofa Korpe.

<sup>8</sup> I am indebted to Wofa Akuamoah, one of my language consultants, for leading the research and gathering most of the data here.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
iii.	Nyuinyui I	It is close to Nyuinyui II.
iv.	Nyuinyui II	It is close to Agodeke and Nyuinyui I.
v.	Bubu	It is close to Andi Korpe and Alekpo.
vi.	Andi Korpe	It is close to Alekpo.
vii.	Agohomey	It is on the north of Bubu, and close to Andi Korpe and Alekpo.
viii.	Zikpo	It is close to Nyuinyui I.
ix.	Teacher Korpe	It is close to Agodeke.
x.	Wofa Korpe	It is close to Agodeke.
xi.	Didiada	It is close to Wofa Korpe.
xii.	Alekpo	It is close to Bubu. Alekpo is under the tutelage of the Twafohini of Nkami.
xiii.	Salepe	It is close to Meikpor.
xiv.	Awonakorfe	It is close to Salepe.
xv.	Meikpor	It is close to Salepe, Amankwa and Kpala Island.
xvi.	Agege	It is close to Meikpor.
xvii.	Bokina	It is close to Agege

C. Island communities: These communities are located on some islands on the Volta Lake. They are fourteen in number and they include remnants of two of the four Old Nkami towns, Nkami and Brewbrew. The current occupants are mainly Ewe (Gbe)-related speakers.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
i.	Old Preda	It is the original location of today's residents of Preda in Amankwa (see map 2 below).
ii.	Old Brɛbrɛw	It is the location of a former traditional state of Nkami.
iii.	Old Nkami	It is the location of the former capital state of Nkami.
iv.	Kpɔve	It is close to Nkonya Mangoase/Dafɔ. It is under the tutelage of the Krontihini of Nkami.
v.	Basampa	It is close to Old Nkami.
vi.	Agyei Boso	It is also known as Agyei Bosom.
vii.	Kpala	It is close to Preda and Agyei Boso.
viii.	Akakpo	It is close to Kpala.
ix.	Anakpokpo	It is close to Akakpo and Kpala.
x.	Tʃɛtʃɛkpo	It is on the same island as Dzakpata and Drɛɛnlɛ.
xi.	Drɛɛnlɛ	It is on the same island as Dzakpata and Tʃɛtʃɛkpo.
xii.	Dzakpata	It is on the same island as Drɛɛnlɛ and Tʃɛtʃɛkpo.
xiii.	Akpagyakpo	It is close to Dzakpata.
xiv.	Alemanɔ	It is close to Akpagyakpo.

D. Around the Obosom River: There is only one settler community in this group.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
i.	Apesika II	It is close to the border of the Brong Ahafo Region.  There are a few Nkami speakers there.



## Population

Judging from the fact that Nkami occupies the Kwahu Mponoa throne coupled with its large size of land resources, it should not be difficult to predict that Nkami had, at least, some few thousands of people in the past. However, a census conducted by my team (consisting of the two consultants and I) on the field indicates that there are less than four hundred<sup>9</sup> Nkamis living currently in Amankwa,<sup>10</sup> though there are about twice or more of them living in neighbouring communities and in the diaspora, especially Accra, Kumasi and Nkawkaw. It is believed that their evacuation from Nkami Didalo on the Volta Lake caused them to lose their belongings, farms and livelihoods, and that might have accounted for their penchant for economic migration into the cities. The good thing, however, is that the majority of them still keep in touch with their families back home. Many of them frequently visit home, especially during *Odzodzi* 'yam festival', funerals, Christmas and Easter.

## Education and Infrastructure

Nkami can be said to be one of the well-endowed non-urban communities in Ghana in terms of availability of and accessibility to educational facilities. It has structures that accommodate pupils from pre-school to high (technical) school level. Its technical school, Amankwakrom Fisheries, Agricultural and Technical Institute (AFATI), is reported to have been earmarked by the Nkrumah government to be one of the hubs of technical and agricultural training at the high school level in Ghana. Unfortunately, owing to lack of commitment by successive governments, that dream is yet to be realized. Because of the availability of educational facilities in the community, most Nkamis have been to school and have some level of formal education. The community has produced a handful of trained teachers, and these teachers represent the class of people who have attained the highest level of education in the community. Unfortunately, however, like many other non-urban domains in Ghana, education appears to be on the decline in Nkami. For instance, all the trained teachers of Nkami are over 50 years, and presently, very few children advance to the senior high school while the majority of them are unable to complete junior high school. The disparity between the education of girls and boys is conspicuously witnessed in Nkami. For instance, none of the trained teachers is a female and very few girls go beyond the upper primary level<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> This figure does not support estimates from others such as SIL, Ethnologue, who put it around 7000, and describe the Nkami's status as vigorous.

<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, time did not permit the author to analyse the detailed demographic information gathered from the census.

<sup>11</sup> The reason for this is not readily known though it is likely that, as in many other cultures of Ghana, the people of Nkami placed/place more emphasis on men's formal education than on women's. The high rate of teenage pregnancy in the community could also be a factor.

Since the mid-2000's, the community has had access to electricity. There are about three boreholes in addition to a locally dug dam, named *Dhimi Abura*, that provide water to the about 3000 inhabitants of Amankwa. The road from the district capital, Donkorkrom, to Nkami and many parts in the district is not asphalted.

## **Economy**

The main economic activity in Nkami is agriculture. Cassava and yam are the two major crops they invest in. They also do some maize, groundnut and beans farming. Goats, sheep and pigs are generally reared on free-range basis. As in many areas of Ghana, the greater majority of Nkami farmers practice subsistence farming. Gari-making is also a major business in Amankwa.

## **Linguistic Issues**

The remaining part of the paper concentrates on linguistic issues. It establishes the linguo-genetic classification by positing that the language belongs to the southern group of the Guang languages. Secondly, it looks at Nkami's peculiar socio-linguistic situation as a language spoken in a resettlement community of multiple languages. It also discusses some factors that threaten/boost its continuous existence, in addition to some existing works and language development. Finally, it provides a typological profile of the general grammatical features of Nkami, and then brings to the fore some of the most prominent issues of Nkami that are of cross-linguistic typological and theoretical interests.

## **Linguo-genetic Classification of Nkami**

The genetic and linguistic classification of Nkami has undergone some conjecturing or speculation until Asante (2016a) finally confirmed it through research. For instance, in his trip report to the Afram Plains in 2005, Peacock guessed that Nkami might be a North Guang language. Thus, he notes that "no language data was collected, but I would guess that Nkami is a Northern Guang language, closer to Nkonya than Chumburung, Kaakye or Gikyode" (Peacock, n. d., p. 2). Beyond that, the Nkami people have always considered themselves a group that belongs to the Guang language family. Some other Guang speakers such as Nkonya and Gwa (Anum) speakers I interacted with also corroborated this belief. Having worked on the language for a while, I was able to confirm their belief. Thus, with my working language competence in Nkami now, I am able to make some meaning, however insignificant, from speakers of other Guang languages or, at least, I can determine who is either or not speaking a Guang language. To cement this belief, my team undertook a miniature study to compare Nkami and some neighbouring languages: Ewe, Akan, Nkonya and

Anum (the last two are also Guang languages).<sup>12</sup> The results firmly indicated a strong relation between Nkami and the other Guang languages. It revealed that Nkami is closest to Nkonya, closer to Anum, less close to Akan, and least close to Ewe. See example (2) for some cognates showing the similarity between Nkami and some other Guang languages.

(2) Some cognates of Nkami and some other Guang Languages<sup>13</sup>

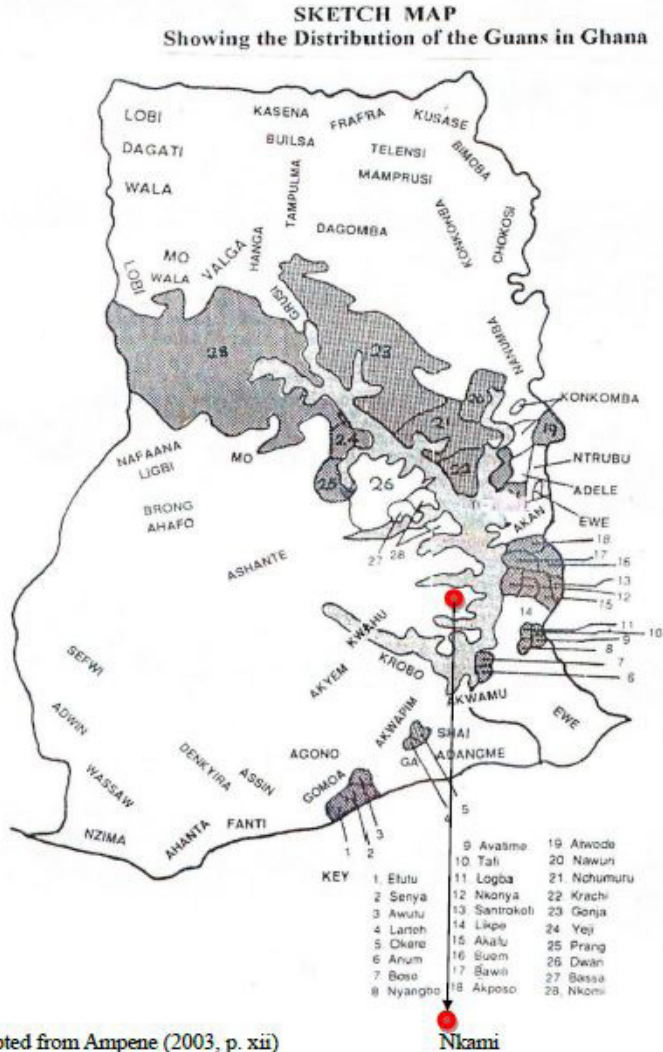
English	Gonja	Chumburung	Nawuri	Gwa (Boso)	Nkonya	Nkami
Mouth	kò-nò	ká-nò	gò-nò	áɲɔ	ò-nò	ɔ-nò
Head	ku-mú	ku-ɲú	gu-mú	ɲú	ɲwú	e-ɲú
Breast	kí-ɲápö	kí-ɲápö	gí-ɲápö	áho	ɲɔpö	ɲɔgɔ
Eat	dʒi	dʒi	dʒi	dʒi	dʒi	dʒi
Grow	däŋ	däŋ	däŋ	de	dã	dã
Be ill	lɔ	lɔ	lɔ	lʷɛ	lɔ	lɔ
Die	wu	wü	wü	wu	wú	wu
Wet	pö	pö	pö	hɔɛ	fɔ	fɔ
Day	ka-tʃé	ka-ke	ga-ke	ntʃi	nke	aká/atʃé
Sore	é-lɔ	lɔ	ɔ-lɔ	alʷɛ	ɔ-lɔ	ɛ-lɔ
Stranger	é-fɔ	ɔ-fɔ	ɔ-fɔ	áfʷɛ	ɔ-fɔ	ɔ-fɔ
Thief	o-yu	o-yú	o-yú	áyuú	o-yu	o-yú
Right	dʒisä	ki- dʒisè	dʒisä	dʒíba	dʒɔpɪ	e-dʒe
You (sg.)	fú	fú	fú	wú	fɔ	wɔ

<sup>12</sup> The recording can be accessed online from Nkami’s collections at ELAR of Endangered Languages Documentation Programme (ELDP), SOAS, via the title “nkami\_languagecomparison\_12041”.

<sup>13</sup> With the exception of the Nkonya and Nkami’s cognates which are mine, and those of Gwa (Boso) which are from Michael Obiri Yeboah, all the others are taken from Snider (1989a).

Thus, there is no doubt at all that Nkami is a Guang language. Any speaker or linguist familiar with Guang languages will easily make this fact out. See in (3) a map indicating the location of Nkami in relation to other Guang languages.

**(3) A map showing the present location of Nkami in relation to other Guang Languages**



Adapted from Ampene (2003, p. xii)

Nkami has no distinct dialects though it is possible that it had in the past when they (the Nkamis) lived on the four different archipelagoes in Nkami Dɔ̀dalo ‘Old Nkami’. For instance, synchronically there are a few variations in the realization of some forms such as the marking of the habitual aspect when the subject of a clause is the IPL pronoun, which some speakers attribute to former geographical associations. Thus, the clause ‘we (habitually) dance’ may be realized as either of the following:

- |     |    |                          |    |                          |
|-----|----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| (4) | a. | <b>ani-tʃa</b>           | b. | <b>ani-ɔɔ-tʃa</b>        |
|     |    | IPL-HAB.dance            |    | IPL-HAB-dance            |
|     |    | ‘We (habitually) dance.’ |    | ‘We (habitually) dance.’ |

A critical observation of the speech of speakers, however, shows that neither of the two realizations is exclusive to any particular group.

### Is Nkami a North or South-Guang Language?

Having settled on Nkami’s classification as a Guang language, I set myself the task of determining which of the two Guang groups Nkami belongs to. Thus, does Nkami belong to the North-Guang division including Gonja, Chumburung, Krachi (Kaakyi), Gichode, Nawuri, etc.; or the South-Guang division including Larteh, Cherepong, Gwa (Anum/Boso), Awutu, Efutu, Nkonya, etc.? I posit that Nkami belongs to the South-Guang group based on two parameters, linguistic and geographical closeness.

Geographical location has been one of the key factors for classifying languages into language families, since speakers of languages or dialects found spatially close to each other usually tend to show more similarities in terms of their linguistic properties than those found farther apart. On this note, a careful look at the position of Nkami Dɔ̀dalo ‘Old Nkami’ in (1) and Amankwa ‘New Nkami’ in (3) seems to indicate that Nkami is geographically closer to the South-Guang languages than the North-Guang languages. Consequently, it may not be wrong to predict that Nkami is more likely to belong to the South-Guang division than the North-Guang division.

More instructively, in examining the literature on Guang languages, one notes that there are six major linguistic innovations/features that have been used to distinguish the North-Guang languages from the South-Guang languages (cf. Stewart, 1970; Reneike, 1972; Snider, 1989a, 1989b, Snider, 1990a, 1990b; Asante, 2009). As we shall shortly observe, Nkami behaves similarly to the South-Guang languages in all six innovations/features. The innovations/features are grouped into two: (i) four innovations/features that unite the North-Guang languages, and (ii) two innovations/features that unite the South-Guang

languages. We will start with the former and continue with the latter. After each innovation, examples are given to indicate that Nkami belongs to the South-Guang but not the North-Guang group.

### Features that Unite the North-Guang Languages

First, the North-Guang languages do not have phonemic /ĩ/ and /õ/ due to vowel mergers in Proto-Tano (cf. Stewart, 1970; Snider, 1989a, b, 1999a). However, as the examples in (5) show, /ĩ/ and /õ/ are phonemic in Nkami and so, based on this parameter, Nkami is distinct from the North-Guang group.

(5)	Non-nasal	Nasal
	<b>bo</b> ‘be.LOC/have’	<b>bõ</b> ‘crow, smell/sniff’
	<b>efi</b> ‘leaf, bush, skin/husk’	<b>efĩ</b> ‘rubbish, dirt’

Secondly, the alveolar nasal /n/ of Proto-Guang (PG) is realized as a palatal nasal /ɲ/ when it precedes front high vowels in the North-Guang languages (cf. Snider, 1990a). This is schematised as:

(6) PG \*n → ɲ (North-Guang)

$$\left( \begin{array}{l} +\text{Nasal} \\ +\text{Cons} \\ -\text{High} \end{array} \right) \rightarrow [+High] \quad / \text{ \_\_\_\_ } i$$

However, synchronically Nkami has several words that have front high vowels following the alveolar nasal consonant, as (7) exemplifies.

(7)	<b>ni</b> ‘move’	<b>nna</b> ‘cook’
	<b>ni</b> ‘this.is, clausal linker’	<b>nani</b> ‘walk’
	<b>bni</b> ‘be.cooked, be.near’	<b>bani</b> ‘to acquire something for free’

Here too, Nkami does not behave like the North-Guang languages.

Thirdly, Snider (1990a) observes that the post-coda voiceless velar stop /k/ in Proto-Guang has totally assimilated to a preceding velar nasal in the North-Guang languages, as (8) schematises.

(8) PG \***ŋk** → **ŋŋ** (North-Guang)

$$\begin{pmatrix} +\text{Back} \\ +\text{Cons} \\ -\text{Nasal} \end{pmatrix} \rightarrow [+Nasal] / [+Nasal] \underline{\quad}$$

However, as exemplified in (9), there are many Nkami words that show the sequence of /ŋ/ and /k/. As a result, Nkami does not also share this innovation with the North-Guang languages.

(9) <b>ŋkami</b> ‘Nkami’	<b>ŋkɪla</b> ‘shin’,
<b>ŋka</b> ‘afternoon greeting’	<b>ŋkɔ̃</b> ‘different’
<b>ŋkita</b> ‘light soup’	<b>ŋklɛɔ</b> ‘beside’

Fourthly, the voiceless velar stop /k/ has become approximant intervocalically in the North-Guang languages (Snider, 1990a), as (10) illustrates.

(10) PG \***k** → **w** (North-Guang)

$$\begin{pmatrix} +\text{Back} \\ -\text{Cont} \\ -\text{Nasal} \end{pmatrix} \rightarrow [+Cont] / V \underline{\quad} V$$

However, as we find in (11), Nkami has several words that have the voiceless velar stop /k/ occurring between two vowels. Consequently, Nkami does not share this innovation as well with the North-Guang languages.

(11) <b>okisi</b> ‘god’	<b>akosi</b> ‘yam mound’
<b>akɪtoa</b> ‘groundnut’	<b>ɔka</b> ‘wife’
<b>nsɔkɔ</b> ‘chewing stick’	<b>ɔkɔli</b> ‘one’

Thus far, we have seen that Nkami does not share any of the four innovations that unite the North-Guang languages. Now, we turn to the two innovations uniting the South-Guang languages.

## Features that Unite the South-Guang Languages

One of the prominent features that separates the two groups is that whereas the South-Guang languages drop off the initial *K* of some nominals beginning with *KV* nominal prefixes, the North-Guang languages do not (cf. Reneike, 1972). This is illustrated in (12).

(12)	Mouth	Head	
PG	*kɔ-nɔ̃	*ku-ŋũ	
Gonja	kɔ-nɔ̃	ku-mũ	
Chumburung	kɔ-nɔ̃	ku-ŋũ	
Krachi	ka-nɔ̃	ku-mũ	North-Guang
Gichode	gɔ-nɔ̃	gu-mũ	
Nawuri	gɔ-nɔ̃	gu-mũ	
Larteh	a-nɔ̃	ɔ-ŋwũ	
Cherepong	a-nɔ̃	ɔ-ŋwũ	
Gwa	a-nɔ̃	ɔ-ŋwũ	
Awutu	a-nɔ̃	e-nũ	South-Guang
Efutu	a-nɔ̃	ɔ-nũo	
Nkonya <sup>14</sup>	ɔ-nɔ̃	e-ŋwũ	
Nkami	ɔ-nɔ̃	e-ŋũ	

(Snider, 1989a, p. 117)

Thus, whereas all the proposed North-Guang languages maintain the *KV* nominal prefixal system, all the South-Guang languages elide the *K* and retain only the *V*. As we observe from Nkami's cognates, both ɔnɔ̃ 'mouth' and eŋũ 'head' have their *K* deleted while retaining only the *V*. Thus, Nkami behaves like the South-Guang languages.

<sup>14</sup> Snider (1989a, p. 117) places Nkonya in the North-Guang group. However, I have here placed it in the South-Guang because it is adequately shown in Asante (2009) that Nkonya is closer to the latter than the former. Nkami's insertion is also mine.



Lastly, one of the features Snider (1989a, 1990a) assigns to the North-South Guang division is that whereas the North-Guang languages maintain their *VN* (vowel-nasal consonant) forms from Proto-Guang, the South-Guang languages do not. In the South-Guang languages the final *N* has been elided. However, before deletion, its nasal feature was transferred to the preceding *V*.<sup>15</sup> This is exemplified in (13).

(13)

	Bite	
PG	<b>*duŋ</b>	
Gonja	<b>duŋ</b>	
Chumburung	<b>duŋ</b>	
Krachi	<b>duŋ</b>	North-Guang
Gichode	<b>duŋ</b>	
Nawuri	<b>duŋ</b>	
Larteh	<b>dũ</b>	
Cherepong	<b>dũ</b>	
Gwa	<b>dũ</b>	
Awutu	<b>dũ</b>	South Guang
Efutu	<b>dũ</b>	
Nkonya	<b>dũ</b>	
Nkami	<b>dũ</b>	

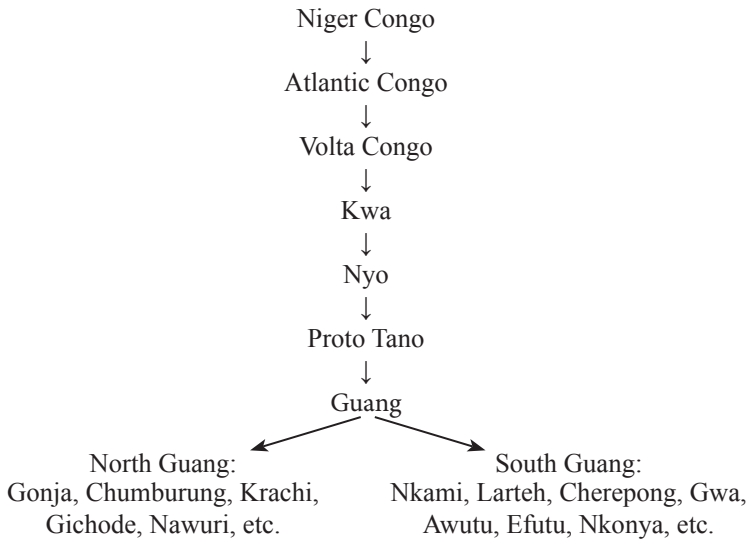
(Snider, 1990a, p. 57)

Looking at this innovation too, one observes that Nkami behaves similarly to the South-Guang languages since it has also transferred the nasal quality from *N* to *V* in *VN* forms.

In sum, we have seen from the foregoing that Nkami shares with the South-Guang languages in all six linguistic features that are used to categorise the Guang languages into North and South divisions. This strong empirical evidence gives substance to the position that Nkami should be placed in the South-Guang group. The tree below provides a detailed genetic classification of Nkami.

<sup>15</sup> Presently, the nasalised *V* is phonemic in the South-Guang languages.

(14) A tree representing the classification of Nkami's language family



This notwithstanding, following Asante (2009), I propose that future work that thoroughly looks at the whole classification of the Guang languages may be necessary because of the following two reasons. First, as far as I am aware, no single work, besides this, assembles more than four linguistic resources to support the North-South Guang classification. For instance, in an attempt to justify the North-Guang group, as opposed to the South-Guang group, Snider (1990a) notes the following:

Among the innovations discussed are three which support the genetic unity of the North Guang branch. Until the present, the validity of claims which support the existence of this node has rested upon only a single innovation, i.e., that first proposed in Stewart (1970) and confirmed by Snider (1989b). This greatly strengthens, then, the claims for the North Guang branch. (p. 37)

Thus, by implication, if he (Snider) had been successful in his project, then, the validity of claims for the unity of the North-Guang languages, as opposed to the South-Guang languages, would have increased to four from the initial one from Stewart (1970). Thus, relying on just six linguistic resources to justify the classification of a major language family into two groups may be inadequate.

Secondly, a critical look at the evidence adduced above for the classification also shows that all six linguistic features are phonologically related, i.e. they involve either sound change or deletion. Since language is not all about sounds (phonology), a more comprehensive study that expands on the phonological differences and also looks at other variations pertaining to other aspects of the grammar, e.g. morphological, syntactic and semantic variations, of the Guang languages would be appropriate.

### **Socio-linguistic Background**

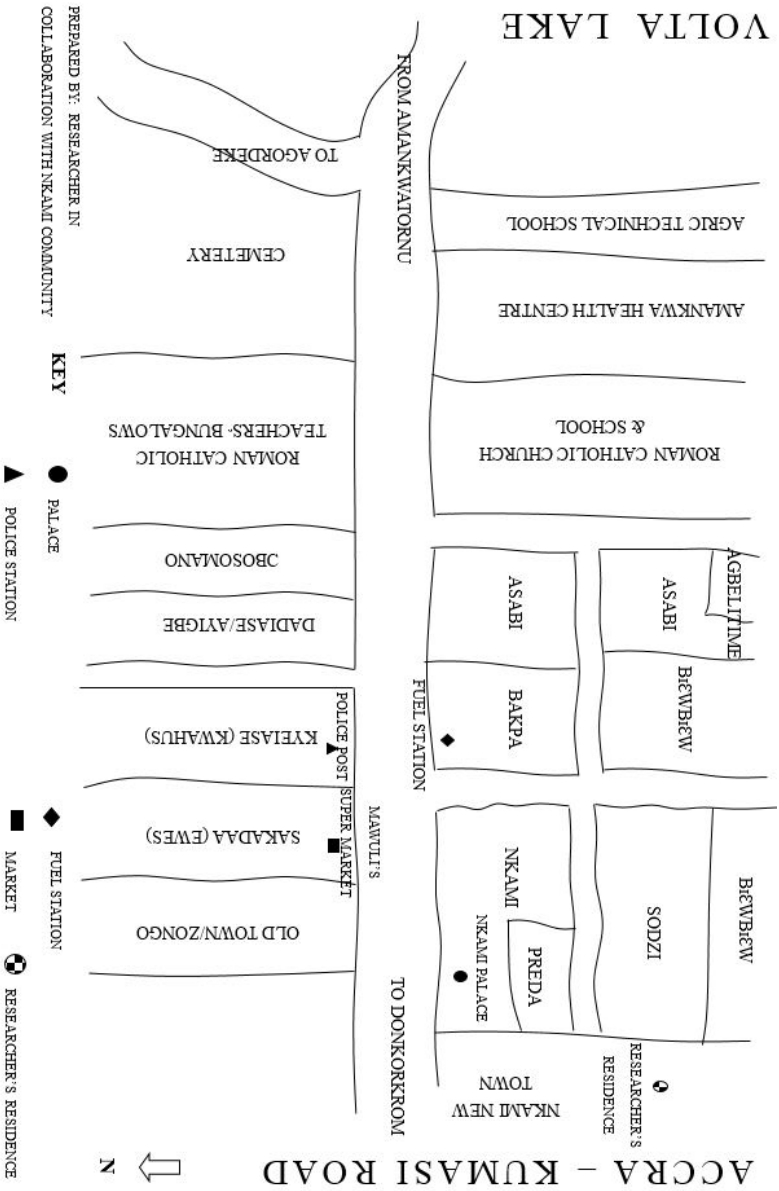
The socio-linguistic situation of Nkami is quite interesting. As mentioned before, the Nkamis were resettled in Amankwa in order to make way for the construction of the Volta Lake. And as common with most resettlement communities, Nkamis do not live in Amankwa alone. In fact, Amankwa (Amankwakrom) was named after a Kwahu<sup>16</sup> hunter by name Amankwa, who first settled in the area. Thus, before the resettlement, there were a number of Kwahus living in Amankwa. Apart from the Kwahus, several other different groups also live in Amankwa. Notable sub-communities in Amankwa are Agbelitime (Ewe-related speakers), Bakpa (Ewe-related speakers), Asabi (Anum/Gwa speakers), Sodzi (Ewe-related speakers), Preda (speakers of Northern languages including Gruma, Chamba, Sisaale, Kotokoli), Kyeiase (Kwahu speakers), Sakadaa (Ewe-related speakers), Dadiase (Ewe-related speakers), and Old Town/Zongo (speakers of Northern languages). Four different sub-communities make up the Nkami spoken community within Amankwa: Nkami, Bɛwɔɛw, ɔbosomano and Nkami New Town.

The sketched maps (15) and (16) in the next two pages respectively depict the different designated sub-communities within Amankwa and the languages spoken by their inhabitants.

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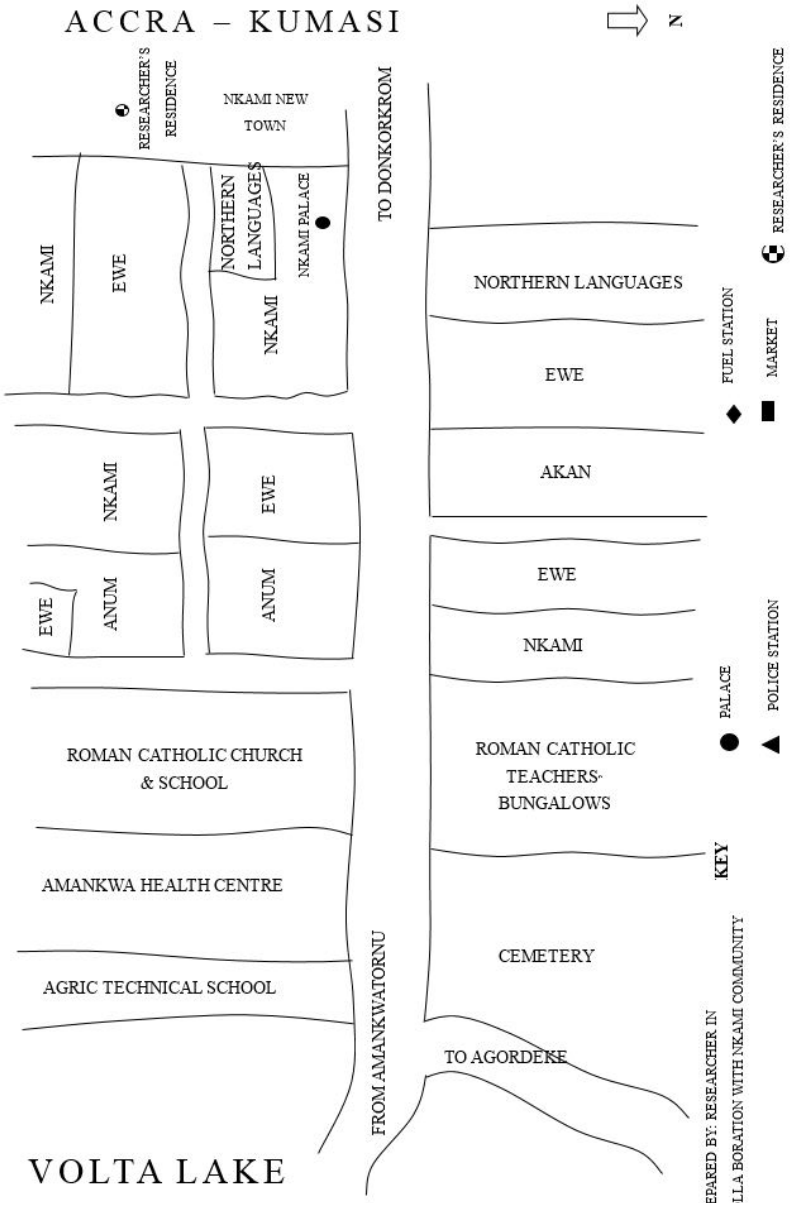
<sup>16</sup> Kwahu is the name of a dialect of Akan (Kwa, Niger Congo) and the people who speak it.

(15) A map showing the location of the different ethnic groups in Amankwa



A map showing the location of speakers of the different languages in Amankwa

(16)



It must be noted that though the locations of all these sub-communities are well designated, obviously, in reality due to factors such as free movement, intermarriage, and economic need, each sub-community has occupants that originate from other ethnic groups.

In terms of population, the speakers of Ewe (Gbe)-related languages constitute the largest group followed by the Nkamis. The population of the Ewes is about twice that of the Nkamis. After the Nkamis come the Asabis (Anums), the Northern groups and the Akans.

More crucially, as a result of the large population of Ewes in Amankwa and within the Afram Plains, the proximity of the Afram Plains and the Volta Region, the economic might of Ewes in the Afram Plains, especially in trade, fishing and education, and intermarriages between Ewes and Nkamis, almost every adult Nkami gets to speak Ewe. Some Nkamis speak Anum and Nkonya languages too because of intermarriages as well as their cultural, linguistic and geographical affinities. Furthermore, presently the majority of young Nkamis first acquire Akan before they acquire their own language. This is probably so because of the strong historical relations between them and the Akans, specifically the Kwahus. In fact, many Nkami speakers will identify themselves as Kwahus due to the fact that their grandmothers or great grandmothers were married to Kwahus (refer to the pages above on historical relations). Moreover, their resettlement from Old Nkami to Amankwa in 1964 appears to have accentuated the situation. Unlike Amankwa, where they share the same community with people from different language groups, in Old Nkami they lived alone as one Nkami nation though they were always in contact with other ethnic groups through trade, fishing and wars, among others.<sup>17</sup> Here, it is fair to note that it is not only Nkami speakers who learn to speak other languages: some members of other ethnic groups also acquire Nkami. Thus, it is possible to find a number of people from almost all the identifiable ethnic groups in Amankwa who are competent in Nkami somehow. Generally, however, non-Nkamis may pick ‘some’ Nkami when they marry or befriend them, or live within the Nkami designated sub-communities for a long period. One of such people is Agbo, an Ewe corn miller in Amankwa, who picked Nkami from his Nkami close friends he attended elementary school with.<sup>18</sup>

### **Factors that Threaten Nkami’s Continuous Existence**

The first factor that threatens the continuous existence of Nkami is the fact that the Nkami people live in a small community with speakers of other dominant communities. Thus, unlike Nkami Didalo where they lived alone as one Nkami nation, in Amankwa they share the same small space with other dominant groups, particularly the Akans and Ewes. In this way, Nkami competes with the other

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<sup>17</sup> See the next section for some factors that threaten Nkami’s continuous existence.

<sup>18</sup> A video recording of an interview the researcher had with Agbo in Nkami titled “nkami\_foreignersspeaknkami\_agbo\_310714” can be accessed online from Nkami’s collections at ELAR, SOAS.

dominant languages for usage and this has forced it to be mainly used in domestic settings.

Relatedly, because of the peculiar socio-linguistic setting of the speakers of Nkami, intermarriages between Nkamis and speakers of dominant communities are very common in Amankwa. In fact, it appears that in every home there are one or more people who have spouses from other ethnic groups. Generally, the risk of losing Nkami by children is higher when intermarriages are contracted within members of the dominant language communities and vice-versa. Usually, such children identify more with the dominant language group. It appears to me, therefore, that the question of who is an Nkami, especially for children of intermarriages, largely depends on where they reside with their families. If blood was the only means to determine the linguo-ethnic identity of an individual, then, there may be no single individual now who is a 'true' Nkami. Not only is the level of intermarriages high, but they have lived with it for a very long period. In fact, the oldest man in Nkami now, Naapuni Kwasi Anto, the Barimhuni of Nkami (over 100 years), is a product of intermarriage. I believe he, like others, considers himself an Nkami largely because he lived in Nkami.<sup>19</sup>

Further, the current status of the language which renders it a domestic language and failure to use it as a medium of instruction or a subject taught at school is also a major threat. High levels of economic migration to the cities due to lack of interest in agricultural activities by the youth and the inadequacy of other economic activities in the area are also another challenge to the survival of Nkami. The vast majority of children of these migrants do not acquire the Nkami language.

Another factor is the unwillingness of many parents, even in Amankwa, to pass on Nkami to their young ones. The common reasons for their use of Ewe or Akan, instead of Nkami, as the medium of communication with their children often boil down to socio-economic considerations: that their children would be better off socially and economically speaking the dominant languages than Nkami.

### **Factors that Boost Nkami's Continuous Existence**

The first factor that holds the Nkami people together and preserves their language is the institution of Afram (Afram shrine/deity). It is the single most important reason that unites and solidifies the Nkamis as one people. Almost every Nkami in and outside Amankwa takes pride in Afram because he is generally seen by Nkamis, irrespective of their religious inclinations, as a protector, and a good, compassionate and benevolent parent. As a result, most Nkamis happily and willingly associate with it and consult it in times of need.

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<sup>19</sup> Naapuni Kwasi Anto was the father of my hostess, Nei Christiana Awuabea. He passed on some weeks ago, just after the completion of the doctoral dissertation on the grammar of Nkami in 2016. May his soul rest in peace.

And since the language of communication with Afram is strictly Nkami, people who do not even speak Nkami with their children at home are compelled to do so when they go before him (Afram deity). Indeed, one may not be wrong to say that the existence of Nkami, as a language and a group of people, is tightly linked with the continuous existence of the institution of Afram.

Ironically, one factor that may be seen as a threat to Nkami's existence also serves as a 'blessing' to its existence. This is the derision, threat and intimidation that Nkami speakers receive from speakers of other dominant groups. Living as a minority group with other majority groups within the same community is not an easy task; however, the fear and realisation of being an endangered 'species' encourages most to keep their language. Thus, Nkamis consciously or unconsciously recognise their language as an important 'asset' that can be used as a language of 'secrecy' or 'security' to talk about others and/or issues they deem confidential.

Last but not least, re-settling Nkami speakers at specified locations (i.e. Nkami, Biewbiew and Obosomano) in Amankwa, rather than mixing them up with other ethnic groups, is also another parameter that has helped to keep the language and people together. The observation is that children who live in these Nkami sub-communities generally end up speaking Nkami, while their counterparts who reside in non-Nkami sub-communities fail to do so.

### Existing Works and Language Development

Before 2013/2014, no (in-depth) work had been done on the language. Language researchers including eminent Ghanaian language documenters were not even aware of the name 'Nkami'. This is, for instance, captured in the report by Peacock (n.d., p. 2) on his 2005 trip to the Afram Plains when he records that "Nkami has not been referenced in any literature that I am aware of. The language map contained in Kropp-Dakubu's *The Languages of Ghana* shows the entire Nkami area as speaking Akan". Thus, not even the phonemes or orthography had been described. Accordingly, the language is used neither as a medium of instruction nor as a subject taught at any level of formal schooling. It also does not enjoy any newspaper, radio or television broadcasts.<sup>20</sup>

Peacock, however, in 2009 requested for a new code element [nkq] in ISO 639-3 for the language. Prior to that, in 2005, he had made a trip to verify the existence and status of the language, and subsequently collected cognates from Nkami residents at Nkonya, based on the wordlist of Swadesh<sup>21</sup>, for the categorisation of the language. Additionally, an international Christian organisation, namely, Global Recordings Network, has shown interest in the language and is appealing for support to have audio bible stories recorded in the language. From 2013/2014 the documentation of Nkami commenced.

<sup>20</sup> The majority of the languages of Ghana (e.g. Ahanta, Efutu, Sefwi, Wala, Nkonya, etc.) also do not enjoy this right.

<sup>21</sup> Morris Swadesh (1909-1967) was an American linguist with specialisation in historical, comparative and anthropological linguistics (cf. Newman, 1967).



This has culminated into a doctoral dissertation on the grammar of the language (Asante, 2016a). Others, such as Asante and Akanlig-Pare (2015), Akanlig-Pare and Asante (2016), Asante (2016b, c), and Asante and Ma (2016), have also studied the language.

## Linguistic Features

In this section I shall first attempt to provide a conspectus of the general grammatical features of Nkami, and then highlight some of the revealing issues of Nkami that are of cross-linguistic typological and theoretical interests. Nkami displays most of the areal-typological linguistic features shared by regional languages. Like other South-Guang, but unlike North-Guang languages, Nkami has in its inventory both phonemic oral and nasal vowels. Articulation of consonants is made at seven different places of articulation, and it possesses only the phonemic voiceless double-articulated labio-velar stop, /kp/, unlike some Guang languages which have the voiced counterpart, /gb/, as well.<sup>22</sup>

There are two basic level tones (high and low), which manifest both grammatical and lexical functions of tone. As with other Guang languages, functional high tone morphemes typically trigger high tone spread to following syllable(s). It has a dominant CV syllable structure with other minor types: V, CVC and VC (where final C is a nasal, /w/ or /ʔ/) in descending frequency. There is evidence of three major vowel harmonic processes, ATR, labial, and height, where the last two are secondary to the first. Just like most Guang languages (cf. Casali, 2002), [+ATR] is the dominant feature, manifesting prototypical regressive assimilation within and across word boundaries (cf. Akanlig-Pare & Asante, 2016). The deletion of word-initial *ε*-/e-, word-final /u/ and the syllable *mo* are among the most widespread segment and syllable deletion processes in the language. Other syllable structural processes such as syllabic nasal formation, insertion, deletion, compensatory lengthening, free variation, and metathesis are also observed. With regard to assimilatory processes, Nkami, like other neighbouring languages, shows evidence of segmental and tonal processes including labialisation, palatalisation, labiopalatalisation, nasalisation, tone stability and flotation, and tonal sandhi.

Words belonging to the major and minor word classes such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, adpositions, pronouns, conjunctions, and specifiers are all available in the language. Paralinguistic vocalizations such as ideophones, interjections, routines and particles are also pervasive, showing up everywhere in the language of speakers. Like Akan, but unlike many Kwa languages including Ewe (Aboh, 2010), it shows residues of a decayed noun class system; for instance, number may be marked on the noun stem. Like many regional languages<sup>23</sup>, such as Akan and Ewe (cf. Ameka, 2003; Ameka & Essegbey, 2006),

<sup>22</sup> A reviewer notes that in Leteh/Larteh the voiced counterpart, /gb/, exists in loan words only.

<sup>23</sup> A 'regional language' here refers to a Kwa or Gur language spoken in Ghana and/or neighbouring countries.

Logba (Dorvlo, 2008), Gurene and Chakali (Brindle & Atintono, 2012) and Tafi (Bubuafor, 2013), linguistic forms that synchronically function as postpositions in Nkami are diachronically traceable to nominal sources that index body parts and environmental/landscape terms. Affixation, compounding, and reduplication are the dominant morphological processes. Verb features are expressed by prefixes and verbal particles, just like most Kwa languages (cf. Dakubu, 1988).

Nkami is a configurational language, just like other regional languages, and so grammatical relations of arguments (A, S or O) are primarily determined by constituent order and optionally strengthened by cross-referencing of the subject (A, S) on the verb. Nominal modifiers, both word and clause-level, occur after nominals. Coding of 'predicative' property is prototypically expressed through possessive/locative constructions (and less via adjectives, verbs and nouns), while 'attributive' property is mainly expressed through relative clause constructions. Similar to the majority of the world's languages (cf. Dixon, 2010), transitive (AVO) and intransitive (SV) clauses constitute the most common clause types in Nkami. Copula clauses are also widely employed by Nkami speakers to indicate three distinct sets of semantic relations between the Copula Subject (CS) and Copula Complement (CC): identity, attribution and possession. Besides, Nkami also has other minor clause types such as possessive, existential and locative clause constructions - all of which exhibit identical structures; thereby supporting the observation that the notions of existence, location and possession are generally couched in identical structures (cf. Clarke, 1978; Payne, 1997).

Further, Nkami exhibits archetypical cases of constructions involving multi-verbs and clause combinations, such as serial verb, relative clause, complement clause, adverbial clause and coordinate clause constructions. For example, like most regional languages (cf. Welmers, 1973) such as Akan (Amfo, 2007) and Ewe (Dzameshi, 1998), Nkami has functionally distinct conjunctive coordinators, **na** and **ni**, for phrasal and clausal coordination respectively. Contrary to the fairly widespread view (cf. Nylander, 1997; Dimmendaal, 2001) that prototypical serial verb construction languages do not have inherent trivalent verbs, Nkami, like some regional languages such as Ewe, Likpe, and Akan (cf. Ameka, 2013), does.

## Linguistic Features of Typological Interest

Besides the general grammatical features discussed, Nkami also manifests distinct features of cross-linguistic typological and theoretical interest. They include the following phenomena:

- Unlike other Guang languages described, which show evidence of stem-controlled rounding harmony in regressive direction, Nkami shows evidence of progressive affix-controlled rounding harmony (cf. Akanlig-Pare & Asante, 2016).

- Like many of the world's languages, the 1st and 2nd singular subject personal pronouns behave similarly by being the most vulnerable/amenable to partake in phonological processes in the language (cf. Asante, 2016a).
- Nkami is one of the very few languages including Mandarin Chinese (cf. Haiman, 1985, Nichols, 1985), Ewe (Ameka, 1991), and Nkonya (Asante, 2009) that code kin terms in an inalienable structure in possessions, while other semantic types of nominals including body parts (assumed to be the most inalienable and permanent possessum of the possessor) are coded in alienable structures (cf. Asante, 2016a).
- Nkami shows remarkable evidence of animacy distinctions especially in forms and behaviours of pronouns, demonstratives, nominal affixes, nominal modifiers, and dispositional verbs in basic locative construction (cf. Asante & Akanlig-Pare, 2015).
- Nkami 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, e.g. Akan, Babungo, Logba and Urhobo), where the resumptive pronoun strategy is employed to obligatorily state relativized NPs in subject function within the relative clause (cf. Asante & Ma, 2016).
- Unlike other Kwa languages including Akan, Ewe, and Ga, the head noun in relative clause construction is never flanked by a definite determiner (cf. Asante and Ma, 2016).
- Nkami employs a 'bracket strategy' (cf. Kuteva and Comrie, 2005) in relativisation and focus formation, where two enclosing relative/focus markers are simultaneously placed at the ends of the relative/focus clause.
- All lexical words/phrases including nouns, verb/verb phrases, nominalised verbs, adjectives, adverbials, interrogative words, coordinate NP structures, postpositional phrases, and possessive phrases can be preposed for focus in *ex-situ* focus constructions in Nkami.
- Nkami joins Akan as the only two Kwa languages described in the literature (cf. Ameka, 2013) that exhibit the very unusual property of focus clause constructions, where the default slot of an animate object NP in *ex-situ* focus is obligatorily marked by a resumptive pronoun.

- Unlike other regional languages, Nkami employs two distinct complementisers, **yɛɛ** and **bɛɛ**, to introduce complement clauses. While the former generally collocates with utterance verbs, the latter collocates with all other complement-taking verbs. Both complementisers are also multi-functional and are traceable to the verbs **yɛɛ** 'say' and **dʒi bɛɛ/bɛ** 'be like' respectively (cf. Asante, 2016b).
- Moreover, in addition to the vacuous verb, **bu** 'be.located', Nkami has an inventory of over twenty verbs that are used to localize entities (Figures) in relation to their reference objects (Grounds) in Basic Locative Construction (BLC) (cf. Asante, 2016c).
- Many of the grammatical items in Nkami are multi-functional and show evidence of several grammaticalization paths. For example, the form **ni** functions as a clausal conjunctive coordinator, a relative marker and a focus marker and it is likely to have derived from the form, **ni** - the proximal predicative demonstrative (PPD), 'this is'. Likewise, the proximal directional prefix and the future tense prefix share the same form, **bɛ-**, which is diachronically traceable to the basic deictic motional verb **ba/bɛɛ** 'come'.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to introduce a group of people and an endangered language, called Nkami, to the world of knowledge. The data for the study were extracted from a large corpus collected from a documentation project on the language and people. I talked about the historical, geographical, political, religious, demographical, social, economic and linguistic traits of the people. Among other things, it has been established that Nkami is a South-Guang language spoken by about 400 people in a resettlement community in the Afram Plains of the Eastern Region of Ghana called Amankwa. Several others also reside in neighbouring communities and in the diaspora, mostly Accra, Nkawka and Kumasi. I have also argued that the greatest force that holds the Nkami people and language together is the institution of Afram (Afram deity). Expectedly, Nkami shares the majority of the area-typological linguistic features of neighbouring languages. However, its unique typological features include the fact that a head noun of a relative clause construction is never modified by a definite determiner. It also shares with Akan as being the only two Kwa languages (at least, as far as I am aware of) that obligatorily employ a resumptive pronoun strategy to mark the default slot of an object NP in focus. Further, unlike most Guang languages which show evidence of stem-controlled rounding

harmony in regressive direction, Nkami shows evidence of progressive affix-controlled rounding harmony (Akanlig-Pare and Asante, 2016). Moreover, the reader may have been overwhelmed by the striking (e.g. grammatical, cultural) similarities between Nkami and Akan. Looking at the dominance of Akan in the Nkami-speaking area such that presently some young Nkamis first acquire Akan before learning Nkami, it may be interesting to undertake comparative studies in the future to determine how many of the similarities are due to diffusion and how many to cognate forms and structures. Lastly, as adequately discussed in this paper, due to the inadequacy of the linguistic features that support the classification of the Guang languages into two, North and South, future work that thoroughly looks at the whole classification of the Guang languages may be necessary.

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