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## POSTURE VERB NOMINALISATION IN LĪKPĀKPÁLN ‘KONKOMBA’

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### **Abstract**

In this paper I, mainly, examine nominal derivation from posture verbs in a little-researched Mabia (Gur) language known as LĪkpākpáln (Konkomba). LĪkpākpáln is often associated with the Northern Region of Ghana, although it noticeably spreads beyond that. This study dwells on a corpus drawn from both natural discourse and elicitations. With only very minimal theoretical inspirations, the study observes that the morphological as well as the syntactic features of nominalised posture verbs are, largely, compliant of the generally known linguistic characteristics of LĪkpākpáln nouns. Thus, the obligatory feature of affixation, simple and non-simple stem types are attested in the derived nominals. The syntactic idiosyncrasy of nominalised posture verbs is, however, their defiance to function as nominal modifiers in NP structure. In nominalisation strategy, I argue that LĪkpākpáln posture verb nominalisation sees a preponderant synchronisation of the processes of prefixation and a reduplication of the posture verb base. Another relevant finding of this study is that the figurative uses and meanings of nominals derived from LĪkpākpáln posture verbs reinforce the claim in Newman’s (2002) socio-cultural domain of the semantic frame for the analysis of postural senses.

**Keywords:** Posture verb, nominalisation, LĪkpākpáln

### **1. Introduction**

This article examines nominal derivation from a sub-lexical category, posture verbs in a less researched linguistic system of LĪkpākpáln. The area of posture verb nominalisation has not received specific attention, especially in relation to the indigenous Ghanaian languages.

LĪkpākpáln is classified as a Mabia (Gur) language of the Niger-Congo phylum (Naden, 1988: 12-19). It is actively spoken both in the Republics of Ghana and Togo, but the present study is based on data from speakers in Ghana. Simons and Fennig (2017), in *Ethnologue: Languages of the world*, estimate that LĪkpākpáln speakers in Ghana alone number about 831000. Saboba in the Northern Region of Ghana is often cited as the traditional centre of the BĪkpākpáám (the autonym for the people who speak LĪkpākpáln) in Ghana. While this may be true, it is also notable that the BĪkpākpáám are found in significant numbers across four other administrative regions of Ghana (see Appendix I: Map of Ghana, showing some districts where LĪkpākpáln is spoken). The Nkwanta North and South Districts are among such areas where LĪkpākpáln is natively spoken (Bisilki, 2017: 36; Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2014: 4).

The analysis in this study is based mainly on a digitally recorded corpus from spontaneous speech (in several interactional domains), elicitations and observations (both participant and non-participant forms) among LĪkpākpáln native speakers in the Nkwanta North. The elicitations were based on stimuli adaptations from Atintono (2013: 185). The stimuli adapted from Atintono (2013)

were also based on the Max Planck Institute’s (MPI) picture models for positionals. Data from the preceding sources were cross-validated and augmented through semi-structured interviews with two prolific speakers of Līkpākpāln. With the help of Elan (4.9.4), the recorded utterances were segmented and transcribed for the analysis herein.

In addressing the phenomenon of posture verb nominalisation, the paper is structured into the following main sections: Introduction, motivation for the present study, nominalisation, review of related literature on nominalisation in (Ghanaian) Mabia, the morphology of the noun in Līkpākpāln, posture verbs, the process of posture verb nominalisation in Līkpākpāln, some aspects of the syntax of posture verb derived nominals, deverbal posture verbs vis-à-vis the socio-cultural domain parameter and, then, the conclusion. It must be stated that apart from exploring the purely linguistics of posture verb nominalisation, the section on the socio-cultural domain is envisaged to unearth some of the possibly culture specific extended meanings of the nominalised forms in Līkpākpāln. This will be situated in the socio-cultural domain parameter of the larger semantic frame for postural analysis as proposed by Newman (2002: 1-3).

It is also worth indicating that, although the present study is not into any formalisms, it happens to draw significantly on notions and terminologies from Appah (2003) and Boadi (2016) among others. Data in this paper is mostly represented in the Līnàjùú dialect as this allows me to more properly leverage on my native speaker competences while being fully wary of any personal biases.

## **2. The motivation for the present study**

Although Līkpākpāln has a considerably significant speaker population, it is, so far, one of the linguistic cultures attracting the least attention from Linguists and the scientific community generally. Most of the basic linguistic properties of Līkpākpāln either remain entirely unknown or under-described. This is well resonated in Schwarz’s (2009: 183) remark that knowledge of the grammatical properties of Līkpākpāln is rather small and the need for basic grammatical research into the language is still very high. Apparently, the somewhat scholarly ‘neglect’ of Līkpākpāln is a shared predicament of the Mabia family of languages being poorly researched, at least, if compared with counterpart language families such as the Kwa of Ghana (Cahill 2007: 5; Naden 1988: 12).

The morphological phenomenon of nominalization has become one of the most familiar topic areas due to the comparatively increasing number of studies delving into the sub-area. Nonetheless, it appears, as available literature suggests, that the process of nominalization in Līkpākpāln is yet to receive a first investigation ever. This reality, possibly, places this article as a pioneering attempt in that direction. Also, although nominalisation has relatively enjoyed a flourishing attention from linguists cross-globally, one rarely finds such studies predominantly focusing on nominal derivation from posture verbs, unlike the case of other deverbal phenomena that receive focus in studies such as Abubakari (in print), Kambon (2012), Kambon, Appah and Duah (2018) and Bodomo et al. (2018). Rather, studies on nominalisation commonly omit examples illustrating posture verb nominalisation. From my observation, any instance one may find illustrating nominal derivation from posture verbs likely describes as an incidental usually situated in general discussions of deverbal phenomena. What is more is that to discover such examples requires that one reads with a keener eye on nominalised posture verbs as an author normally may not draw attention to this. For instance, in Bodomo (1997: 76), the nominalisation

of the Dagaare posture verb element, **zeɛ** ‘to swoop’ is cited among a few other verbs generally meant to show the formation of nouns from verbs. (1) is how Bodomo illustrates the nominalisation of **zeɛ** ‘to swoop’.

**Zee** → **zeɛo/zeɛbo** [Dagaare]  
 ‘to swoop’ ‘the act of swooping’

Again, Appah (2003) is entirely dedicated to describing nominal derivation in Akan. Appah’s analysis includes a significant chunk on deriving nouns from verbs, but hardly provides any example(s) that identify as nominalised posture verbs. Similarly, Atintono (2013) is quite an extensive inquiry into the semantics and grammar of positional verbs (a term he uses to incorporate posture verbs) in Gurene. Nonetheless, no amount of attention is granted the processes of nominalisation that these verbs can undergo to create nouns either in Gurene or in any other language that he made reference to.

Furthermore, as pointed out by Payne (1997: 224-225) and Appah (2003: 68), languages adopt different strategies in deriving nouns from verbs. These strategies may be lexical, morphological or analytic. The fact that verb→noun derivation is not in a monolithic linguistic operation across languages provides further justification for the exploration of the phenomenon in other linguistic systems like Līkpākpāln which lack any previous study along such lines. As will be discovered in subsequent sections (7.0, 8.0, etc.) of this study, Līkpākpāln tends to exhibit some strikingly unique features in terms of the morphological operations that are required for nominal derivation from posture verbs in particular. I note this unique feature with regard to the predominant synchronisation of the processes of reduplication and affixation that characterise the derivational process.

### 3. Nominalisation

The term, nominalisation is used interchangeably with nominal derivation and the present study does not intend to discriminate between these terms. Following Appah (2003: 1), one can say that nominalisation refers to the process of forming nouns from lexical items of different form classes as well as from non-lexical categories (including many clause and phrase types). On the part of Bodomo (1997: 76), nominalisation is a process involving the formation of nouns from verbs and adjectives. It appears that the several definitions given to nominalisation in the literature, sometimes, have contextual underpinnings as these definitions may be oriented towards specific languages or theoretical leanings. In respect of nominalisation involving the lexical categories, a noun can be derived from a verb, an adjective or even another noun as in examples (2) and (3) from Appah (2003) and the Līkpākpāln data<sup>1</sup>:

(2) a **kekan** → **a-kenkan** [Akan]  
 ‘read’ SG-reading  
 ‘the act of reading’

<sup>1</sup> In section 3.0, examples (2a) and (2b) are from Līkpākpāln data while the rest are Akan examples cited from Appah (2003: 46, 49, 65, 70). Throughout the paper, however, tone markings in Līkpākpāln items are based on my native speaker impressionistic determinations and so may not always be as accurate.

	b	<b>chúú</b> ‘hold’	→	<b>n-chúú-m</b> CL-hold-CL ‘the act of holding’	[Līkpākpáln]
(3)	a	<b>kɛsɛɛ</b> ‘big’	→	<b>ɔ-kɛsɛɛ</b> SG-big ‘the fat one/the prominent one’	[Akan]
	b	<b>gbīí</b> ‘fat’	→	<b>ń-gbìngbì-n</b> CL;SG-fat-CL;SG ‘fatness’	[Līkpākpáln]

In (2a-b) we see verb nominalisation while in (3a-b) we find a case of adjective nominalisation. Similarly, in example (4), again, from Appah (2003: 46, 49), non-lexical categories are nominalised as follows:

(4)	a	<b>ɔ-ko</b> 3SG;SBJ-fight.HAB	<b>de</b> take	<b>foro</b> climb	<b>boɔ</b> stone	→	<b>ɔ-koforoboɔ</b> ‘the mount-climbing warrior’	[Akan]
							‘He climbs hills whilst fighting.’	
	b	<b>ɔ-be-dzi</b> 3SG;SBJ-FUT-eat		<b>edziban</b> food		→	<b>edzibandzi</b> ‘eating’	[Akan]
							‘S/he will eat’	

(4a) involves the nominalisation of an entire clause whereas (4b) illustrates the nominalisation of a verb phrase (VP). The nominalisation strategies used in (4a) and (4b) are termed as subject dropping and object fronting respectively. Appah (2003: 45) further talks of these strategies as argument structure process with morphological implications. Although I follow the notion of nominal derivation, largely, from Appah (2003), the present analysis concentrates on lexical nominalisation, specifically in a circumscribed sense of how the sub-lexical category of posture verbs are nominalised in Līkpākpáln. That is, this article excludes nominalisable structures that are non-lexical. It is also note-worthy that modelling after Appah’s (2003) analysis, this study is solely situated in segmental morphology and does not seek to dabble in any related functions of prosody.

Nominalisation, as the alternative term, *nominal derivation* suggests, is a derivative process. This is to say that to nominalise requires the use of morphological operations and devices that have a derivational function in the particular language concerned. For our present context, the derivational devices are morphemic segments. Just as the concept of nominalisation itself, the notion of *derivational morpheme* has been looked at in somewhat differing senses. For Katamba and Stonham (2006: 49), a derivational morpheme is that which when added to a base, results in a new word of only a different meaning or of a totally varying word class. From the angle of Katamba and Stonham (2006), then, the morphemes *-ness* and *un-* as in *kind-ness* and *un-kind* both classify as derivational affixes. The stance of Thakur (2010: 12) ties up with the view of Katamba and Stonham (2006) when Thakur maintains that derivational morphemes are either class changing or class maintaining. Nevertheless, Boadi (2016: 1) holds that a derivational affix is one which

changes the class distribution of a linguistic form to which it is added. Although Boadi's (2016) definition, probably, relates to Akan, that definition more aptly captures the pattern found with the L̩kp̩kp̩p̩n posture verb nominalisation as subsequent sections (6.0,7.0, 8.0, etc.) in this paper will reveal.

#### 4. Review of related literature on nominalisation in Mabia: Some Brief Remarks

Works touching on nominal derivation as relates to the Mabia languages of Ghana are not much of a scarcity. What is very clear, however, is that these studies as will be discussed in the rest of this section do not share focus with the present paper.

One of the studies to mention in relation to nominalisation in the Mabia languages of Ghana is Bodomo's (1997) seminal work, *The structure of Dagaare*. Chapter 8 of this work is devoted to a very cursory discussion of some nominal processes in Dagaare. These processes include nominalisation, compounding and nominal incorporation. While this chapter in itself is of a highly limited length of about three pages or so (pp. 76-79), it does not concentrate on nominal derivation alone as already mentioned. The analysis provided on nominalisation in the referenced context has naturally tended to be scanty in every sense of it. Only a handful of verbs and adjectives are tabulated to illustrate how they are nominalised (Bodomo, 1997: 76). From the few examples provided and from Bodomo's own explicit remarks, the processes of nominalising Dagaare verbs and adjectives remain suffixation and vowel lengthening or diphthongisation. The subject of nominalisation as treated in Bodomo (1997) has a broad affinity with the present analysis in two respects: First, nominalization receives some attention in both contexts. Second, both studies attempt an account on nominalisation in two Mabia languages spoken in Ghana.

On the other hand, the point of departure between these two studies is that whereas the present work solely investigates nominalisation, with specific focus on nominal derivation from posture verbs, Bodomo (1997) neither has any such emphasis nor constitutes any comprehensive representation on nominalisation.

In further exploring related literature, Olawsky (1999) deserves mention. As its title suggests, Olawsky's (1999) work is a grammatical sketch on Dagbani, with emphasis placed on the phonology and morphology of the language. Olawsky (1999) lends some space to nominalisation under what he captions as *derivational morphology*. He focuses on noun and adjective formation in describing derivational morphology in Dagbani, with the latter phenomenon falling out of the interest of the present study. Olawsky (1999) discusses fourteen suffixes and a derivational vowel lengthening as the means of nominal derivation in Dagbani. While the resourcefulness of Olawky's (1999) nominalisation account cannot be underrated, it has tended to represent fewer verbs in that regard. A chunk of the data in his section are weighted more towards noun → noun derivation and adjective → noun derivation. Again, no posture verb surfaces in his data sets on nominal derivation.

Akanlig-Pare (1999) looks at nominalisation in Buli, an equally Mabia language of northern Ghana. Nonetheless, whilst this tended to be a fairly short paper, it is neither significantly placed on verbal nominalisation nor narrowed to posture verb nominalisation as presently being pursued.

Dakubu (2005) also incorporates an aspect of nominalisation in her study on Dagaare grammar, although this is equally sketchy. Overall, the scope of Dakubu's (2005) section on *derived nouns* barely goes beyond a few examples illustrating how abstract, agentive and instrumental nouns are derived from verbs. What is more of a pertinent issue is that a thorough

gleaning of her examples does not show the inclusion of any posture verb element or how it is nominalised. That much, Dakubu (2005) hardly caters for the goal(s) of the present study.

A most recent and equally closest analyses to the present study include Abubakari (in press) and Bodomo et al. (2018), which concentrate on predicate clefting and serial verb nominalisation respectively. Again, these two studies have no overlap with this paper as they are based on different verb typologies other than postures verbs. The two do not also cite any data from Līkpākpáǎn.

## 5. The morphology of the Līkpākpáǎn noun

Līkpākpáǎn is a noun class language (see Bisilki & Akpanglo-Nartey, 2017; Winkelmann, 2012). Generally, a typical Līkpākpáǎn noun consists of at least a stem and an affix(es). This is similar to Dagaare and Dagbani nouns (Dakubu, 2005: 42; Olawsky, 1999: 71). A majority of typical nouns in Līkpākpáǎn cannot occur in the root or stem form alone without an affix. Aside their number function, the affixes are also the basis for the Līkpākpáǎn noun class assignment. These affixes do not show any regular semantic correlation. A noun stem may have only a prefix or both a prefix and a suffix which must co-occur in its structure. The set of nouns in (5) illustrate the former case as those in (6) show the latter instance:

(5)	<b>Noun (sg)</b>	<b>Noun (pl)</b>
a	<b>ù-pù</b> CL;SG-sheep 'sheep'	<b>ì-pù</b> CL;PL-sheep 'many sheep'
b	<b>ń-dó í-dó</b> CL;SG-stick 'stick'	<b>CL;PL-stick</b> 'sticks'
c	<b>ú-kúlóó</b> CL;SG-chicken 'chicken'	<b>í-kúlóó</b> CL;PL-chicken 'chickens'
(6)	<b>Noun (sg)</b>	<b>Noun (pl)</b>
a	<b>bī-sù-b</b> CL;SG-tree-CL;SG 'tree'	<b>í-sú-í</b> CL;PL-tree-CL;PL 'trees'
b	<b>kī-sáá-k</b> CL;SG-farm-CL;SG 'farm'	<b>tī-sáá-r</b> CL;PL-farm-CL;PL 'farms'
c	<b>ń-múú-l</b> CL;SG-rice-CL;SG 'rice, sg'	<b>í-múú-l</b> CL;PL-rice-CL;PL 'rice, pl'

A deletion of any part of the affixal segments in (6) renders the word element concerned incorrect as in (7). This confirms the requirement that the prefixal and the suffixal parts must go together if the words are to have well-formedness: <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> \* in front of an item means that the item is an incorrect form.

- (7) a \* **Ø-sù-b**  
 Ø-tree-CL;SG  
 ('tree')
- b \* **tī-sáá-Ø**  
 CL;PL-farm-Ø  
 ('farms')

There are also cases where a word in the singular may have both a prefix and a suffix, but may drop one of the two affixes in plural formation. The vice versa of this phenomenon also hold in some cases where a singular noun with only a prefix takes on a suffix in addition when in the plural form. The examples in (8) instantiate this morphological occurrence:

- |     |   |   |  |
|-----|---|---|--|
| (8) |   | <b>Noun (sg)</b>                                  | <b>Noun (pl)</b>                                   |
|     | a | <b>lī-bíí-l</b><br>CL;SG-breast-CL;SG<br>'breast' | <b>m-bíí</b><br>CL;PL-breast<br>'breasts'          |
|     | b | <b>ú-nímpɔ́</b><br>CL;SG-woman<br>'woman'         | <b>bī-nímpúú-b</b><br>CL;PL-woman-CL;PL<br>'women' |

A look at (8a) will reveal that whilst the singular, **lī-bíí-l** 'breast' has both a prefix (li-) and a suffix (-l), the plural version, **m-bíí** has only a prefix (m-). On the other hand, in (8b) the singular, **ú-nímpɔ́** incorporates only a prefix as the plural, **bī-nímpúú-b** assumes a suffix in addition. An observation about this affixal behaviour is that the patterns are highly irregular and, thus, difficult to predict.

Again, while it is true, as earlier indicated, that Līkpākpáln nouns typically incorporate affixal segments in their structure, there are other nouns (some of which are obvious loans into the language. (E.g. **lool** from lorry in English) that lack any affix when in singular. This category of nouns constitutes class 1a (Bisilki & Akpanglo-Nartey, 2017: 32). Such nouns are pluralised only by suffixation. The pluralising suffixes in this case, include **-mbá** and **-tííb**. The items in (9) provide examples:

- |     |   |                             |   |
|-----|---|-----------------------------|---|
| (9) |   | <b>Noun (sg)</b>            | <b>Noun (pl)</b>                                  |
|     | a | <b>chéchéé</b><br>'bicycle' | <b>chéchéé-mbá</b><br>bicycle-CL;PL<br>'bicycles' |
|     | b | <b>lóól</b><br>'car'        | <b>lóól-mbá</b><br>car-CL;PL<br>'cars'            |
|     | c | <b>ná</b><br>'mother'       | <b>ná-tííb</b><br>mother-CL;PL                    |

‘mothers’

**-Ḿbá** has the variant, **-mám** in some dialects such as Līchából and Līnánkpél. Again, Bisilki and Akpanglo-Nartey (2017) observes that the distribution of **-tííb** and **-ḿbá/-mám** vary from dialect to dialect. In this regard, the present data and analysis provide a corollary to an earlier observation made by Bisilki and Akpanglo-Nartey (2017) that in Līnàjùúíl, **-ḿbá** can non-reciprocally be used to substitute **-tííb** in any noun context as **-tííb** only substitutes **-ḿbá** when the noun involved has -human feature.

As noted by Bodomó (1997: 52), the nominal systems of languages normally include case, number, gender and person. Just as a Mabilia language like Dagaare, Līkpākpáǎn nominals do not have case and person markings. On the issue of gender marking, this study identifies only two suffixes, **-sál** and **-jà**, which can be used to mark the male and the female polars on nouns denoting living things, as and when a speaker deems it necessary. This means that, in Līkpākpáǎn, nouns denoting both living and non-living things are often rendered without any gender marking. Example (10) shows the use of the preceding gender suffixes (**-sál** and **-jà**):

- (10) a      **ú-ŋɔ'-jà**  
             CL;SG-goat-male  
             ‘a he goat’  
       b      **ú-náá-sál**  
             CL;SG-cow-female  
             ‘female cow’  
       c      **ú-sí-jà**  
             CL;SG-tree-male  
             ‘tree type’

By the noun stem classification proposed in Appah (2003: 6-7), I observe that a noun stem in Līkpākpáǎn can be simple, compound or complex. A noun with a simple stem contains only a single stem in its structure while a compound noun stem comprises two stems. On the other hand, a noun containing three or more stems in its morphological form is described as having a complex stem. For purposes of this study, I will further coin the term, *non-simple stem* to subsume both compound and complex stem types. Based on the definitions of the noun stem types, we can say that the stems contained in the Līkpākpáǎn noun examples cited up to this point are, so far, describable as simple stems. The examples in (11) and (12) consist of compound and complex stems respectively:

(11)	Noun	Prefix(es)	Stem	Suffix(es)	Gloss of compound
a	<b>ńtútùn</b>	<b>ń-</b>	<b>tún,</b> ‘heat’	<b>tùn</b> ‘heat’	<b>-ń</b> ‘heat’
b	<b>ń-yípúán</b> ‘head’ ‘strong’	<b>ń-</b>	<b>yí,</b>	<b>púá</b>	<b>-n</b> ‘headstrong’
c	<b>tíkóókúr</b>	<b>tī-</b>	<b>kóó,</b> ‘chicken’	<b>kú</b> ‘feather’	<b>-r</b> ‘chicken feathers’

	d	kīgēŋgēŋ	kī	gēŋ, gēŋ	‘short one’ <sup>3</sup>	
				‘short’ ‘short’		
(12)	<b>Noun</b>	<b>Prefix(es)</b>	<b>Stem</b>	<b>Suffix(es)</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	
	a	bībó’nééŋmáb	bī-	bó’, néé, ŋmó’	-b	‘name of a clan’
				‘dog’, ‘intestine’, ‘chew’		
	b	līnūmó’gál	lī-	nú, mó’, gáá	-l	‘type of farm land preparation’
				‘yam’, ‘grass’, ‘cut’		

What can be observed from (11) and (12) is that a non-simple stem is attained by simply reduplicating the same stem as in (11a/d) or by bringing together entirely different stems as in the rest of the examples. What may be found more intriguing is the fact that the constituents of a non-simple stem may underlyingly belong to different lexical categories. A case in point is **līnūmó’gál** ‘type of farm land preparation’ in (12b) which consists of **līnúúl** ‘yam’, **tīmóór** ‘grass’ and **gáá** ‘to cut’. The structure of this non-simple stem can be given as N + N + V. Once any permissible combination of stems is brought together, an appropriate nominalising affix(es) is attached to it to seal its nounness. These affixes, as already pointed out, also have class and number functions in the noun.

Another observation worth attention is that, with the exception of class 1a nominals, a noun in Līkpākpáaln cannot stand independently without any affix(es) attached to it. This condition holds for both simple and non-simple stem nouns. Against this background, a claim can be put forth that most Līkpākpáaln nouns have bound roots or stems. In the light of this, we can further say that the presence or absence of an affix in a word will be an important criterion for measuring the nounness possibility of that word. The foregoing claim that Līkpākpáaln nouns consist of bound roots/stems is substantiated by the data in (13), which is supposed to be a repetition of the singular nouns in (5):

- (13) a      \*Ø-pù
- Ø-sheep
- (‘sheep’)
- b      \*Ø-dó’
- Ø-stick
- (‘stick’)
- c      \*Ø-kúlóó
- Ø-chicken
- (‘chicken’)

A final remark to add on this section concerning the structure of the Līkpākpáaln noun as a lexical category is that the interesting choice of affixes for various nouns could have phonological

<sup>3</sup> The full form of the stems in (11b) are līyíl ‘head’ and púa’ ‘be strong’. In (11c) the full forms are úkúlóó ‘chicken’ and tīkúr ‘feathers’. The full forms in (12a) are úbó’ ‘dog’, tīnéér ‘intestines’ and ŋmó’ ‘to chew’.

motivations, but which question currently lies beyond the reach of this paper and will require a full-scale inquiry.

## 6. Posture verbs

In Ameka and Levinson (2007), posture verbs come under the cover term, locative verbs or locative constructions as in other studies. Nonetheless, as observed by Atintono (2013: 25), several other alternative terms used with slightly varying or in the overlapping sense exist in the literature. Such terms include: verbs of posture, verbs of body position, positional verbs, positional verbs of spatial location, etc.

The proliferation of tags in relation to locative verbs is possibly because, in many languages, this family of verbs tends to cover a broad semantic range that can further be subjected to sub-groupings. For instance, it is found that in Gurene, locative construction sub-delineates into six types, namely, verbs of body position or posture, elevation verbs, attachment verbs, distribution verbs, general locative verbs and proximate or propinquity verbs (Atintono, 2013: 25).

Taking a cue from Atintono (2013: 24), a posture verb is here considered as a verb which semantically codes the static assumed body position or posture of animate entities. In other words, posture verbs are a sub-class of predicates that describe the different body positions or postures of humans and animals. It is in the preceding sense that the terms posture verb and verb of posture will often be employed synonymously in the present study. The forms **tui** ‘to stand’ and **eno** ‘to lie down’ are cited as examples of posture verbs from Manam (an Austronesian language) (Newman, 2002: 5). Similarly, **zi** ‘be in a sitting posture’ and **kpa** ‘be kneeling’ are mentioned as examples of posture verbs in Gurene (Atintono, 2013: 29).

Seven Līkpākpáln verbs of posture: **sil** ‘to be standing’ **kál** ‘to be in a sitting position’ **gbáán** ‘to be kneeling’, **bóón** ‘to be in a stooping posture’, **dóón** ‘to be in a lying body posture’, **dìn** ‘to be leaning against something’ and **sóón** ‘to be in a squatting position’ will be covered in this study. In a classification paradigm of Welmers (1973: 344) which typologises verbs into primary and auxiliary verbs, Līkpākpáln verbs of posture can be placed under primary verbs as they consist of single bases and do not construct with any auxiliaries in their basic structure.

Līkpākpáln posture verbs are essentially intransitive in the basic sense that they do not require objects or direct object arguments. However, as occurs in Tongan (Austronesian), Swahili (Niger-Kordofanian) and Cantonese (Newman, 2002), a posture verb in Līkpākpáln may take a locative complement as shown in (14a-b):

(14)	a	<b>Kánjɔ́</b> Kánjɔ́ ‘Kánjɔ́ sat on a chair’	<b>kál</b> sit.PFV	<b>lī-jà-l</b> CL;SG-chair-CL;SG	<b>bɔ́</b> on
	b	<b>Kánjɔ́</b> Kánjɔ́ ‘Kánjɔ́ lay on the ground’	<b>dóón</b> lie.PFV	<i>kī̀tìŋ</i> ground	

In (14a-b), we find the posture verbs taking the italicised locative complements or phrases, *lī-jà-l* **bɔ́** ‘on a chair’ and *kī̀tìŋ* ‘on the ground’. As reflected in the Līkpākpáln data in (14) above and as noted by Newman (2002), a locative complement may incorporate an adpositional, also sometimes

referred to as the locative suffix or the locative preposition. In different languages, varying parameters determine whether or not the locative preposition can be omitted. In Tongan, the locative becomes optional in casual speech whereas in Swahili it may be omitted when the location phrase has specific reference. For instance, the Swahili sentences in (15) illustrate location phrases with or without a locative preposition. Similarly, the Tongan example in (16) indicates the optionality of the bracketed adposition:

- (15) a     **Juma a-li-kaa        kiti-ni**  
           Juma he-PAST-sit chair-LOC  
           ‘Juma sat on a/the chair’
- b     **Juma a-li-kaa                    kiti    hiki**  
           Juma he-PAST-sit                    chair this  
           ‘Juma sat on this chair’  
           (Newman, 2002: 5)
- (16) **Oku tangutu‘a    Mele (‘i)    he    sea**  
       PRES sit        ABS Mele LOC ART chair  
       ‘Mele is sitting on a chair’  
       (Newman, 2002: 5).

The idiosyncrasy of Līkpākpāln with respect to the use of the locative preposition is that its presence or absence may not necessarily be optional, but contingent upon the landmark<sup>4</sup> or the posture verb involved. For example, when **kītīŋ** ‘ground/land’ is the landmark, no locative preposition is required in the locative complement. In a similar way, the use of the posture verb, **dīn** excludes an adposition in a following locative complement. (17a-b) provide examples to the preceding observations:

- (17) a     **Ú-bú                dɔ’                kītīŋ**  
           CL;SG-child lie.IPFV                ground  
           ‘A/the child is lying on the ground’
- b     **Ú-kpán                    dīn                bī-sù-b**  
           CL;SG-hunter                lean.PFV                CL;SG-tree-CL;SG  
           ‘A/the hunter leaned against a tree’

The sentences in (17) will become semantically and/or grammatically weird if adpositions are introduced in the constructions as in (18a-b):

- (18) a     **\*Ú-bú dɔ’    kītīŋ    bɔ’**  
           CL;SG-child lie.IPFV                ground                on  
           ‘A/the child is lying on the ground’

<sup>4</sup> In locative constructions, the ground/landmark refers to the point or place where the object is located whilst the term, figure/trajjectory is used to refer to the object that is located (Atintono, 2013; Talmy, 2007: 70).

- b      **\*Ú-kpán**                      **dìn**                      **bī-sù-b**                      **bɔ́**  
 CL;SG-hunter                      lean.PFV                      CL;SG-tree-CL;SG                      on  
 ‘A/the leaned against a tree’

Again, with the exception of **dìn** ‘to be leaning against something’, all the other Līkpākpáln posture verbs discussed in the present analysis can occur in a sentence without a following locative complement as exemplified in (19):

- (19) a      **Ú-bú**                      **dɔ́**  
 CL;SG-child                      lie.IPFV  
 ‘The child is lying (on something).’
- b      **Mánótī**                      **sóón**  
 Mánótī                      squat.PFV  
 ‘Mánótī squatted.’
- c      **Ú-nìmpū**                      **gbáán**  
 CL;SG-woman                      kneel.PFV  
 ‘A woman knelt down.’

A posture verb can optionally be reduplicated to achieve a plural meaning and agreement with an appropriate subject. The examples in (20) demonstrate the pluralisation of Līkpākpáln verbs of posture through reduplication:

- (20) a      **Bī-nìmpúú-b**                      **bóbóó**                      **lī-chìn-l**  
 CL;PL-woman-CL;PL                      stoop.IPFV                      CL;SG-compound-CL;SG  
 ‘Women are stooping in the house.’
- b      **Bī-yáá-b**                      **dɔ́dɔ́**                      **kī-díí-k**                      **nē**  
 CL;PL-child-CL;PL                      lie.IPFV                      CL;SG-room-CL;SG                      in  
 ‘Children are lying in the house.’
- c      **Bī-nìnkpíí-b**                      **káká**                      **lī-kpū-nàmpà-l**  
 CL;PL-elder-CL;PL                      sit.IPFV                      CL;SG-funeral-house-CL;SG  
 ‘Elders are sitting at the funeral house/ground.’

As can be seen from (20a-c), there is the option for a posture verb to be reduplicated for a plural effect when the subject argument has reference to two or more persons or entities. In this case, the posture verb can semantically be conceived as having a focus on the individual postures of the persons or entities involved. However, the non-reduplicated form of posture verbs is found to be more often used with plural subjects than the reduplicated forms are.

Affixation is not a productive means of tense, aspectual or mood marking in Līkpākpáln posture verbs. Rather, non-concatenative processes such as vowel alternation and tone play a more

active role in encoding other grammatical information in the posture verbs. The examples involving **dóón** ‘to be in a lying body position’ in (21a-c) is a case in point:

- (21) a      **Chákún**      **dòò**      **lī-jà-l**      **tààb**  
 Cat            lie.HAB      CL;SG-chair-CL;SG    under  
 ‘A/the cat lies under a chair.’
- b            **Mákīnyì**      **dóón**      **kī-káampéé-k**      **bɔ́**  
 Mákīnyì      lie.PFV      CL;SG-mat-CL;SG    on  
 ‘Mákīnyì lay on the mat.’
- c            **Chákún**      **dɔ́**      **lī-jà-l**      **tààb**  
 A/the cat      lie.IPFV      CL;SG-chair-CL;SG    under  
 ‘The cat is lying under the chair.’

The non-segmental representation of some aspects of grammatical information in Līkpākpáln posture verbs has semblance with the non-use of segmentals for the habitual and continuative aspectuals in Akan (Appah, 2003: 40).

### 7. The process of posture verb nominalisation in Līkpākpáln

Nominal derivation from Līkpākpáln posture verbs generally follows a concatenative process. This involves prefixation and reduplication. Among the seven posture verbs covered in this analysis, only two, namely, **gbáán** ‘to be in a kneeling posture’ and **dìn** ‘to be leaning against something’ were found to be nominalisable through only prefixation. To nominalise any of the other posture verbs requires the simultaneous processes of prefixation and reduplication of the verb base. The prefixal element involved, which I term as a nominalising prefix, is identified as **N-/M-**. Hence, one can formulate a rule for the nominalisation of posture verbs as:  $N/M_{\text{prefix}} + V_{\pm\text{reduplication}} = \text{Derived Nominal}$ . Adopting the stance of Appah (2005 :132) and Payne (1997), the derived nominals, in this case, can be described as action nominals as they essentially refer to the action designated by the posture verb. Table 1 below shows the posture verbs and their corresponding nominalised outputs:

**Table 1: Līkpākpáln posture verbs and their corresponding nominalised forms** <sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The final nasals, /m/ and /n/ in the words in table 1 are orthographic representations of nasalized vowels in the words.

No.	Posture verb	Nominalised form	English gloss of nominalised form
1	sìl	Ń-sìsìí	The act of being in a standing posture
2	kál	Ń-kákáá	The act of being in a sitting posture
3	gbáán	Ń-gbáám	The act of being in a kneeling posture
4	bóón	M-bóbóó	The act of being in a stooping posture
5	dóón	Ń-dódóó	The act of being in a lying posture
6	dìn	Ń-dìim	The act of leaning against something
7	sóón	Ń-sósóó	The act of being in a squatting posture

From table 1, it can be observed that apart from 3 and 6, the nominalised forms of the rest of the posture verbs show evidence of total reduplication. The reduplication gives these nominalised forms compound stems. This agrees with the Līkpākpālŋ nominal structure in (11) under section 5.0. On the other hand, the non-reduplicated stems in 3 and 6 of table 1 are instances of simple stem nouns. Again, as typical of Līkpākpālŋ nouns, each of the derived nominals is necessarily attached with an appropriate prefix, N-/M-. This prefix generally marks class and number (singular) in nominals. Nevertheless, since the nominals derived from posture verbs cannot properly be described as countable nouns, the N-/M prefix may not (in this case) be marking number per se, but proffer evidence to the nounness of the derived forms. The non-number effect of the prefixal allomorphs in Līkpākpālŋ deverbal posture verbs can be assumed to have a typological symmetry in Dagbani where derivative affixes commonly do not attest to number (Olawsky, 1999: 102). Also, the use of affixation in the nominalisation of Līkpākpālŋ posture verbs ties up with the phenomenon of action nominalisation in Akan, except that in Akan there is also the option where some action nominals are derived through the use of a zero operator (Appah, 2005: 133).

## 8. Some aspects of the syntax of the derived nominals

This section takes a cursory look at some aspects of the syntactic behaviour of deverbal posture verbs in Līkpākpáǎn. These include their argument functions, occurrence with modifiers and in possessive constructions.

### 8.1 Subject and object positions

Nominals derived from posture verbs can take both subject and object argument positions in sentence structures. The sentences in (22a-b) illustrate deverbal posture verbs in subject and object positions:

- (22) a     *Ń-sisíí*                      wù                      kīcháj  
                  CL;SG-standing              pain.HAB              waist  
                  ‘Standing causes waist pain.’
- b     **Bī-kpáá-b**                      láá                      *m-bóbóó*  
                  CL;PL-farmer-CL;PL              like.HAB              CL;SG-stooping  
                  ‘Farmers like stooping.’

In examples (22a) and (22b), the derived nominals in italics are subject and object arguments respectively.

### 8.2 Occurrence with other modifiers in a noun phrase

A deverbal posture verb as head of a noun phrase can be modified by adjectives, adverbials (intensifiers) and nominal modifiers. (23a-c) give examples of these instances:

- (23) a     *Ń-sisíí*                      *nyáán* nká     tī                      bán  
                  CL;SG-standing              good    FOC     we                      want.IPFV  
                  ‘A GOOD POSITION/STATUS is what we want.’
- b     *Ń-kákáá*                      *búnbún*                      *káá-ŋán*  
                  CL;SG-sitting                      much                      NEG-good  
                  ‘Too much of sitting is not good.’
- c     **Tī-nyóór**              bī              *ń-kpáá-bóbóó*                      nē  
                  CL-profit              be              CL;SG-farmer-stooping                      in  
                  ‘There is profit/benefit in farmers’ stooping.’

From examples (23a), (23b) and (23c) we find NPs in which the derived nominal heads are modified by an adjective, an adverbial (intensifier) and a nominal modifier respectively. It is also observed as in (23a-c) that while other modifier categories are postposed to the derived nominal head, the nominal modifier is preposed to it. This is compliant of the order of modification observed in Līkpākpáǎn (see Bisilki, 2018). It is also important to add that a derived nominal may retain a literal meaning or assume an idiomatic one as in (23a). However, while it is possible for a deverbal posture verb to take a nominal modifier, it does not seem possible for a nominal derived from a posture verb to serve as a nominal modifier to another noun in an NP structure. This accounts for the incorrectness of the structures in (24a-b):

- (24) a    **\*Tī-nyóór**    **bī**    **ń-bóbóó-kpáú**    **nē**  
 CL-profit    be    CL;SG-farmer-stooping    in  
 (‘There is profit/benefit in farmers’ stooping.’)
- b    **\*Nákújà**    **sóó**    **ń-sósóó-nímpú**  
 Nákújà    be.squatting    CL;SG-squatting-woman  
 (‘Nákújà is squatting like a woman’)

### 8.3 The derived nominals in possessive constructions

Nominals derived from posture verbs can be used in adnominal possessive constructions. This is exemplified in (25a-b):

- (25) a    **Sòjà-tííb**    **áá-sìsìí**    **púá**    **pám**  
 Soldier-CL;PL    POSS-standing    be.difficult    INTENS  
 ‘The military type of standing is very difficult.’
- b    **Bī-kpáá-b**    **kán**    **ń-bóbóó**    **áá-nyóór**  
 CL;PL-farmer-CL;PL    see.HAB    CL;SG-stooping    POSS-profit  
 ‘Farmers benefit/profit from stooping.’

In (25a), the derived nominal, **ńsìsìí** ‘to be in standing posture’ is the possessum in the possessive construction whereas in (25b), the derived nominal, **ń-bóbóó** ‘to be in a stooping posture’ is the possessor in the possessive construction.

### 9. Nominalised posture verbs vis-à-vis the socio-cultural domain parameter

Newman (2002: 2) points out that the central meanings of posture verbs are their literal interpretations, also known as their postural senses. From this point of view, the central meanings of posture verbs will include such as the actual acts of standing, sitting, kneeling, etc. Beyond these central meanings, it is also widely attested that posture verbs come to acquire figurative, grammaticalised or semantic extensions in terms of their meanings or interpretations in languages. It is argued that postures play an important role in our human daily routines, hence, the verbs denoting these postures come to be common sources of semantic extensions (Atintono, 2012; Newman, 2002). I will, additionally, adopt the term connotation or associative meaning in a synonymous use with the figurative or semantic extensions of nominalised posture verbs.

In analysing the semantic components of posture verbs, Newman (2002: 2) establishes four domains as constituting the semantic frame within which the semantic properties of posture verbs can be analysed. These include the spatio-temporal domain, the force dynamics domain, the active zone domain and the socio-cultural domain. Zeroing in on the socio-cultural domain, one can say that this domain has to do with the world views or social evaluations held by the speakers of a language about a particular posture. These world views or social evaluations which underlie the semantic extensions or connotative meanings of postures are, in turn, influenced by cultural factors (see Atintono, 2013: 157; Song, 2002). Whereas this section does not claim to be an exhaustive account on the figurative usage of posture verbs or their nominalised outputs in Līkpākpáǎn, it does

provide some key highlights on the subject.

In the Bīkpākpáám linguistic culture, a nominalised posture verb may have a couple of figurative meanings simultaneously. For instance, beyond the denotative meaning of the nominalised form, **ń-dódóó** ‘the act of being in a lying posture’, it has other figurative uses where it could mean accommodation/shelter, sexual intercourse, a condition of sickness and a place of burial. The examples in (26a-c) provide some illustrations:

- (26) a **Ú-nìnjà**      **sán**      **ké**      **áá-ń-kpá**      **áá-bá**      **áá-dódóón**  
 CL;SG-man    must    CONN      2SG-AUX-have    your-self    POSS-lying  
 ‘A man must have his own sleeping place/accommodation.’
- b **ń-dódóó**      **áá-bór**      **ńjáán**      **Máálán**      **nē**      **ú-púú**  
 CL;SG-lying    POSS-matter    be.disagreement    Máálán      CONJ    POSS-wife  
 ‘Sexual affair is the cause of the contention between Máálán and his wife.’
- c **Bī-ná**      **nīn-dó**      **ń-dódóó**      **ńin**      **yá**      **káá-ńán**  
 3PL;POSS-mother    be-lying      CL;SG-lying    REL    DEF    NEG-good  
 ‘Their sick mother’s condition is very bad.’

In (26a), the interactants were a youth (a young man) and his paternal uncle. The young man discloses to his paternal uncle his intention to put up a room for himself. The uncle’s response represents the statement in (26a) where we see the word, **ń-dódóó** ‘sleeping place’ taking a non-literal meaning. Similarly, in (26b) and (26c), **ń-dódóó** assumes the figurative meanings of mating between male and female and sickness respectively.<sup>6</sup> It has been argued that in many socio-cultural groups, the lying posture is adjudged as the least involving physical action among the body postures. As such, the lying posture has generally been associated with rest, sleep, sickness and death (Newman, 2002: 3; Atintono, 2013: 157). This generic observation about the lying posture resonates with the figurative senses of **ń-dódóó** in Līkpākpáám as shown in the preceding discussion. Perhaps, something more to add, based on the Līkpākpáám data, is that these associated meanings are, more properly, metaphorical extensions or associations. For example, the figurative interpretation of **ń-dódóó** as accommodation/shelter and sickness in (26a) is metaphorical in the sense that one’s place of accommodation is where one lies down to sleep or rest. Similarly, a time of sickness is usually when the body resorts to the lying posture most.

The non-literal use of one of the posture verbs and its nominalised output was found to always have a pejorative or disparaging meaning among Līkpākpáám speakers. This is the posture verb form, **sóó** ‘to be in a squatting posture’ and its nominalised form, **ń-sósóó** ‘the act of being in a squatting posture’. **Sóó** or **ń-sósóó** in figurative usage does not normally have a specific meaning. Nonetheless, employing any of the two forms in reference or address to a person expresses contempt or belittlement of the highest order towards the fellow, except in the context of a jest. The deprecatory meaning given to the non-literal usage of **sóó** and **ń-sósóó** follows from the

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The contextual background of (26b) is that a husband returns from the farm and then enquires from his wife the cause of a quarrel that ensued the previous night between a couple in the neighbourhood. The wife’s response is the utterance represented in (26b). (26c) is an extract from a conversation between two co-wives about a young man who hurries to by-pass them without greeting. One of the co-wives finds the young man’s conduct unusual/inappropriate and complains to her counterpart. The counterpart who already knew that the young man’s mother was seriously ill at the time responds as represented in (26c), probably, to get the young man as a victim of circumstances pardoned/exonerated.

Bīkpākpāám cultural association of the squatting posture with a lack of independence/self-reliance and dignity.

Additionally, what seems more intriguing about the figurative uses and meanings of nominalised posture verbs in Līkpākpāln is that they are fairly fixed rather than being open ended. Thus, no additional meanings are easily added to the repertoire of figurative meanings of nominalised posture verbs.

## **10. Conclusion**

This study has discussed the phenomenon of nominal derivation from posture verbs in the less-studied Līkpākpāln linguistic culture, using data from both naturalistic and elicitation sources. In the analysis, I considered the morphology of posture verbs, the processes of their nominalisation, some aspects of their syntax and also an overview of their figurative or idiomatic usage vis-à-vis the socio-cultural domain hypothesis of Newman (2002). I establish, inter alia, that the nominalisation of posture verbs in Līkpākpāln is, preponderantly, a synchronisation of the processes of prefixation and reduplication. I also observe that the syntactic characterisation of nominalised posture verbs, largely, complies with those of other nouns in Līkpākpāln, except their (nominalised posture verbs’) defiance to function as nominal modifiers in the NP. Also, agreeably, the extended meanings of nominalised posture verbs in Līkpākpāln are impinged by the socio-cultural views of the speakers. This is, therefore, a further vindication of the socio-cultural domain of Newman’s (2002) semantic frame for the analysis of posturals.

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**Abbreviations**

ABS	Absolutive	PFV	Perfective
ART	Article	PL	Plural
AUX	Auxiliary	POSS	Possessive
CL	(Noun) class	PRES	Present
COND	Conditional marker	PRF	Perfect
CONJ	Conjunction	PROG	Progressive
CONN	Connective	PRS	Present
DEF	Definite	REL	Relative
DEM	Demonstrative	SBJ	Subject
FOC	Focus marker	SG	Singular
FUT	Future	V	Verb
HAB	Habitual	VP	Verb phrase
INTENS	Intensifier	1	1st Person
IPFV	Imperfective	2	2nd Person
LOC	Locative	3	3rd Person
N	Noun		
NP	Noun phrase		
OBJ	Object		

