THE CASE AGAINST A-N COMPOUNDING IN AKAN[1]

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This article questions the status of Adjectives-Noun nominal compounding ([A-N]$_N$) in Akan. Although the A-N compounding is postulated, no single study offers more than three good examples at any time. This is interesting because compounding is very productive in Akan. Again, in all the putative examples, the adjectives bear prefixes that they do not have elsewhere in the grammar, except when they modify plural nouns. I argue that the prefixes nominalize the adjectives which then must occur as the left-hand nominal modifiers in N-N compounds which are predominantly right-headed in Akan. Real adjective constituents of nominal compounds occur on the right. Thus, the morphological make-up and distribution of the constituents of such compounds suggest that they may be better analyzed as N-N compounds with nominalized adjectives as left-hand constituents. However, we may not rule out the existence of A-N compounding in Akan yet, hoping that proponents may succeed, somehow, to adduce real evidence to justify their postulation.

Cet article remet en question le statut du nom composé formé de l'adjectif-nom ([A-N]$_N$) en akan. Bien que l'on postule l'ensemble A-N comme nom composé, il n'existe aucune étude qui ait étayé ce genre de nom composé avec plus de trois exemples. Ceci est intéressant dans la mesure où la composition en akan est hautement productive. Ici aussi, dans les exemples mentionnés, les adjectifs ont des préfixes qu'ils n'exhibent pas ailleurs dans la grammaire de la langue, sauf lorsqu'ils modifient les noms au pluriel. Il est proposé dans cet article que les préfixes nominalisent les adjectifs qui, à leur tour, doivent paraître à la droite. C'est ainsi que l'issue morphologique et la distribution des constituants de tels mots composés suggèrent qu'ils devraient être analysés comme des composés N-N avec des adjectifs nominalisés apparaissant comme constituants à leur gauche. Cependant, nous n'excluons pas nécessairement l'existence de composés A-N en akan, en espérant que ceux qui soutiennent leur existence pourront un jour fournir des preuves convaincantes à ce sujet.

0. INTRODUCTION

Compounding is the process by which a word is formed by concatenating two or more bases each of which potentially occurs alone elsewhere in the grammar as a syntactic atom. The literature on compounding cross-linguistically is enormous. Yet, for Akan, compounding is relatively under-researched, although compounding is a very productive word formation strategy in the language. In recent years the situation has improved, as there has been renewed interest in the subject from scholars interested in Akan (cf. Abakah 2004, 2006; Appah 2003, 2004, 2005, 2009a, 2009b; Marfo 2004, 2006; Obeng 2009). Most studies, however, concentrate on the phonology, leaving the grammatical and semantic properties largely unaccounted for. This study is a modest attempt at filling this gap.

Compounds are classified according to various criteria, a common one being the syntactic category of the constituents of the compound. Based on this criterion, six two-word compounds, all of which form nominals, have been argued to occur in

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Akan. They are Noun-Noun, Noun-Adjective, Adjective-Noun, Verb-Verb, Verb-Noun and Noun-Verb (Dolphyne 1988: 120-124). Scholars seem to agree with Dolphyne on the six two-word compounds she posits, yet it is unclear which ones really exist, which ones are productive, etc.

Apart from these, there are studies that employ various other criteria in grouping compounds leading to variations in the number of compounds. Abakah (2006) for example, lists as many as nine different classes of compounds in his discussion of the tonology of Akan compounds. See Table 1.

Table 1: Abakah's (2006) classification of Akan compounds

Compound type	Examples	Gloss	Meaning
Noun-Noun	**sika + mfutuw**	gold + dust	gold dust
Noun-Adj	**opanyin+bɔn**	adult + bad	irresponsible adult
Adj-Noun	**enyimnyam+hen**	glory + king	king of glorious
Verb-Noun	**nyim+dzee**	know + thing	knowledge
Noun-Verb	**abra+bɔ**	make/lead + life	life in this world
Verb-Object	**agye+nkwa**	get + life	saviour
Object-Verb	**nkwa+gye**	get + life	salvation
Verb-Verb	**nsɔ+hwɛ**	to try + to see	temptation
Phrasal Verbs	**nkɔm+hyɛ**	pass + prophecy	Prophecy
De-verbal Noun+Noun	**bradato+nyi**	ruse + agentive noun	con
Other Types - Nominalization	**kantama+nto**	**ɔka ntam aa ɔnto** 's/he doesn't violate an oath'	he who is above the law

Sometimes the variation in number results from the unsystematic application of criteria, leading to the separation of types that belong together. One wonders, for instance, why Abakah separates Verb-Noun compounds from Verb-Object compounds since they behave similarly in every relevant grammatical environment (Appah 2009a).

Obviously, there are issues in the study of Akan compounds. In this paper, I take up one such issue relating to the existence of A-N compounding in Akan. Even though the class is postulated, no single study offers more than three good examples at any time. This is interesting given the fact that compounding is very productive in Akan. Again, in all the examples cited in the literature, the putative adjective constituents bear prefixes that they do not bear in isolation elsewhere in the grammar, except where they modify plural nouns. In this paper, I argue that the prefixes nominalize the adjectives which then must occur as left-hand nominal modifiers in N-N compounds which are predominantly right-headed in Akan. Real adjective constituents of nominal compounds occur on the right because N-A compounding in Akan is invariably left-headed. Thus, the morphological make-up and distribution of the constituents give us the inkling that the compounds cited in the literature as exemplifying A-N compounding may be better analyzed as N-N compounds with nominalized adjectives as left-hand constituents.

If it can be shown that all the compounds that are cited as exemplifying A-N compounding are indeed N-N compounds, then one could argue that A-N compounding does not exist in Akan, but that would be an extreme position to take,

since the paucity of examples does not necessarily invalidate the claim for the existence of that class. I strongly believe, though, that whereas the paucity of examples may not be proof of the nonexistence of the class, complete absence of examples would definitely be.

The alternative argument would be that A-N compounding exists but proponents have not provided good examples. In this paper, I adopt the latter view and go on to argue for the nounhood of the left-hand constituents of those compounds cited as exemplifying A-N compounds in Akan. I show that the compounds are formed from underlying NPs in which the head noun is modified by an adjective in a post-head attributive modifier position. The adjective is nominalized and pre-posed so that the head constituent can occur in the right-hand position which is the preferred position of heads in endocentric N-N compound in Akan. All this will lead us to the conclusion that, even if we cannot rule out the existence of A-N compounding, proponents are yet to provide us with real examples.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: in §1, I discuss the literature on the putative class of A-N compounds in Akan, showing that only three of the examples cited in the literature are potential examples of A-N compounds. However, the prefix on their left constituents cast doubt on the correctness of their classification as A-N compound. In §2 I present two principal conclusions that can be reached based on the review of the literature in §1. In §3 I present the argument for classifying the compounds in question as N-N compounds, pointing to the morphological make-up and distribution of the left-hand constituents. I argue that sorting out the alignment of head-constituents in compounds helps in deciding the category of the left-hand constituents of the compound. That is, the left-hand distribution of the nominalized adjective in the compound is expected because they are nominal modifiers in N-N compounds in Akan which are predominantly right-headed. In all other cases non-nominalized adjectival constituents of compounds occur on the right of the nominal constituents they modify. §4 concludes the paper.

1. THE PUTATIVE ADJECTIVE-NOUN COMPOUNDS IN AKAN

It has generally been assumed, without question, since Dolphyne (1988), that Akan has a well-defined class of A-N nominal compounds (cf. Abakah 2006; Anyidoho 1990; Marfo 2004, 2006). In this section, I discuss the literature on the class of A-N compounds, picking the examples that are cited and showing that they do not exemplify A-N compounding at all.

1.1 BALMER AND GRANT (1929) ON A-N COMPOUNDING

As far as I have been able to ascertain, the only mention of A-N compounding in Akan which pre-dates Dolphyne (1988) is Balmer and Grant (1929: 224), where compounds like those in (1) are cited. Christaller (1875) does not mention A-N compounds among the ten classes of compounds he deals with, neither does Welmers (1946).

(1) a. **hwimhwim adze** ‘things quickly got’
b. **nwɔ-mu tam** ‘richly designed cloth’
c. **mbea-mu dua** ‘a cross’
d. **nhyia-mu dan** ‘a synagogue’
e. **nyimpa-hö adze** ‘a human requirement’

Balmer and Grant's examples are, however, by and large, unlike the kinds that are cited as examples of A-N compounds in contemporary studies of Akan. They are indubitably N-N compounds in which the left-hand noun constituent modifies the right-hand constituents – the head. For instance, the left-hand constituent of (1d), **nhyia-mu** 'meeting, assembly', is a noun which results from the nominalization of the phrasal verb **hyia mu** 'to assemble' (lit. to meet in), so that the compound has the literal meaning *meeting building*, and *meeting* is a noun not an adjective. Obviously, Balmer and Grant seem to classify the left-hand constituents as adjectives because they serve as modifiers in the compound. That is not right. Spencer (1991) discusses this issue of classifying nominal modifiers as adjectives, describing it as the mark of inexperience.

The example that contains **hwimhwim** (1a) appears to be an exception since it contains a left-hand constituent that looks like an adjective. However, it is clear that **hwimhwim** cannot function either in a predicative (2a) or an attributive (2b) role in an NP headed by the noun it occurs with – **adze** 'thing'. This would be an anomaly if (1a) were a real A-N compound because all the adjectives that occur as the left-hand constituents in the putative A-N compounds can also occur as predicative and/or attributive modifiers of the nominals they combine with in the alleged A-N compounds (Abakah 2006: 16).

(2) a. ***adze no yɛ hwimwhim**
thing DEF be swift
b. ***adze hwimwhim**
thing swift

We may say therefore that **hwimhwim** is not an adjective, at least not a prototypical adjective. It is an ideophone that refers to the swiftness of motion. See the discussion of (3) below.

Ideophones are words that serve to vivify some activity designated by a predicate in sound. They are usually employed as manner adverbs since they show how an activity happened by imitating properties of the activity such as the sound and movement (cf. Saah 2004: 53-54; Welmers 1973: 459). In the examples in which **hwimwhim** occurs, therefore, it probably modifies the whole event designated by a VP in which **adze** occurs as the object of the predicate. The English gloss of (1a) seems to support this view. In fact Christaller (1933 [1881]: 204) lists **hwimhwim** as an adverb. Nevertheless, we know that ideophones may be used as adjectives and, as Osam (1999) argues, some Adjectives in Akan started off as ideophones and so we may be looking at an ideophone being used as an adjective or one that is gradually becoming part of the class of adjectives in Akan.

If we are right about the adjectivehood of the word **hwimhwim**, then we have at least one real example of an A-N compound in Akan where the adjective occurs in its bare form (1a). It would be the only real example found in the literature, nonetheless. Interestingly, however, the group **hwímḿhwímḿ á¹dzé** occurs in the Akan adage in (3) and nowhere else in the grammar, as far as I can tell.

(3) **Hwímḿhwímḿ á¹dzé kɔ̀ sr̀ɔ̀sr̀ɔ̀.**
swiftly thing go.HAB swiftly
What comes quickly goes quickly.

Again, even though both **hwímḿwhímḿ** and **sr̀ɔ̀sr̀ɔ̀** have virtually the same meaning, the form **sr̀ɔ̀sr̀ɔ̀ àdzé** does not occur in the language, showing that even if

A-N compounds existed and **hwímḿhwím á'dzé** was a typical example, it would be either totally unproductive or have severely restricted productivity. But, **hwimhwim adze** cannot be regarded as a compound at all. First, it is common knowledge that in proverbs, words may occur in non-canonical positions. So a case cannot necessarily be made for the compoundhood of the Ideo-N construction. Secondly, and more importantly, unlike typical compounds with **adze** as the right-hand constituent, the word **adze** in the group **hwimhwim adze** does not lose its prefix. Hence, ***hwimhwim dze** is ill-formed, as a compound.

Thus, Balmer and Grant (1929) do not give us any real examples of A-N compounds. The only example that has the appearance of an A-N compound is deficient in that the putative adjective does not occur anywhere else in the grammar as an adjective, and the morphology of the right-hand constituent is not as expected in compounds. This leads us to conclude that the group is not a compound.

1.2 DOLPHYNE (1988) AND ANYIDOHO (1990) ON A-N COMPOUNDS

Dolphyne (1988) and Anyidoho (1990) as well as Abakah (2006), which is discussed in §1.3, constitute one side of a divide that can be discerned in contemporary accounts of the so-called A-N compounds in Akan. As noted in the introduction, no contemporary study of compounding in Akan which posits A-N compounding gives more than three good examples of it. The following are two examples gleaned from Dolphyne (1988: 22, 24), (4a,b), and Anyidoho (1990: 5), (4a).

(4)	a.	**a-kɛse-sɛm**	b.	**a-fɛfɛ-de**
		PREF-big-matter		PREF-beautiful-thing
		magniloquence		vain things/vanity

The only nouns found in these examples are **asɛm** 'matter/case' and **ade** 'thing' which are both non-specific in reference. Replacing them with other nouns like **nyimpa** 'person', **pono** 'table' and **ataade** 'dress' renders the words ill-formed, as in (5).

(5)	a. ***a-kɛse-nyimpa**	b. ***a-fɛfɛ-ataade**	c. ***a-tantan-pono**
	PREF-big-person	PREF-beautiful-dress	PREF-ugly-table

To render the intended meaning, where the adjective modifies the head noun, the linear order of the constituents must be reversed so that the adjective follows the noun, as exemplified in (6).

(6)	a.	**asɛm kɛse**	b. **ade fɛfɛ**	c. **ade tantan**
		matter big	thing beautiful	thing ugly
		big issue	a beautiful thing	an ugly thing

The result, however, is a different construction type – an N-A nominal compound – which is not different from the corresponding noun phrases in the distribution of its constituents. This is because modification in Akan is generally done to the right of the modified constituent, so that attributive adjectives, determiners, numerals and quantifiers follow the head noun in NPs (cf. Saah 2004: 50-41).

1.3 ABAKAH (2006) ON A-N COMPOUNDS

Abakah (2006: 19) lists five putative examples of A-N compounds which I quote in full in (7), with the formatting slightly modified. But two of the elements that fill the left-hand constituent position – **enyimnyam** 'glory' (7d) and **animguase** 'disgrace' (7e) – are incontrovertibly nouns. The motivation for classifying these words as adjectives seems to be the English translation and Abakah's own glosses.

(7) a. **tétéɾ́+àséḿ** (wide + case) **àtétéséḿ** publicized case
b. **tètè+ɔ̀bótáɱ́** (ancient + rock) **(ɔ̀)tètèbótáɱ́** rock of ages
c. **húhú+ɔ̀bɾ̀á** (immoral + life) **èhúhúbɾ́á** promiscuous life
d. **ènyìm̀nyáɱ́+ɔ̀héné** (glorious + king) **ènyìm̀nyáɱ́héɱ́** glorious king
e. **ànìmùgùàsé** + **àséḿ** (disgrace+case) **ànìm̀gùàsè!séḿ** a disgraceful affair

Taking the two compounds out, therefore, we have just three potential examples of A-N compounds (7a-c), confirming the point made above that no study provides more than three good examples of the putative A-N compounding at any time. But, of the three left, we can show that two are nouns.

The Akan human identity suffix **-fo(ɔ)**[2] and its distinctly singular counterpart **-n(y)i** attach to only nominal bases to derived nouns of varying semantic characterization, including *agentive* (8a) and *patient* (8b) nouns from action nominals, *nationality* (8c) and *inhabitative* (one who lives in X) (8d) nouns from place names, etc.

(8) a. **adwumayɛ-fo(ɔ)**
(act of) working-NMLZ$_{[person]}$
workers

b. **ɔsoma-foɔ**
sending (on an errand)-NMLZ$_{[person]}$
one who is sent

c. **Ghana-n(y)i**
Ghana-NMLZ$_{[person.SG]}$
Ghanaian

d. **akurase-fo(ɔ)**
village-NMLZ$_{[person]}$
villagers

Now, the left-hand constituents of the putative A-N compounds in (7b-c) also serve as bases for nouns formed with these suffixes. From my corpus of 1000 complex nouns collected from various written sources, I found three nouns containing the base **huhu** 'vain' and two (in rows 2and3) in which the suffix **-foɔ** attaches to the base **e-huhu**. This suggests that the base is a nominal or at least nominalized by means of the prefix.

[2] This suffix is unspecified for number so the noun it forms can be either singular or plural.

Table 2: Nouns with **e-huhu** 'vain(ity)' as base

	Noun	Gloss	Process	Formation schemas
1.	**ehuhu bra**	**e-huhu bra** NMLZ-vain life 'vanity/promiscuous life'	Compounding	$[[a\text{-}\ [A]_i]_{Nj}\ [N]_k]_{Nk}$
2.	**ehuhufo** (**ahuhuni**)	**e-huhu-fo** (*a-huhu-ni*) NMLZ-vanity-$NMLZ_{[person]}$ 'vain/promiscuous people'	Affixation	$[[a\text{-}\ [A]_i]_{Nj}\ \text{-}fo]_{Nk}$
3.	**ehuhufo bra**	**ehuhufo bra** vain_people life 'life of the vain/promiscuity'	Compounding	$[[[a\text{-}\ [A]_i]_{Nj}\ \text{-}fo]_{Nk}\ [N]_x]_{Nx}$

The form **tètè** 'ancient' is a noun which names an era (in the distant past). Therefore, it is possible to attach the suffix **-fo(ɔ)** to it (as in, **tete-fo** 'people of old'), deriving a noun that refers to the people of that era. So, of the five examples that Abakah provides, we have just one potential example of A-N compound.

Abakah (2006: 16) regards compounds containing noun and adjective constituents, whatever the linear order of the constituents, as deriving from underlying NPs containing head nouns and modifying adjectives which occur in predicative or attributive position. Assuming this position means that Abakah has to account for how the modifying adjective, which ordinarily follows the head noun, ends up preceding it in the compound. However, he is mainly concerned with the tonal perturbation in compounds and so does not account for the grammatical properties and by extension the motivation of the inversion of linear order of constituents.[3]

The following is a summary of potential members of the putative A-N nominal compounds found in the literature discussed so far.

(9) a. **kɛse asɛm** (big + matter) **a-kɛse-sɛm** 'magniloquence'
b. **fɛfɛ ade** (beautiful + thing) **a-fɛfɛ ade** 'vain things'
(Anyidoho 1990: 5; Dolphyne 1988: 22, 24)

c. **tétɛ́ + àsɛ́ḿ** (wide + case) **à-té-sɛ́ḿ** 'publicized case'
(Abakah 2006: 19)

In all of these examples, the putative adjectives invariably bear prefixes which they do not bear in isolation elsewhere in the grammar except under some well-defined conditions to be discussed below. However, none of the studies mentioned above attempts to account for the source of the prefix and what it reveals about the class of compounds at issue. Indeed, in the presentation of the compounds above I separate the prefix from the base. But in the original studies the prefix is not so-separated and dealt with. This is unexpected since Dolphyne (1988: 78) observes that "adjectives and adverbs in Akan are consonant initial and have no affixes". That is, since adjectives are consonant-initial in their underived forms, one would have

[3] I assume that the position of the constituents in compounds is a constructional property of N-N compounds in Akan. Working out a full construction morphology account of N-N compounding in Akan is beyond the scope of this paper. However, I assume that Akan endocentric N-N compounds are formed by an abstract schema like (1) which pairs a particular form with a particular meaning, indicating that the right-hand constituent is the head of the compound.
(1) $[[a]_{Ni}\ [b]_{Nj}\ ]_{Nj} \leftrightarrow [SEM_j$ with relation R to $SEM_i]_j$

expected that scholars would account for the vowel prefix that consistently occurs on the putative A-N compounds.

1.4 APPAH (2004) ON A-N COMPOUNDS

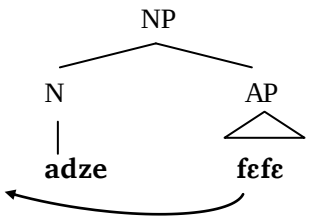
As far as I can tell, in all the previous studies of the so-called A-N compounds, it is only Appah (2004) that attempts to account for the prefix on the adjective in the putative A-N compounds. Thus Appah's approach constitutes the other part of the divide in approaches to the analysis of the so-called A-N compounds. See (10).

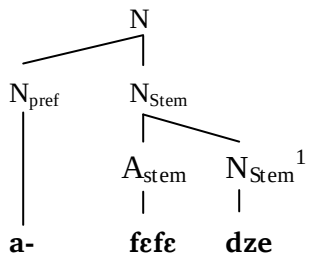
(10) a. **adze** thing **dɔkɔdɔkɔ** sweet **a-dɔkɔdɔkɔdze** sweets
b. **adze** thing **yingyan** vain **a-gyingyandze** vanity
c. **ɔbra** life **ahuhuw** flirtatious **a-huhuwbra**[4] flirtatious life
(Appah 2004: 175)

One problem faced by any attempt at accounting for the prefix in the putative A-N compounds is that it is not always clear whether we are dealing with a nominalized adjective, as we assume in the present paper, making the compound an $[N\text{-}N]_N$ compound, or we are dealing with a bound A-N compound that obligatorily undergoes affixation, as assumed in Appah (2004). See (11).

The word is assumed to be formed through a four-step derivational process from an underlying NP in which the adjective occurs in a post-head attributive modifier position (11a-b). One of the derivational steps is the rather common process of the reversal of the linear order of the constituents of the NP, referred to in Appah (2009a) as head-dependent inversion (HD-Inv). The resultant A-N nominal stem then undergoes affixation which attaches the appropriate nominal(izing) affix to the stem (11c).

(11) a. **a-de** **fɛfɛ**
SG-thing beautiful
'a beautiful thing'

b.


c.


beautiful things

(Appah 2004: 169)

Appah (2004: 175) attempts to provide the motivation for the reversal of the linear order of the constituents arguing that it is "the semantics of the noun rather than that of the adjective that determines whether the elements in the construction will have their linear order altered during nominal derivation". It is claimed that the adjectives involved are value adjectives (cf. Dixon 2004; Osam 1999) which can combine with

[4] This is the same as example (7c) which should be regarded as the correct spelling of the word.

varying semantic classes of nouns. But the linear order of constituents is reversed only when the nouns involved refer to "non-human impalpable entities" such as **adze** 'thing'.

2. ON THE STATUS OF A-N COMPOUNDING IN AKAN: TAKING A STAND

The review of the core literature on the putative class of A-N compounds in Akan shows clearly that scholars have largely not succeeded in providing good enough examples of A-N compounds in Akan. That is, no study provides more than three potential examples of A-N compounds, leading us to think that even if the class existed, its membership would be extremely restricted. Again, in the set of potential examples, the putative adjectives bear prefixes that show that they are nominalized. These prefixes are not accounted for in most studies. Therefore, for attempting to account for the presence of the prefix, the account in Appah (2004) is to be preferred to the others. However, it presents the whole derivation as a case of nominalization of an A-N compound base which is unattested. Thus the prefix is attached in the "wrong place" because it is external to the adjective. Again, the proposed motivation for the reversal in the linear order of the constituents of the underlying noun phrase in the compound is vague and less than convincing. Many nouns, including **edwuma** 'work', can be described as non-human and impalpable. Yet, the compound ***egyingyan edwuma** 'worthless work' is not acceptable.

From the foregoing we can reach one of two main conclusions. The first is that A-N compounding does not exist at all in Akan. The second is that either A-N compounding exists but its membership is so minuscule that one can indeed come up with just the handful of examples found in the literature (supposing they exemplify A-N compounds), or the compounds exists but the proponents have not come up with real examples yet.

Either assumption raises further issues. If we assume that A-N compounding does not exist, we have to account for the class/category of the compounds that are presently listed as A-N compounds? I will not pursue this position, even if I can account for the category of the compounds. This is because ruling out the existence of some class of words on account of a paucity of examples may be considered a bit extreme. I will assume that A-N compounding exists in Akan and then discuss the implications of that assumption for our view of the status of A-N compounding in Akan.

On the assumption that A-N compounding exists, we have to make two further assumptions. The first is that the compounds that are cited indeed exemplify A-N compounds. For this we ought to provide an account of the morphological make-up of the A constituent (specifically the prefix) as well as the near-zero productivity of the compound, given the generally high productivity of compounding in Akan.[5]

Regarding the morphological make-up of the constituents, one might argue that A-N compounds are formed from underlying plural NPs like those in (12) in which plural-marked adjectives modify plural nouns and that it is the plural-marked adjectives which occur as the left-hand constituent of the A-N compound. This is premised on the fact that the only other place where Akan adjectives bear the kind of

[5] On the issues of productivity, I have no sure answer but I could speculate that the lack of productivity of A-N compounding is the effect of blocking. That is, there is competition for the expression of property concepts between adjectives and nouns in non-head position in compounds and speakers seem to prefer nouns to adjectives. That is why there are more right-headed N-N compounds than A-N compounds. This is pure speculation. Ascertaining any effect of blocking will require a more extensive study than space in the present paper would permit.

prefixes found in the putative A-N compound is when they occur as modifiers of plural nouns and the prefix is the exponent of the concord between the noun and its modifying adjective. The observed concord might be the relic of a defunct noun class system in which both singular and plural adjectives showed concord with the nouns they modified through prefixes marking number on the noun and the adjective (cf. Osam 1993).

(12) a. **a-dan a-kɛse** b. **n-tar a-tantan** c. **n-taadeɛ a-fɛfɛ**
PL-house PL-big PL-dress PL-ugly PL-dress PL-nice
big houses ugly dresses nice dresses

I attempt to illustrate the assumed derivation of the A-N compound in (14) with the formation of **a-kɛse-sɛm** from the NP **nsɛm akɛse** (13).

(13) **n-sɛm a-kɛse** => **a-kɛse-sɛm**
PL-matter PL-big
big issues

(14) Derivation of A-N compounds with plural-marked adjective constituents

Input phrase (Base form)	PL-N + PL-A	=>	**n-sɛm a-kɛse**
HD-Inv.	PL-A + PL-N	=>	**a-kɛse n-sɛm**
Delete noun prefix	PL-A with N	=>	**a-kɛse Ø-sɛm**
Conjoin constituents	PL-A and N	=>	**a-kɛse-sɛm**
Output	$[[\text{PL-A}]_i\ [\text{N}]_j]_{\text{Nj}}$	=>	**akɛsesɛm**

This derivation may look attractive but there is a difficulty which becomes apparent once we look at other nouns that occur in such compounds. For example, it is only the singular form of the noun **adze** 'thing' that occurs in such compounds. The plural form **ndzɛmba** does not occur in such compounds, as (15) shows.

(15) ***a-kɛse-ndzɛma**
PL-big-PL.thing
big issues

Thus, any argument that **a-kɛse-sɛm** is an A-N compound with the plural-marked adjective occurring as the left-hand constituent of the compound is defeated. This is because the assumption that a plural-marked adjective occurs in the left-hand constituent position of the putative A-N compound presupposes the plurality of the right-hand constituent modified by the adjective.

The second possibility that opens up with the assumption that A-N compounding exists is that those compounds that are cited in the literature do not exemplify A-N compounds and we have not got any good examples of it to show. This is the position assumed in the present paper and it might well turn out to be a fair representation of the facts of the language. However, pursuing this line of thinking commits us to accounting for the class affiliation of the compounds that are presently listed as exemplifying A-N compounds as well as indicating what may qualify as a good example of A-N compound in Akan. In my view, a good example of an A-N compound would be one in which the adjective can occur in it basic consonant-initial form and must not necessarily bear a prefix that it would otherwise not bear. Proponents of A-N compounding have not as yet provided us with such unambiguous examples of A-N compounds in Akan. Thus, I will argue, even if we do not find

reasons to rule out the existence of A-N compounding in Akan, the examples that are cited in the literature are not A-N compounds since we can show that the left-hand constituents in these compounds are nominals. Call this the N-N compound hypothesis.

3. THE N-N COMPOUND HYPOTHESIS

In this section I present arguments for analyzing the compounds at issue as N-N compounds with left-hand nominalized adjective constituents. As noted in the introduction, there are two main reasons why I believe this position to be right – the morphological make-up of the left-hand constituent and the distribution of the same in the compound. In the next two subsections, I attempt to show the derivation of the nominalized adjective (§3.1) and also argue that the reversal of the linear order of the constituents in these N-N compounds is motivated by the position of the head constituents of N-N compounds in Akan (§3.2). That is, Akan endocentric N-N compounds are predominantly right headed and so the reversal of the linear order of the constituents of such compounds is to ensure that the head constituent is in the right-hand head position. Otherwise, an adjective constituent of a nominal compound occurs on the right-hand of the head noun.

3.1 DERIVING THE LEFT-HAND CONSTITUENTS OF THE N-N COMPOUNDS

The position arrived at above is that the compounds cited in the literature as exemplifying A-N compounds are N-N compounds with left-hand nominalized adjectives. Thus the compounds we are concerned with have the internal structure in (16) which states that the compound is right-headed (the whole compound is co-indexed with the right-hand constituent) and that the vowel prefix together with the adjective base forms a noun. The nominalized-adjective left-hand constituents express properties of the right-hand constituents which they modify.

(16) $[[a\text{-}\ [A]_i]_{Nj}\ [N]_k]_{Nk} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad [SEM_k \text{ with relation R to } SEM_j]_k$[6]

Following the pattern established in (13 and 14), I present my conceptualization of the derivation of the left-hand constituent of the N-N compound in (17), using the compound **akɛsesɛm**. Here again, I assume that the compound is derived from an underlying NP that contains a head noun and an adjectival modifier in an attributive position.

(17) Derivation of N-N compounds with nominalized adjective left-hand constituent

Input phrase (Base form)	N + A	=>	**asɛm kɛse**
Nominalize Adjective	N + PREF-A	=>	**asɛm Pref-kɛse**
HD-Inv.	PREF-A + N	=>	**Pref-kɛse + asɛm**
Delete noun prefix	PREF-A-N	=>	**Pref-kɛse + Ø-sɛm**
Conjoin constituents	PREF-A with N	=>	**Pref-kɛse-sɛm**
Spell out Pref as [a-]	a-A-N	=>	**a-kɛse-sɛm**
Output	$[[a\text{-}\ [A]_i]_{Nj}\ [N]_k]_{Nk}$	=>	**akɛsesɛm**

[6] Note that I have an extended use of indexation in the present paper relative to the mainstream construction morphology literature (Booij 2007, 2009, 2010b, 2010a). I use indexation to capture headship in addition to identifying the constituents of the compound.

Thus the compounds cited as A-N compounds are in fact examples of N-N compounds with Quality/property nouns (e.g., **akɛse** 'bigness') in the left-hand position, derived from Adjectives through prefixation. The advantage this derivation has over previous accounts is that nominalization of adjectives through prefixation is independently attested in Akan (Appah 2003; Dolphyne 1988).

3.2 HEADEDNESS, DISTRIBUTION AND THE NOUNHOOD OF THE LEFT-HAND CONSTITUENTS

The second piece of evidence for the nounhood of the left-hand constituent of the putative A-N compound is the distribution of the constituents of the compound. Being a nominal modifier, the regular place for it in the nominal compound is the left-hand position because Akan endocentric N-N nominal compounds are right-headed.

Since the early 1980s words, like phrases, have been argued to have heads (Selkirk 1982; Williams 1981) which percolate their properties to the whole construction (Lieber 1981, 1989; Selkirk 1982). The head is usually defined by semantic criteria, formal criteria or a combination of the two. But, it has been standard practice in recent years to deconstruct the idea of the head – leading to a distinction between a semantic head (constituent which shares its lexical conceptual information with the whole compound) and a formal or syntactic head (which percolates its formal properties, including its lexical category and subcategorization frame) to the whole compound and the two may not coincide (Guevara and Scalise 2009; Katamba 1993; Scalise; Bisetto and Guevara 2005; Scalise and Guevara 2006).[7]

Compounds may be classified based on the position of the head constituent, giving left-headed, right-headed, and co-ordinate compounds. In the early 1980s it was assumed that the head of a word occurred consistently on the right, leading to the formulation of the Right-hand Head Rule (Williams 1981) which was later reformulated, taking on board the idea of a relativized head (Di Sciullo and Williams 1987; Selkirk 1982). Later, based on data mostly from the Romance languages where compounds are predominantly left-headed, Scalise (1984) suggested that the position of the head is a parameter that has to be set for each language. However, it has been shown that many languages, including Mandarin Chinese and Vietnamese (Ceccagno and Basciano 2009; Ceccagno and Scalise 2006) and Nizaa (Pepper 2010) have both left-headed and right-headed compounds which are productively formed. Bauer (2009: 349) reports that in an earlier study of the order of elements in compounds, he found that out of a sample of thirty-six languages, almost half had variable head-modifier order.

Data available to me show that Akan endocentric N-N compounds are mostly right-headed whilst all N-A compounds are left-headed. Figure 1 shows the head position of the 207 N-N compounds found in my database of 1000 complex nouns in Akan.

[7] Another distinction proposed in the literature is that between the formal head of the compound and a selecting element (cf. Scalise and Guevara 2006).

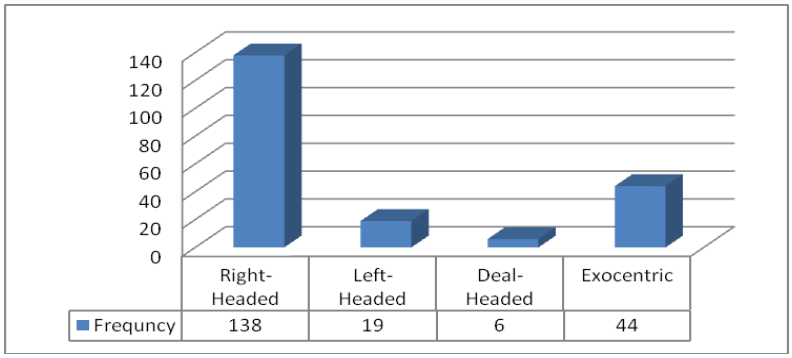


Figure 1: Head position of Akan N-N compounds

Of the 207 N-N compounds, 163 (78.7%) are endocentric of which 138, (84.66%) are right-headed. There are 42 N-A compounds which are all left-headed. There are no A-N compounds except a few which have the structure of the compounds discussed in the present paper and so are rightly, in my view, classified as N-N compounds.

Going back to the main issue in the present paper, the question I seek to answer in this section is: why should we entertain the idea of a nominalized adjective instead of an adjective occurring in the left-hand constituent position? The answer is pretty simple: it is the best explanation for the observed fact. If we regard the adjectives to be nominalized prior to the compounding process, then we are able to explain why the putative adjectives occur on the left-hand rather than the right-hand position as real adjectives in Akan compounds do. The explanation is this: the nominalized adjectives occur in the left-hand non-head position because they are modifiers and the heads they modify occur in the right-hand head position since almost all Akan endocentric N-N compounds are right-headed. Thus, as indicated in the introduction, the distribution of the constituents of the compound confirms that the compounds cited in the literature as A-N compound are indeed N-N compounds.

The foregoing shows that taking into account the alignment of heads in classes of compounds in Akan we are even able to explain the motivation for the common process of head-dependent inversion. That is, it occurs to ensure that the constituents of the compound are in the right positions.

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have shown that no study has given us real examples of A-N compounds in Akan (§1). Based on this I have given two principal scenarios on the status of A-N compounding in Akan. The first is that A-N compounding does not exist in Akan. The second is that A-N compounding exists. If it exists, then it is possible that i) the examples cited in the literature are A-N compounds, ii) the oft-cited examples in the literature are N-N compounds. I assessed the implications of each of these assumptions and opted not to rule out the existence of A-N compounding but held the view that the compounds cited as exemplifying A-N compounds are indeed N-N, arguing that the morphology and distribution of the left-hand constituents in these compounds shows clearly that they are N-N compounds. Thus, deciding on the proper characterization of the compounds at issue is pretty straightforward if we take into account the alignment of heads in the various classes of compounds in Akan. We can be sure about the position we assume here because adjectives occur on the right of the constituent they modify, forming N-A compounds. In N-N compounds, on the

other hand, non-heads occur on the left-hand side of the head. Finally, as indicated above, the advantage that the present account has over previous ones is that the nominalization of adjectives through prefixation is an independently attested process in Akan (cf. Appah 2003; Dolphyne 1988).

ABBREVIATIONS

A	Adjective	PREF	Prefix
N	Noun	HAB	Habitual
V	Verb	SEM	Semantic
PL	Plural	NMLZ	Nominalizer
SG	Singular	$NMLZ_{[person]}$	NMLZ derives personal nouns
DEF	Definite	HD-Inv.	Head-Dependent Inversion

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