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“PADDLING A CANOE AND PREPARING RICE BALLS”: THE SEMANTICS OF TAFI CUISINE

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Abstract

The culinary field is where three of the well-authenticated examples of human universals; tool making, use of fire and cooking of food, come together. Yet in this field, cultures differ in their conceptualisation and linguistic representation of food preparation. In this study, I discuss the language of cooking in Tafi, a Ghana-Togo Mountain Language, focusing on five verbs: **tɔ́** “cook, boil”; **pɔ́** “bake, roast”, **gba** “fry, roast; sweep”; **ge** “cook (e.g. dumpling); drive (e.g. a car)” and **tú** “pound”. I investigate the semantic relations among them and explore the cultural logic that unites the interpretations suggested by their translation equivalents. Thus, I show that the contextual interpretation of **tɔ́** depends on the classes of nouns it collocates with: With **kídɔ́** “thing” it signals “prepare a meal”. Where its complement is a specific product, the interpretation is “to make something” e.g., **tɔ́ bɛsh(e)ɔkɔ́** “prepare local soap”. But if the complement names a food then it means “prepare that particular food” e.g. **tɔ́ (elí) oni** “prepare (oil-palm) soup”. If the complement is a (raw) foodstuff, it is interpreted as “boil in water to”, e.g. **tɔ́ kídzɛ** “egg” is interpreted as “cook egg” or “boil egg in water”. Furthermore, I argue that the use of the activity verbs **gba** “sweep”, **ge** “drive, paddle” (cf. Akan **ka**) and **tú** “pound” in the culinary field is based on the manner of food preparation. The Tafi conceptualisations and lexicalisation patterns will be compared to the vocabulary in Ewe and Akan to discover the similarities and differences.

Keywords: Food preparation, lexicalisation pattern, polysemy, Tafi and verb semantics

1. Introduction

A categorial opposition between the raw and the cooked is a universal experience. Universally also the mediums through which food is cooked tend to be similar: fire, water, fat (or oil) etc. What is striking is that different cultures have different ways of preparing and cooking food. They also construe and interpret the processes differently. For instance, the cooking of **banku**-like¹ foods is described differently in different Ghanaian languages, as we shall see below. The Ewe use the verb “cook” for that and do not pay attention to the manner of cooking. The Tafi and the Akan describe it in terms of the activity and manner of movement of, and the turning of the ladle. Thus, they use the verb that also means to drive a car (or perhaps more accurately to steer) or to paddle or row to talk about it. The goal of this paper is to explore the ways in which the Tafi people of south-eastern Ghana talk about the different modes of preparing the food that they eat. This will be done through an examination of the grammar and especially the semantics of five verbs that can be said to belong to the culinary field in the language (see Lehrer 1974 for English cooking verbs). The verbs involved can be divided into two groups: the verbs in the first group focus on preparing food through a medium: **tɔ** “cook, boil”; **pɔt** “bake, roast”; **gba** “fry, roast; sweep” and those in the second group focus on the vigorous physical activity that the cook performs: **ge** “drive, paddle” and **tú** “pound”. The various translation equivalents of the verbs provide some clues to the significance of the verbs.

In the exploration of the syntax and semantics of lexical units in the lexical field of cooking and cuisine in Tafi, the field semantics and frame semantics perspectives will be adopted. A semantic field or lexical field is a group of words or lexical units that share a semantic feature. They also have paradigmatic relations with each other. A lexical field approach to semantics was introduced by Trier (1931) (see Lyons 1977), and Lehrer (1974) applied this approach to the analysis of cooking terms in English and other European languages. As Lehrer and Kittay (1992:4) note later, the advantage of lexical field analysis is that the meaning of a word is understood in relation to other words in the same domain. These relations could be in terms of synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy or incompatibility. From this point of view, relations are part of the meaning of the word. In Table 1, the relations holding between the cooking verbs in Tafi, hyponymy and incompatibility can be inferred from the representation. As Lehrer and Kittay (1992:4) illustrate, “to understand

¹ *Banku* is the Ga name for a starchy component of a meal prepared with corn dough. People also add cassava dough to the corn dough. The term has been borrowed into other Ghanaian languages including Ghanaian English.

the meaning of the verb to *sauté* requires that we understand its contrastive relation to *deep fry*, *broil*, *boil*, and also the affinitive terms like *cook* and the syntagmatic relations to *pan*, *pot*, and the many food items one might *sauté*”. In the discussion of the meanings of the cooking terms, their relations to say the food items that are prepared that way will be considered.

Apart from knowing how the terms in the field are related and their contribution to the meaning, we can also understand a term in terms of the semantic frame to which it belongs. A semantic frame is a domain of experience including cultural experience that a lexical item evokes. It is assumed that there is a knowledge structure associated with each linguistic sign (encyclopaedic knowledge), parts of which are evoked in particular contexts (Fillmore 2006[1982], Atkins and Fillmore 1992, Petruck 1996). For instance, I will show below that one of the verbs that belongs to the lexical field of cooking **ge** “paddle, row, drive” evokes in particular usages knowledge structures and elements associated with food preparation/cooking (e.g. preparing rice balls², **banku**, as well as ladle, heat source, an effector etc.), vehicular transport frame (e.g. car, steering wheel, a driver), water transport frame (e.g. canoe, boat, paddle, an effector, water bodies etc.).

The frames evoked and the frame elements are critical for the realisation of the event. An aspect of frame semantics is the PARTICIPANTS. For this verb **ge**, as indicated by the frames above, there must be the following Participant roles even if they are not realised in particular usages: an AGENT or Effector of the action (i.e. the one who is preparing the rice balls, for example); an INSTRUMENT that the AGENT handles to bring about a change of state or to produce something (i.e. the wooden ladle manipulated to create the paste); a THEME, i.e. the entity whose movement or state is at stake; and MANNER – the way in which the AGENT carries out the action to produce an effect, or a change.

While for each of the sub frames evoked, the participants are different entities, it seems that the MANNER in which the agent handles the INSTRUMENT to produce an effect in the THEME (causing it to move in a particular direction [TRANSPORT] or to become something else [FOOD PREPARATION] is similar. It appears that this is the logic that unites these seemingly disparate frames. Before turning to the discussion of the verbs, I first provide the typological features of Tafi, relevant for interpreting the examples. The rest of the article is structured as follows: the general verb of cooking **tɔ** “cook” is discussed in section 2. The third section is devoted to the discussion of the verb **gba** “fry, roast” while the fourth section deals with the verb **pɔt** “bake, roast”. Specific activity verbs of food

² Rice balls is a dish prepared by mashing boiled rice and moulding it into balls. This dish is usually eaten with soup, e.g., groundnut or palm nut soup.

preparation - **ge** “cook (dumpling); drive (e.g. a car); paddle/row (a canoe)” and **tú** “pound” are examined in the fifth section and the final section is the conclusion.

1.1 Some typological features of Tafi

The Tafi language is spoken in the south-eastern part of Ghana by about 4,400 people (2003 figures). The Tafi people refer to their language as **Tigbo** and to themselves as **Bagbo** (Simons et al. 2018). Tafi belongs to the KA subgroup of the Ghana-Togo-Mountain (GTM) languages which belong to the Kwa family of the Niger-Congo phylum. Tafi and its neighbour Nyagbo (Tutrugbu) are highly mutually intelligible and it is also closely related to Avatime (Siya) (see e.g. Bobuafor 2013, Defina 2016, Essegbey 2010, van Putten 2014).

Tafi has nine vowels which participate in a root-controlled ATR harmony system. It is a tone language with three level tonemes: High (marked with an acute accent), Mid (marked with a macron) and Low (left unmarked or with a grave accent on syllabic nasals) plus Rising (R) and Falling (F) tones.

Like most of the other GTM languages, Tafi has an active system of noun classes identified by prefixes and a system of agreement markers. At the clause level, the subject is cross-referenced on the verb. The basic constituent orders of Tafi are SV/AVO and AVDO. The possessor precedes the possessed. Pragmatically salient constituents with topic and focus functions occur in the left-periphery of the clause (see Bobuafor 2013).

Tafi is a verb serialising language like most Kwa languages where the subject is expressed only once and the verbs share the same tense and mood but can be independently marked for compatible aspect values (see Bobuafor 2009, 2013).

Tafi has only three underived simple adjectives. Ideophones and derived adjectivals are used as qualifiers in NPs. Property verbs can be reduplicated and used to predicate qualities of subject NPs in clauses.

2. The verb **tɔ**

The verb **tɔ** is a bivalent verb that entails two participants, an Actor and an Undergoer. It cannot occur in a one-place (intransitive) construction. It typically occurs in a two-place (transitive) construction. When it occurs in a two-place construction, it can be extended

with a dative (1) or locative participant (2) as illustrated in the elicited sentences in (1) and (2).³

1. **Ésí átó ’édō kó ’ál’.**

Ésí á-tó kí-dō kó balí
 Ésí SM-cook CM-thing DAT 3PL
 ‘Esi cooked for them.’

2. **Ésí átó ’édō ní osubhamabhā.**

Ésí á-tó kí-dō ní o-subha ní kábhā
 Esi SM-cook CM-thing LOC CM-hearth DEF top
 ‘Esi cooked on the hearth.’

The verb has three readings depending in part on the semantics of the complement it takes. Its general sense is to make or prepare something such as soap (3) or palm oil (4).⁴

3. **Ɔsí ɔtó béshokǎě, ɔbɔpúí koko aklô...**

ɔ-sí ɔ-tó bé-she.ɔkǎě ɔ-bɔ-púí koko a-klô
 2SG-say SM-cook CM-local.soap 2SG-FUT-roast cocoa CM.PL-pod
 ‘If you want to prepare local soap, you will burn cocoa pods...’ (Local soap)

4. **Kánā gi látō ’udzo ní Baagbo.**

ká-nā gi lá-tō bu-dzo ní Baagbo
 CM-manner REL 3PL.DEP-cook CM-palm.oil LOC Tafi
 ‘This is how palm oil is prepared in Tafi.’ (Palm oil)

When the complement of the verb is the generic nominal **kídō** ‘thing’ the general reading is to prepare a meal, to cook. In the sentence in (5), it is clear that the rooster was killed and a meal was prepared with it. The verb here refers to the whole event.

³ In this paper, the examples are presented in four (4) lines. The first line represents the spoken form and shows word divisions. In the second line, the data is presented in bold with hyphens (-) symbolising morpheme breaks. The morphs in the first line are fully spelt out as morphemes in the second line thus initial consonants and syllables deleted are presented in their recoverable forms. The interlinear gloss and a free English translation provided in single quotes are given in the third and fourth lines respectively.

⁴ Where the example is taken from a text example, the name of the text is indicated and these can be found in Chapter 13 of Bobuafor (2013).

5. **Évu y'ókókóny'óní, eyí, átó 'édó.**
é-vu **yí** **ɔ-kókónye** **ɔ-ní** **e-yí**
 3SG-catch 3SG.IND CM-rooster AM-PROX SM-kill
a-tó **kí-dó**
 SM-cook CM-thing
 'He caught this rooster of his, killed it and prepared food.' (Kasala, line 241)

Similarly, in (6) there is disapproval being expressed concerning the quantity of oil that was used in preparing a meal.

6. **Átó 'édó ni budzo tumpé 'egunu zizí.**
á-tó **kí-dó** **ni** **bu-dzo** **tumpá** **ke-gunu** **zizí**
 3SG-cook CM-thing COM CM-palm.oil bottle CM-half whole
 'She used half bottle of oil to cook.' (lit. 'she cooked with a whole half bottle of oil.')

7. **Óboto 'édóní lóó óbovi ti shui 'uní?**
ó-bo-tó **kí-dó** **ní** **lóó** **ó-bo-vi** **ti**
 2SG-FUT-cook CM-thing DEF DISJ 2SG-FUT-go PURP
shui **bu-ní**
 fetch CM-water
 'Will you cook the food or you will go to fetch water (from the riverside)?'

When the complement is specific and refers to food such as soup or rice dumpling, the interpretation is to prepare or cook that particular dish. Consider examples (8) - (10).

8. **Plónó ní óbókó akpá óbókó' ot'óní nó.**
plónó **ní** **ó-bo-yíkó** **a-kpá** **ó-bo-yíkó**
 add TOP 2SG-FUT-take CM.PL-fish SM-FUT-take
ó-tó **o-ní** **nó**
 SM-cook CM-soup COM
 'In addition, you will use fish in preparing soup.' (Kumokó, line 04)
9. **Bótó áday' óni pétée n'elí lo.**
bú-tó **á-dayí** **o-ní** **pétée** **ni**
 1PL-cook CM.PL-bean CM-soup all COM

- e-lí lo**
 CM.PL-palm.nut ADD
 ‘We prepare peas soup using palm nuts.’ (Kimukó, line 09)
10. **Báátó ’emukó ní Baagbo.**
bá-á-tó kɪ-mukó [ní Baagbo]
 3PL-PRSPROG-cook CM-red.rice.dumpling LOC Baagbo
 ‘They are cooking red rice dumpling in Tafi.’⁵

When the complement of the verb refers to an ingredient such as yam (11), palm-nut (12) or rice (13) rather than a dish as in (8) - (10) above, the interpretation can be rendered as 'boil in water to cook'.

11. **Adzĩn ábato ekũn alóó ábad’alí?**
a-dzi ní á-ba-tó é-kũ ní alóó
 CM-woman DEF SM-FUT-cook CM.PL-yam DEF DISJ
á-ba-di alí
 SM-FUT-sell 3PL
 ‘Will the woman cook the yams or she will sell them?’
12. **Ábató élin ɔwūlago.**
á-ba-tó e-lí ní ɔ-wūlago
 3SG-FUT-cook CM.PL-palm.nut DEF CM-evening
 ‘S/he will boil the palm nuts in the evening.’
13. **Át’ôn’ôní kulí y’átó ás’âní kulí áákɔ ’elí pétéé áákó abal’akpi ketsukpú**
gbugblă gbugblă gbugblă gbugblă gbugblă tielímĩ kulí áákɔ éđɔn áda.
á-tó o-ní ɔ-ní kulí yí á-tó
 3SG-cook CM-soup AM-PROX CONJ 3SG.IND SM-cook
á-sí a-ní kulí á-yíkɔ kulí pétéé á-yíkó
 CM-rice AM-PROX CONJ SM-take 3SG all SM-take
a-bali a-kpí ke-tsukpú gbugblă gbugblă
 SM-pour SM-put.in CM-pot big big
gbugblă gbugblă gbugblă tie-lí kumĩ

⁵ **Kimukó** ‘red rice dumpling’ is a dish prepared with flour prepared from roasted red rice.

big big big AM-INDEF in
klí **á-yíko** **klí-dɔ̃** **ní** **á-da**
 CONJ SM-take CM-thing DEF SM-cover
 ‘She prepared this soup and cooked this rice and she put it all into a very
 big pot and covered it.’ (Kasalã, line 243)

In the first line in (13), two readings of the verb are juxtaposed. It is the second use of the verb with its complement as rice that we are interested in here. It just involves putting the ingredient rice on fire, adding water and letting it boil to cook. This is unlike the first use which entails a few more actions like the addition of other ingredients such as fish and vegetables in order to prepare soup.

A piece of evidence that the reading of ‘boil in water to cook’ of the verb **tɔ̃** entails both phases, namely ‘boiling in water’ and ‘become.cooked’, is that there is another verb which translates as ‘boil’ but which focuses on the vigorous activity of boiling and does not entail ‘being cooked’. As the fragment in (14) shows the ‘be cooked’ verb **bí** will be needed to express the result of the boiling denoted by the verb **yabá** ‘become hot to boiling point’.

14. ... **gɪ bubaziyabá g’lɔ̃ babí.**
gɪ **bɔ-ba-zɪ-yabá** **gɪ** **lɔ̃-ba-bí**
 REL 3SG-FUT-REP-boil REL 3SG.DEP-FUT-be.cooked
 ‘...while it continues boiling until it is done (cooked).’ (Palm oil, line 35)

The verb **tɔ̃** can be nominalised through noun class prefixation. Thus, in the proverb in (15), **klí-tɔ̃** ‘cooking’ is a nominalised form of the verb.

15. **Anóvɔ̃ ní gɪ ákányɔ̃ edí ní y’áɔ̃ así y’eni y’ényí ’ítɔ̃ dí.**
a-nóvɔ̃ **ní** **gɪ** **á-ká-nyɔ̃** **e-dí** **ní**
 CM-child DEF REL 3SG.DEP-NEG.PERF-roam SM-look TOP
yí **á-ɔ̃** **a-sí** **yí** **é-ní**
 3SG.IND SM-say SM-COMP 3SG.IND CM-mother
yí **é-nyí** **klí-tɔ̃** **dí**
 3SG.IND SM-know CM-cook surpass
 ‘The child who has never travelled says that his mother is the best cook.’ (lit.
 ‘the child who has never travelled says his mother’s cooking surpasses all.’)
 (Proverbs #49)

In sum, the verb **tɔ** has three readings generated in composition with the semantics of the complement it takes: a general meaning of make or prepare something or make something such as soap, palm oil or prepare a meal; and specific readings of cook a dish, e.g., rice dumpling; palm nut soup, and boil to cook e.g. rice, yam etc. The question is whether each of these readings is a distinct sense or not. In Table 1, I show the hierarchical relation between the senses and in Table 2, I compare some collocational patterns involving the verb and its counterparts in Ewe, Akan and Ga. Table 2 shows that while the cook verb is used in Tafi to talk about preparing and cooking soups, Ewe uses a ‘hit’ verb to express that idea. Table 2 also shows that while Ewe uses the general ‘cook, prepare a meal’ verb to talk about the preparation of **banku** or **akple** or dumpling, Tafi uses an activity verb of manner **ge** ‘drive, paddle’ for that event, similar to Akan.

Table 1: Tafi cooking verbs

tɔ 'prepare something or meal'				
tɔ 'cook a specific dish'				
tɔ 'boil to cook'	pɔ̃ 'bake, roast, char grill'	gba 'fry, roast; sweep'	ge 'drive, steer, paddle, row'	tú 'pound'
+ water	Open or enclosed dry heat; direct contact with fire coals	Cook in fat, or fine powder as heat conduit, over high heat	Mix flour or dough with water and cook on fire by stirring using a wooden stick till it forms a thick paste	

Table 2: Collocational patterns of cooking verbs in Tafi, Ewe, Akan and Ga

	Tafi	Ewe	Akan	Ga
Cook, prepare a meal	tó kí-dō 'cook thing'	ɖa nu 'cook thing'	noa aduane 'cook food'	hoo niyenii 'cook food'
Make, prepare soap	tó ɔkōē 'cook soap'	ɖa adzalē/kœ	yɛ samina 'make soap'	fee samla 'make soap'
Boil cook egg, yam, rice	tó 'cook'	ɖa 'cook'	noa 'cook'	hoo 'cook'
Make, prepare soup	tó oní 'cook soup'	fo detsi 'hit soup'	bɔ/yɛ nkwan 'hit/make soup'	hoo wonu 'cook soup'
Distil alcohol	tó bulu/ akpeteshi 'cook drink/akpeteshie'	ɖa aha/ akpeteshi 'cook drink/ akpeteshie'	noa nsa/ apɛtɛhyi 'cook drink/ akpeteshie'	hoo akpeteshi 'cook akpeteshie'
Boil water	tó buní 'cook water'		noa nsu 'cook water'	too nula 'heat hot water'
Boil leaves for medicine	tó bowá 'cook medicine'	ɖa amatsi 'cook medicine'	noa nhahamma 'cook leaves'	hoo tsofa 'cook medicine'
Sterilise	tó /kahɔkpó/ katsrɔkpó/ kípō 'cook hand/ foot/ wound/ sore'	ɖa asi/ afɔ 'cook hand/ foot'		hoo nane 'cook foot'
Cook dumpling	ge kíkó 'drive/paddle dumpling'	ɖa akple 'cook dumpling'	ka abetee 'drive dumpling'	tsí baŋku 'cook dumpling'
Cook porridge, rice water	hu kókó 'hit porridge'	fo kókó 'hit porridge'	ka mpampa, emo nsuo 'drive porridge'	hoo kókó, raiswata 'cook rice water'

3. The verb *gba*

The verb *gba* is also a bivalent verb which occurs in two-place (transitive) constructions. As shown in Table 1, the verb has three readings. Two of the readings relate to food preparation. One of the readings is that of cooking something in hot oil or fat; that is, fry as in (16).

16. **Hm! adzĩn ágbē eqútsũ uní.**
hm a-dzi ní á-gba i-dútsũ t-ní
 INTJ CM-woman DEF SM-fry CM.PL-stew AM-PROX
 ‘Um, the woman made these stews.’ (Kasalã, line 242)

In this example, stews have been cooked and the use of the verb *gba* signals that the cooking was done in heated oil.

A second reading related to cooking is that of cooking something in dry heat over high fire in an open container. The result is something that is cooked and dry. This applies especially to grains, nuts and flour. In this reading, the verb is translated as ‘roast’. Consider the examples in (17) and (18) describing how red-rice is treated before being cooked into dumpling.

17. **Blš ní, bú-tú ká lɔgba é.**
blš ní bú-tú ká lɔ-gba é
 1PL.IND TOP 1PL-pound then 1PL.DEP-roast CFM
 ‘As for us, we pound (the rice) and then roast it.’ (Kimókó, line 05)

18. **Búagbá n’ɔgbadzéém ká lɔdɔhɔ é.**
bú-ba-gbá ní ɔ-gbadzá kɪmɪ
 1PL-FUT-roast LOC CM-roasting.pan in
ká lɔ-dɔ-hɔ é
 then 1PL.DEP-ITIVE-grind CFM
 ‘We will roast (it) in a roasting pan then we go and grind (it).’ (Kimókó, line 06)

The difference in the medium of cooking between the two readings supports a polysemic account. There is a further reading of the verb *gba* ‘sweep’ outside the cooking domain. Examples 19-21 illustrate the ‘sweep’ sense of the verb.

19. **Kíwinyéewī adzīn agbe 'edō.**
kí-wī-nyáá-kí-wī **a-dzi** **ní** **á-gba** **kí-dō**
 CM-day-DISTR-CM-day CM-woman DEF SM-sweep CM-thing
 'Everyday, the woman sweeps.' (Bobuafor 2013: 228 ex. 172)
20. **Ónúgí áányā kóráá tsyí ábagba 'uvuním.**
ónú.gí **á-á-nyā** **kóráá tsyí** **á-ba-gba**
 COND 3SG.DEP-PRSPROG-be.sick even too 3SG-FUT-sweep
bú-vū **ní** **kími**
 CM-house DEF inside
 'Even if s/he is sick s/he will sweep the room.' (Bobuafor 2013: 298, ex. 113)
21. **Imosa tutá ulí láayíko agbá kikpekpením flôgo pí abaho asrá vuvó akpí.**
t-mosa **ti-tá** **ulí** **lá-ba-yíko**
 CM-handful.of.rice.stalk AM-three 3PL.IND 3PL.DEP-FUT-take
ba-gbá **ki-kpekpe** **ní** **kími flôgo pí**
 SM-sweep CM-snuff.box DEF inside before CONN
a-ba-ho **a-srá** **vuvó** **a-kpí**
 3SG.DEP-grind CM-tobacco new SM-put
 'It is three handfuls of rice stalks that will be used to clean the inside of the snuff-box before she will grind new tobacco to put into it.' (Sáhwĩ) (Bobuafor 2013: 292-3)

The question has to be asked whether the sweep interpretation is a related sense or we would have to consider the verb with that reading, a different lexical item in homonymous relation to the cooking verb. I submit that the sweep sense is related to and linked to the cooking verb hence one polysemous verb. The common denominator of the actions associated with the three readings is the movement an agent makes in bringing about the realisation of the event involved. Think about the sweeping movements and the movements of turning things being fried and especially entities such as flour and grains being roasted. Table 3 summarises various collocational patterns of the cooking senses of the verb and the equivalents in related languages.

Table 3: Collocational patterns of **gba** compared

	Tafi	Ewe	Akan	Ga
Fry plantain, yam	gba	tɔ	kyé	shĩ
Heat to boil of oil, make stew	gba	tɔ / wɔ atadi ‘make stew’	yé ‘make’	fee ‘make’
Roast grain (e.g.) rice, maize, peanuts, nuts	gba	tɔ	kyé	shĩ
Roast gari	gba	tɔ	kyé	shĩ

From the table, it is apparent that there is a logic that unites what in English is expressed as ‘fry’ and ‘roast’ which is shared by the linguacultures in southern Ghana and in fact beyond. The analysis presented here shows that we need to go beyond translation equivalents to understand the cultural logics of verbs.

4. The verb **póĩ**

The verb **póĩ** is translated in context into English as ‘bake’, ‘roast’, ‘grill’ or ‘char-grill’ depending on the nature of the heat and whether there is contact with live charcoal as source of heating for the cooking. Thus, if the cooking is done in an enclosed dry heat environment where the ingredient is not in direct contact with the heat generating entity, e.g. in an oven, then the verb is translated as bake or roast. The ingredient could also be cooked on a frame where it is not in direct contact with the heat generating entity. This is also translated as roast (see image below of roasted plantain in Fig 1). The ingredient can also come in direct contact with the heat generating entity such as the charcoal as is the case of the maize in Fig 2.



Fig 1: roasted plantain



Fig 2: roasted maize

Thus, the roasting talked about in example 22 can be done either with direct heat or without as in the figures. Example 23 shows that the ingredient cooked in this way can be meat also.

22. **Adzun eéwúsé bladyó ti apó̄.**
a-dzi ní e-é-wúsé bladyó ti
 CM-woman DEF SM-PRSPROG-peel plantain PURP
a-pó̄
 3SG.DEP-roast
 ‘The woman is peeling plantains to roast.’
23. **Ákó lapó̄i kudzyañ.**
á-kó la-pó̄i kú-dzya ní
 3SG-cause 3PL.DEP-roast CM-meat DEF
 ‘S/he made them roast the meat.’ = char grill

Food preparation that is done in an enclosed heated environment, i.e. oven, is also described with this verb. Thus, the baking of bread is described with the same verb. Equivalents of this verb with a similar range of uses are found in the neighbouring languages as well, as demonstrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Collocations of **pó̄i** compared

	Tafi	Ewe	Akan	Ga
Roast/char grill, plantain, yam fish, meat (direct/open dry heat)	pó̄i	me	toto	shã
Bake bread, etc (enclosed dry heat)	pó̄i	me	to	shã
Burn (in enclosure) e.g. charcoal	pó̄i	me	hye	shã

Burn (as in cause pain e.g. from a hot entity e.g. iron)	póĩ	me	hye	shã
Burn paper	póĩ	tó dzo ‘set fire’	hye	shã

5. Specific activity verbs of food preparation

The verbs discussed so far describe general food preparation. We now turn to specific verbs for talking about particular activities carried out in the preparation of some aspect of the meals. We focus on two verbs that describe activities associated with two salient foods of the Tafi – **kíkó** ‘dumpling’ and **fufuó** ‘fufu’.⁶

5.1 The verb *ge*

The verb **ge** is a general verb that is glossed as ‘drive, steer’ something. In the culinary domain, it is specialised for describing the movements a cook makes while preparing a dumpling-like food. Example (24) taken from a procedural text describing how a local ritual and ceremonial food **kumukó** ‘red.rice dumpling’ is made in Tafi. The particular example talks about the things that happen before one begins to ‘drive’ the flour in the water to make the dumpling.

24. **Okónín butibatsi kpí ko gu lóoge?**
o-kóní ní bu-ti-ba-tsi kpí ko gu
 CM-water DEF 1PL-NEG1-FUT-pour put.in just REL
ló-bo-ge
 1PL.DEF-FUT-drive
 ‘We don’t just add the flour to the water and start stirring (it).’

⁶ A reviewer wonders how this distinction between general food preparation verbs and specific verbs is motivated. They question what makes ‘soup’ a major part of the meal while ‘dumpling’ is not. The said reviewer suggests that the distinction lies in the specific verbs being used to prepare starchy foods. However, this will also not work as the verb **gba**, for example, is also used in the preparation of starchy foods. What this points to is that the verbs can be classified in different ways. The one adopted here looks at the ascent of the semantics of the verb: the semantic focus of the specific activity verbs is the manner as opposed to the focus on result of the general verbs discussed in previous sections.

Interestingly, the name for the instrument that is used for preparing foods of this kind, ‘a wooden ladle, mingling stick’ is based on a nominalisation of the verb and prefixed with an appropriate noun class marker: **o-gi-ge** [CM-RED-drive]. Example 25 describes the stage at which the ladle is inserted for the action of ‘driving’ to begin.

25. **Otsúgo lókpi ogige ko loge ’ulí pétéé.**
otsúgo ló-kpí o-gige ko lo-ge
 now 1PL.DEP-put.in CM-wooden.ladle just 1PL.DEP-drive
bulí pétéé
 3SG all
 ‘It is now that we put in the wooden ladle then we stir it.’

We have seen in example 10 (repeated as 26 for convenience) that the general process of preparing a meal involving **kumukó** ‘red rice dumpling’ can be described with the general verb **tó**. The verb **ge** by contrast is used to describe the specific action of preparing the dumpling. Thus, the opening sentence of the text describing the processes of how one specifically cooks **kumukó** uses this verb as shown in 27. Example 26 implies not only the preparation of **kumukó** but also the preparation of the sauce or soup that goes with it. Example 27 focuses only on the preparation of **kumukó**. Compare examples 26 and 27.

26. **Báátó ’emukó ní Baagbo.**
bá-á-tó kɪ-mukó [ní Baagbo]
 3PL-PRSPROG-cook CM-red.rice.dumpling LOC Baagbo
 ‘They are cooking red rice dumpling in Tafi.’
27. **Kumukó gige ní Baagbo kulínū sí óopi amó ...**
kɪ-mukó gi-ge ní Baagbo ní
 CM-red.rice.dumpling RED-drive LOC Tafi TOP
kɪl-nū sí ó-bɔ-pɪ a-mó
 3SG.IND-COP COMP 2SG.DEP-FUT-look.for CM-rice
 ‘Red rice dumpling preparation in Tafi is that you will look for rice ...’

Thus, the verb **ge** focuses on the activity of preparing the dumpling. In Table 2, it has been shown that Akan also uses a similar verb suggesting a similar and shared conceptualisation of the event.

5.2 The verb tú

The verb **tú** is a general activity glossed as 'pound'. The preparation of the staple '**fufu**' is done by pounding boiled yam, cassava, cocoyam or plantain to produce a starchy paste. This activity is specific to this aspect of preparing the meal. It does not describe the preparation of the accompaniments of the starchy component. Example (28) describes the pounding of a specific ingredient to get **fufu** while (29) talks of the action of pounding **fufu** without specifying the particular ingredient that is being pounded to result in the **fufu**.

28. **Ébetú kíkū.**
 é-be-tú **kí-kū.**
 3SG-FUT-pound CM-yam
 'S/he will pound yam.'
29. **éé-tű fufuo** 'S/he is pounding fufu'

In fact, the activity can be applied to other ingredients in the process of food preparation where the result is not fufu. In example (17) repeated here as (30) the pounding of the rice to remove its husk is a precursor to it being roasted.

30. **Blɔ̃ ní, bú-tú ká lɔ̃gba é.**
 blɔ̃ **ní** **bú-tú** **ká** **lɔ̃-gba** **é**
 1PL.IND TOP 1PL-pound then 1PL.DEP-roast CFM
 'As for us, we pound (the rice) and then roast it.' (Kimokó, line 05)

The Tafi verb **tú** 'pound' and its uses are closely matched by the Ewe verb **tó** 'pound'. The Ewe verb is also used to talk about pounding of boiled tubers or plantain into fufu, as well as for pounding grains into flour or for the pounding of nuts such as boiled oil palm nuts. The close form and meaning resemblance suggests that they could be cognate. Other languages like Ga also have verbs used similarly but which do not resemble the Ewe or Tafi verbs. In Ga, the verb is **shí** 'pound' and Akan uses **wó** 'pound'.

6. Conclusion

In the foregoing, I have explored the grammar and meaning of five verbs that belong to the culinary field in Tafi. One cannot describe Tafi cuisine without using these verbs. The discussion has been framed in terms of general cooking verbs which seem to be distinguished at one level in terms of the medium through which the cooking takes place. That is at the basic level, **tɔ** applies to cooking in water, **gba** to cooking in oil and **pɔ̄i** to cooking by dry heat. There is also the specialisation of activity verbs for particular actions carried out in producing some foods. The two salient ones are **ge** 'drive' for making dumplings and **tú** 'pound' for making **fufu**. As indicated, all these verbs have other uses and, in some cases, other senses that do not fall within the culinary domain. Nevertheless, the investigation has laid bare the ways in which the various modes of preparing different kinds of food are construed from a linguistic point of view.

Abbreviations

ADD	Addressive particle	INTJ	Interjection
AM	Agreement Marker	LOC	Locative
CFM	Clause final marker	NEG	Negative
CM	Class marker	PERF	Perfective
CM.PL	Class marker (plural)	PL	Plural
COM	Comitative	PROX	Proximal
COMP	Complementiser	PRSPROG	Present progressive
COND	Conditional	PURP	Purpose
CONJ	Conjunction	RED	Reduplicative
CONN	Connector	REL	Relative marker
COP	Copula	REP	Repetitive marker
DEP	Dependent	1PL	First person plural
DISJ	Disjunctive	2SG	Second person plural
DISTR	Distributive	3PL	Third person plural
FUT	Future	3SG	Third person singular
IND	Independent	SM	Subject marker
INDEF	Indefinite	TOP	Topic marker

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