

NOUN PLURALISATION AS A DIALECT MARKER IN LĪKPĀKPÁLN 'KONKOMBA'

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a descriptive analysis of nominal pluralisation in Līkpākpáln (Konkomba) from a dialectologically comparative perspective, based on the Līchából (LiC) and the Līnājùúl (LiN) variants. In reaching its focus, the study also looks at noun affixation and noun classes in Līkpākpáln. First and foremost, we argue that LiC and LiN manifest a number of intriguing divergences with respect to the morphological phenomena in question (noun-plural formation, noun affixation and noun classes). We specifically note some points of differences having to do with LiN class 2 plural suffix *-líḽ* and the corresponding LiC *-b* and *-m*, class 2a *-mbá* in LiN and LiC *-mám* as well as LiN class 6 *ń-* as against the LiC *ń-*. Also, we establish that vis-à-vis the Gurma noun class linguistics, LiC seems more conservative than LiN is, as the latter appears to be evolving further away from Gurma. Additionally, we make the observation that the trend with class 6 prefix in LiN raises a curious theoretical issue in the face of on-going arguments on Gurma noun class systems.

Key terms: Noun-Pluralisation, Dialect, Līkpākpáln

1. Introduction

Taking a cue from Okoye & Onuh (2015: 89), noun-plural formation refers to the means by which languages systematically provide for number distinctions in nominals. Noun pluralisation in languages follows either segmental or prosodic morphological processes and the distinction in number is usually reflected in the singular-plural (sg-pl) dichotomy. The subject of noun-plural formation can prove a useful point from which to examine the nature of linguistic variation between dialects or languages since different linguistic systems may resort to different morphological devices and operations towards that end.¹ Līkpākpáln is a Gurma language of the Oti-Volta sub-group, belonging to the broader Niger-Congo phylum (Naden, 1988: 12-19; Winkelmann, 2012: 472; Bendor-Samuel & Hartell, 1989). This language group to which Līkpākpáln belongs also comes under the cover name, Mabilia (see footnote 4 of Bodomo & Marfo, 2007: 225). The autonym for the ethnolinguistic group that speaks Līkpākpáln is Bīkpākpáám. Commonly referred to by the exonym, 'Konkomba', Līkpākpáln is spoken in both the Republics of Ghana and Togo. Tait (1961) seem to suggest that the form, Konkomba most likely evolved out of the term, Kpakpamba, which has been a Dagbani reference label for the Bīkpākpáam. Simons and Fennig (2017) in *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*,

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estimate that Līkpākpāln speakers in Ghana number 831,000 whilst those in Togo total 84,700. This study is intended as a description of the nature of possible variation between the Līchábɔl (LiC) and the Līnàjùúl (LiN) variants of Līkpākpāln, using nominal pluralisation as well as the noun classes as a basis. Primary data sets of 200 nouns per dialect are elicited from the native speakers of LiC and LiN clan dialects in the Nkwanta North District of Northern Volta, Ghana. The noun list used in this study largely revolves around items cited in Winkelmann (2012) and we augment this with other nominal lexemes from the Ibadan wordlist of 400 basic items. The study hereof is structured under the following sub-headings: The problem, a phonemic inventory and the orthography of Līkpākpāln, nominal affixation in Līkpākpāln, Līkpākpāln noun classes, a comparison of LiC and LiN nominal pluralisation, LiC and LiN vis-à-vis Gurma noun class systems and finally, the conclusion.

2. The problem

Although Līkpākpāln has a significant native speaker population, research output on either the language or its speakers remains among the lowest. Schwarz (2009: 182) clearly states that linguistic documentation of Līkpākpāln is far from extensive and the need for basic grammatical descriptions of the language is still very high. Schwarz's observation ties up with an earlier remark by Maasole (2006) that because the Bīkpākpāám (speakers of Līkpākpāln) were originally nomadic and acephalous, they were not organised into such an important grouping as would have attracted the attention of early scholars and researchers.

Although an under-documented language, a constant refrain in the few works on Līkpākpāln is that the language is highly split into numerous clan dialects (Hasselbring, 2006: 107; Schwarz, 2009: 182). However, this noticeable intra-linguistic diversity in Līkpākpāln lies unexplored or, at best, under described. To the best of our knowledge, the only study related to the dialectology of Līkpākpāln is Steele (1966b). Steele's work was a dialectal survey that focused on finding the baseline for designing an initial orthography for Līkpākpāln. Before commenting any further on the said work of Steele, it must be acknowledged that, that work proved fully useful in meeting its functional target of devising a preliminary writing system for Līkpākpāln. Steele's survey, nevertheless, seemed to have dwelt more on phonetic-phonological and lexical comparisons among the sampled dialects while giving only very brief comments relating to the morphological and syntactic correspondences. Līnáféél, Līchábɔl, Līkóónl, Līmónkpènl and Līgènl were the recognised dialects in Steele's study, which concluded by proposing that the writing system of Līkpākpāln be based on the Līchábɔl variant.

In justification for the present study vis-à-vis Steele (1966b), a fact is that the spatial delimitation of Steele's survey (by being limited to Līkpākpāln speakers in only three districts: Saboba-Chereponi, Gushegu-Karaga and Zabzugu-Tatale, all within the Northern Region of Ghana) could have certainly occasioned the omission of a greater number of the vast dialectal units of Līkpākpāln that are now well represented in ten (10) administrative districts across Northern, Volta, Greater Accra and the Brong Ahafo Regions of Ghana (see appendix I, a map showing areas where Līkpākpāln is spoken in Ghana). Consequently, in this instance of Steele's work, the LiN dialect significantly spoken in parts of Northern Volta such as Abunyanya, Sibi, Burai, Chinderi and Kpassa suffered omission. Relatedly, while Steele's analysis lacked a morphological orientation, Froelich (1954) cited in Hasselbring (2006: 110) is reported to have remarked that Līkpākpāln dialects 'have the same grammar, the same roots and differ only in the morphology of the words'. While this assertion may be true, there is hardly any trace of

detailed morphological comparisons between the dialects of Līkpākpāln by either Froelich or any other writer.

Furthermore, questions regarding the nature of variation between variants of Līkpākpāln seem more relevant now than ever. This is in view of current moves being initiated by the speaker community in Ghana to re-fashion a more unified orthography for Līkpākpāln. Additionally, recent accounts on Gurma noun class linguistics necessitate a re-investigation of the subject in relation to the members of Gurma. Winkelmann (2012b), for example, argues that linguistic evolutions currently render some Gurma member languages deviant from the Gurma noun class characteristics. Moba has, in this regard, been declared as displaying the most deviations from Gurma. For instance, Moba has been shown to probably be the only one preserving the low vowels for class 2 (*ba-*) and class 6 (*ɲa-*) (see Winkelmann, 2012b: 529 *Gurma: Comparative notes*). It is in response to the foregoing realities that we undertake this study, ‘Noun pluralization as dialect marker in Līkpākpāln’. Our interest in LiC and LiN is on the premise that as LiC is currently the standard variety, LiN which also constitutes a significant dialectal node of Līkpākpāln did not feature in the earlier variation study done by Steele. It may also be important to indicate that the comparison between LiC and LiN in this study is mainly along the lines of nominal pluralisation and the noun classes. Nonetheless, data examples 1-5 draw from LiC, but the morphological phenomena illustrated with these data examples also stand true for LiN.

3. A Brief Sketch of the Phonemic Inventory and the Orthography of Līkpākpāln

Tables 1 and 2 below show the phonemes of Līkpākpāln and their corresponding orthographic representations.²

Table1: Consonantal Phonemes of Līkpākpāln and their corresponding orthographic alphabets

	bilabial	labiodental	alveolar	palato-alveolar	labiovelar	velar
stop, voiceless	p <p>		t <t>	tʃ <ch>	kp <kp>	k <k>
Stop, voiced	b 		d <d>	dʒ <j>	gb <gb>	g <g>
Stop, nasal	m <m>		n <n>	ɲ <ny>	ŋ <ŋm>	ŋ <ŋ>
fricative, voiceless		f <f>	s <s>			
approximant			l <l>	j <y>	w <w>	
flap			r <r>			

² The phonemic list of Līkpākpāln is adapted from Hasselbring (2006: 106-7). To the right of every phoneme is its orthographic form enclosed in < >.

Table 2: Vowel phonemes of Līkpākpáǎn and their orthographic forms

Short vowels		Long vowels	
	front back	front back	
high	i <i> ε <e>	ɔ <u> o <o>	i: <ii> u: <uu> ee <ee> oo <oo>
low	æ <a> ɒ <ɔ>	a: <a> wɒ: <ɔɔ>	

As can be observed from tables 1 and 2 above, Līkpākpáǎn traditionally has 21 consonants and 12 clear vowels. The vowel inventory consists of 6 short vowels and 6 corresponding long vowels. Each long vowel is of a slightly different quality from the corresponding short vowel. A seventh short vowel, [ə] occurs in Līkpākpáǎn, but lacks a phonemic status in the language. This is because [ə] occurs only as an open transition between two consonants, in which case the sequence is interpreted as a consonant cluster. Four vowel sequences: **ue**, **ui**, **ae** and **ai** also occur in the orthography of Līkpākpáǎn. A long vowel or a vowel sequence in a word is treated as two syllable nuclei that may have the same or varying pitch levels.

Also, worthy of note about the orthography of Līkpākpáǎn is that a nasalised vowel(s) is marked by **-n** immediately attached after the vowel. Therefore, a final **-n** originally following a nasalised vowel makes for **-nn**. Relatedly, when a nasal (being a pronoun, a prefix or part of the root) appears before <p, b, m, ŋm, ŋ>, assimilation is incorporated in the writing system; for example, n > m before as in **mbáán** (scent). A hyphen is inserted after a syllabic nasal (being a noun class prefix) before <y> to distinguish it from other nouns beginning with <ny>; for example, **n-yíín** (horn) and **nyíín** (spring of water).

Tone is generally not marked in the orthography of Līkpākpáǎn. In this study, we present items in their orthographic forms (since the orthography is reasonably phonemic), but we, however, mark tone as this has a lexical/phonemic function in the language and is relevant to our analysis. See the examples below:

Example data 1:

- i. **wíí** ‘to cry’
- ii. **wìì** ‘to break/demolish’
- iii. **ńpúán** ‘strength’
- iv. **ńpùàn** ‘debts’

Three tones, including high (´), mid (ˉ) and low (˘) are identified in Līkpākpáǎn (Steele & Weed, 1966a: 16). We also made reference to Steele’s (2010) *Konkomba-English Dictionary* for purposes of word spellings.

4. Nominal affixation in Līkpākpáǎn

A careful observation of data reveals that two types of positional affixes operate in the word structure of Līkpākpáǎn nominals. These are, namely, prefixes and suffixes. Items in 2a and 2b below exemplify the occurrence of prefixes and suffixes in Līkpākpáǎn nominals.

Example data 2:

2a. Word (sg)	Plural (pl)	Gloss	2b. Word (sg)	Plural (pl)	Gloss
ū -bù̀n	i-bù̀n	donkey	ná	ná-tííb	mother
ū-nà	í-nà	cow	kpáchá	kpáchá-mám	matchete
lī-nyìln	ṅī-nyìn	tooth	chál	chá-tííb	husband
ń-d́	í-d́	stick	pū	pū-tííb	wife
lī-dīchál	ṅī-dīchál	house	jàpón	jàpón-tííb	son
ú-ṅóób	í-ṅóób	goat	gólngóln	gólngóln-mám	millipede

In Līkpākpáln, a prefix may concomitantly occur with a suffix in a noun as in a majority of the following examples:

Example data 3:

Singular	Plural	Gloss
i. ú-náyùk	bī-náyùk-b	thief
ii. ū-níí	bī-nì-b	person
iii. lī-núù-l	ṅī -núú	yam
iv. lī-kúù-l	ṅī-kúú	hoe
v. kī-dī-k	tī-dī-r	room

From the items in example data 3 above, where a noun goes with both a prefix and a suffix, a consonantal suffix must have a place of articulation harmony with the initial consonant of the prefix, sometimes alongside a reduction in a stem vowel quality immediately preceding such a consonantal suffix. This seems to be accountable for the changes in the plural forms of i, ii and v above. Prefixes in Līkpākpáln nouns are mainly class morphemes that also mark number and gender distinctions (Winkelmann, 2012a). The same applies to suffixes, which may also occur alone in a noun or co-occur with a corresponding class prefix.

Animate nouns in Līkpākpáln can also take the literally gender suffixes, **-jà** and **-sál** for masculine and feminine respectively. This is exemplified in the items below:

Example data 4:

i. wéí-jà	male maternal kin
ii. ágbágbá-jà	drake
iii. ú-gbé-jà	boar
iv. wéí- sál	sister's daughter
v. ágbágbá-sál	duck
vi. ú-gbé-sál	gilt

In addition to the above, diminutive suffixes, **-bìk** and **-wáá** on one hand and, on the other hand, the suffix **-kpèl**, which has a +big/+senior semantic also feature in Līkpākpáln nouns. Whereas **-bìk** can be suffixed to any noun to mean smallness, **-wáá** and **-kpèl** are mostly attached to kinship nouns. **-wáá** and **-kpèl** are antonymous. The following items show the occurrence of **-bìk**, **-wáá** and **-kpèl** in nouns.

Example data 5:

- i. **tī-kpèl** paternal uncle (older than father)
- ii. **tī -wáá** paternal uncle (younger than father)
- iii. **chá-wáá** brother-in-law (younger than husband)
- iv. **chá-kpèl** brother-in-law (older than husband)
- v. **kī -jà-bìk** small seat/chair
- vi. **kī -sà-bìk** small farm
- vii. **kī-pí-bìk** small sheep

It is also observed that the use of **-bìk** necessitates prefixing a noun stem with the class 12,15 prefix, **ki-** (see section 5 for class prefixes and class pronouns). **-bìk** in itself, which is further analysable into **bi** ‘small/child’ and the class suffix, **-k** also has an important class marker relationship with class 12,15.

5. Lìkpàkpáln noun classes

A language is described as having a noun class system if it exhibits grammatical gender or if the nouns of the language can be categorised according to a system of concord or affixal markings on the noun (Bodomo & Marfo, 2007: 205). It has been established in the literature that two out of every three African languages have a noun class system (Heine et. al., 1981) cited in Bodomo and Marfo (p.205). Linguistic account(s) on Lìkpàkpáln indicate that it is a noun class language (Tait, 1954; Winkelmann, 2012a). Winkelmann (p.485) crisply remarks that Lìkpàkpáln is a typical representative of Gurma languages, with a bilateral noun class marking. The analyses of Tait and Winkelmann are both based on the Lìchábòl dialect. In our present study, however, data is also drawn in from the LiN variant to compare with LiC. This comparison is more in terms of noun-plural formation and the noun classes.

Approaches that have often been adopted in studies on noun classes include morphophonological, semantic and morphological. Angkaaraba (1980) and Delplanque (1995) are instances in the literature that follow morphological and semantic criteria respectively in dealing with noun classification in specific languages. The morphophonological approach to noun classes also finds examples in Cahill (2000/01), Brindle (2009) and Brindle (2015). Both Tait (1954) and Winkelmann (2012a) resort to the morphological criterion in presenting the noun classes of Lìkpàkpáln (although we could not directly access Tait’s work). With the morphological approach, a noun class is evolved for a language based on number affixation (i.e. singular and plural markings on nouns).

Within the Gurma noun classes’ framework, Winkelmann (2012a) categorises Lìkpàkpáln nouns into fifteen classes³. The specific noun classes identified in Lìkpàkpáln include 1, 1a, 3, 5, 14, 12,15 based on singular number affixes. Noun classes 2, 2a, 4, 6, *ci, 22 and 21 also occur in Lìkpàkpáln based on plural affixation. One other class, 22,23 is recorded, based on non-number affixes while there is yet a class 20 that is classified on a neutral pronoun, **ni**, which does not contain any noun.

Our presentation of overviews 1 and 2 (under 5.1) of noun class affixes and class pronouns in Lìkpàkpáln are based on LiC and LiN respectively. While overview 1 follows from Winkelmann (2012a: 473), it is important to state that we omit the **-g**

³ Details on Gurma noun classes can be found in Winkelmann’s (2012) *Gurma: Comparative notes*.

allomorph of class *ci's *-i*. Winkelmann (2012a) incorporates the *-g* class suffix in her analysis with a single item example, purportedly, after Tait (1954), but we presently sidestep this (*-g*) because it does not feature in our data sets. The example used by Tait (1954) and, subsequently, Winkelmann (2012a) is found in the plural of *bū-sū-b* (tree, sg) → *í-sū-g* (tree, pl) as against *í-sú-í* (tree, pl), which remains invariable in our data currently. It is possible that the loss of *-g* is out of linguistic changes since 1954 and an attendant reconstruction of Gurma class affixes into forms with high vowels.

Another innovation with the present analysis is that we add *-mam* and *-l* as alternant suffixes in classes 2a and 21 respectively, of overview 1. This is against the backdrop of our observation from data that Licháboɓ speakers seem to use the class 2a *-tiib* and *-mam* in free variation as they also do with class 21 *-r* and *-l* (see data examples in tables 4b and 9b). This is, perhaps, a synchronic development in the language. In contrast, Winkelmann (p.485) identifies *-mam* as a pluraliser that occurs in only a few nouns. Additionally, Winkelmann's class 2a *-teeb* becomes *-tiib* in our analysis as we perceive in our data a raising of the suffix vowel from /e/ to /i/. Formant values based on the utterances of three native speakers (two LiC speakers and one LiN speaker) and spectrogram samples illustrating a relative high vowel status in the *-tiib* suffix is as shown below in table 3 and in figures 1 and 2. The word items that were recorded in sound for analysis include: *titiib* (father, pl) and *uteeb* (a frog type).

Table 3: F1 Values for /i/ and /e/

F1 Values		
	titiib /i/	uteeb /e/
Speaker A	358Hz	376Hz
Speaker B	302Hz	352Hz
Speaker C	261Hz	320Hz

From table 3 above, it can be noted that the mean values of F1 for all three speakers (A, B and C) show higher values for /e/, compared with /i/. As observed by Katz (2013: 185-8), high vowels generally record lower F1 values than low vowels do.

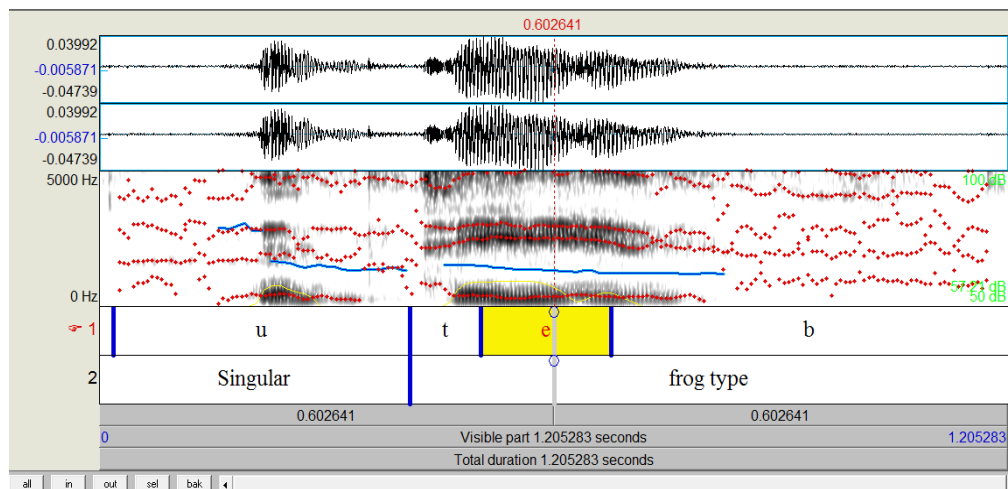


Figure 1 above shows waveform and spectrogram of a speaker's /e/ in *uteeb*.

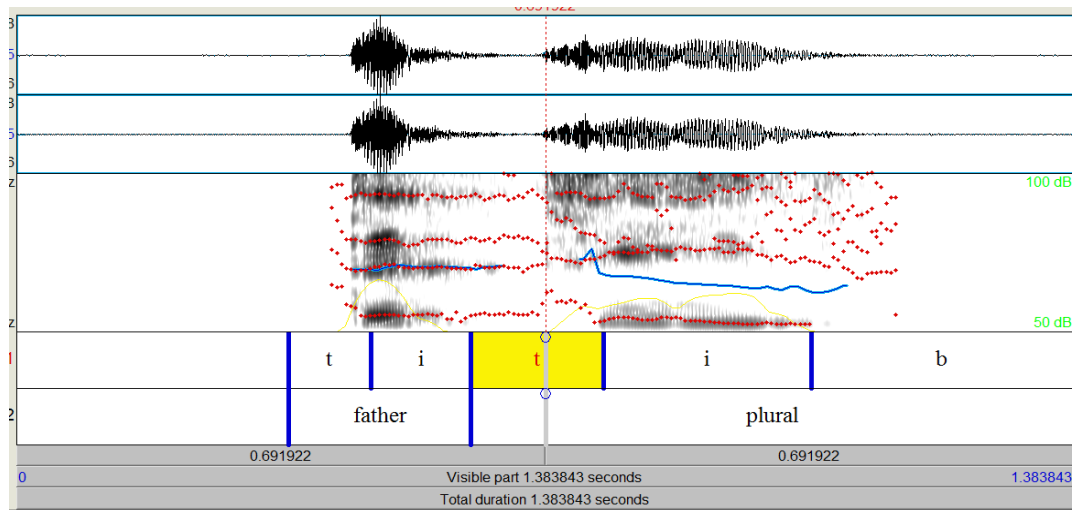


Figure 2 shows waveform and spectrogram of a speaker's /i/ in *titiib*.

5.1 Overview on noun classes 1: Class pronouns and affixes in Līchából

Noun classes	Affixes	Pronouns(sg)	Pronouns(pl)	Affixes	Noun classes
1	u-...-Ø	u	bi	bi-...-b, -m	2
1a	Ø-...-Ø			Ø-...-tiib/-mam	2a
3	N-...-Ø	mu	i	i-...-Ø	4
5	li-...-l	li	ŋi	ŋi-...-Ø	6
14	bu-...-b	bu	i	i-...-i	*ci
12,15	ki-...-k	ki	mu	N-...-m	22
			ti	ti-...-r/l	21
22,23		N-...-N mu			
20		ni			

4

⁴ In the sketches on overview of Likpakpaln noun classes, the numerical labels outside the vertical lines represent the noun classes. Within the vertical lines are placed the class affixes under the heading, ‘affixes’ and also the class pronouns under the headings, ‘pronouns (sg)’ and ‘pronouns (pl).’ The affixes and the pronouns to the left within the vertical lines are the singular forms and go with the noun classes outside of the left vertical line. The vice versa of this item arrangement is also true for the items to the right side.

Overview on noun classes 2: Class pronouns and affixes in Līnàjùúł

Noun classes	Affixes	Pronouns(sg)	Pronouns(pl)	Affixes	Noun classes
1	u-...-Ø	u	bi	bi-...-b, -m, -liib	2
1a	Ø-...-Ø			Ø-...-tiib/-mba	2a
3	N-...-Ø	ŋi	i	i-...-Ø	4
5	li-...-l	li	ŋi	n-...-Ø	6
14	bi-...-b	bi	i	i-...-i	*ci
12,15	ki-...-k	ki	mi	N-...-m	22
			ti	ti-...-r	21
22,23			N-...-N mi		
20		ni			

From the sketches above, the bolded items are class pronouns in Līkpākpáln. It can further be noted that, with the exception of the class 22,23 pronouns, *mu/mi* and the class 20 *ni*, which maintain neutrality with respect to number distinctions, all the other pronouns mark number. Those to the left side signal singularity while those to the right mark plurality. Again, as can be observed, number marking in a noun is achieved by attaching a class prefix which may go with or without a corresponding class suffix. The only exceptions seem to be found in class 1a nouns which entirely defy affixation and the corresponding 2a which is shown to admit only a suffix *-tiib/-mam* in LiC and *-tiib/-mba* in LiN for a plural and class effect. There is a phenomenon of homophone class pronouns and prefixes in Līkpākpáln. *Mu, mi, ŋi* and *i* manifest as homophonous class pronouns. *Mu* does so in relation to classes 22,23, 3 and 22 (plural of 12, 15) of LiC as *mi* does so only with class 22,23 and 22 (plural of 12,15) in LiN. *ŋi* is homophonous with classes 3 and 6 of LiN. The homophonous tendency of the *i* pronominal, on the other hand, is seen with classes 4 and *ci of both LiC and LiN. In the case of homophone prefixes, again, a case in point is *i-* as in the classes 4 and *ci prefixes as shown in both overviews 1 and 2. The otherwise linguistic dilemma posed by this homophony (in the case of number/class prefixes) finds resolution in the occurrence of ⁵distinct suffixal forms in the classes concerned. For instance, in *ci while there is *-i* suffix, class 4 has *-Ø* suffix.

6. Comparison of Līchából (LiC) and Līnàjùúł (LiN) Plurals

In comparing LiC and LiN noun-plural formation, our focus is more on the number and class affixes as outlined in the overviews in section 5.1 above. This, therefore, means that, in addition to class 20, we do not also deem *N-...-N* affixes of 22,23 obligatory in the number marking comparisons here. The following tables present a class by class comparison of number and class affixes between LiC and LiN nouns. Each table has **a** and **b**, comprising the singular and the plural respectively of the same noun sets. Thus, the **b** set presents the plural and corresponding class of a preceding **a** set.

⁵ The sketch in overview 1 is based on LiC while the overview 2 is based on LiN.

Table 4a: Noun class 1

S/N	LiC		LiN		Gloss
	Class 1: u-...-∅		Class 1: u-...-∅		
	Noun (sg)	Stem	Noun (sg)	Stem	
1	ūpíí	-píí-	ū̀nìmpú	-nìmpú-	woman
2	ūcháá	-cháá-	ūcháá	-cháá-	blacksmith
3	ū̀bùá	-bùá-	ū̀bùá	-bùá-	soothsayer
4	ū̀jǒǒ	-jǒǒ-	ū̀jǒǒ	-jǒǒ-	blind person

Table 4b: Noun class 2

S/N	LiC		LiN		Gloss
	Class 2: bi-...-b, -m		Class 2: bi-...-b, -liib, m		
	Noun (pl)	Stem	Noun (pl)	Stem	
1	bīpííb	-píí-	bī̀nìmpùúb	-nìmpú-	women
2	bīchááb	-cháá-	bīcháálííb	-cháá-	blacksmiths
3	bī̀bùáb	-bùá-	bī̀bùálííb	-bùá-	soothsayers
4	bī̀jǒóm	-jǒǒ-	bī̀jǒóm	-jǒǒ-	blind persons

From table 3b, it can be noted that while pluralisation in class 2 nouns is limited to *bi-...-b, -m* (i.e., *bi-...-b* or *bi-...-m*) in LiC, there is an additional option of *bi-...-liib* in LiN.

Table 5a: Noun class 1a

S/N	LiC		LiN		Gloss
	Class 1a: Ø-...-Ø		Class 1a: Ø-...-Ø		
	Noun (sg)	Stem	Noun (sg)	Stem	
1	ná	-ná-	ná	-ná-	mother
2	kóln	-kóln-	kóln	-kóln-	elephant
3	yóón	-yóón-	yóón	-yóón-	co-wife
4	yà	-yà-	yà	-yà-	grandmother

Table 5b: Noun class 2a

S/N	LiC		LiN		Gloss
	Class 2a: Ø-...-tiib/-mam		Class 2a: Ø-...-tiib/-mba		
	Noun (pl)	Stem	Noun (pl)	Stem	
1	nátíib/námám	-ná-	nátíib/námbá	-ná-	mother
2	kólntíib/kólnmám	-kóln-	kúnmbá	-kún-	elephant
3	yóóntíib/yóónmám	-yóón-	yóóntíib/ yóónmbá	-yóón-	co-wife
4	Yàtíib/yàmám	-yà-	yàtíib/yàmbá	-yà-	grandmother

Based on the data in table 5b, it can be noted that while LiC has **-mam** as a plural suffix in class 2a, the equivalent of that in LiN is **-mba**. Again, while the **-tiib** plural marker and **-mam** seem to be in free variation in LiC, **-tiib** and **-mba** cannot be treated as free variants in LiN as **-tiib** in LiN seems restricted to nominal items denoting +human entities.

Table 6a: Noun class 3

S/N	LiC		LiN		Gloss
	Class 3: N-...-Ø		Class 3: N-...-Ø		
	Noun (sg)	Stem	Noun (sg)	Stem	
1	ńkòkón	-kòkón-	ńkòkón	-kòkón-	thorn
2	ń-nyáán	-nyáán-	ń-nyáán	-nyáán-	root
3	ńmíí	-míí-	ńmèè	-mèè-	fire

Table 6b: Noun class 4: i-...-Ø

S/N	LiC		LiN		Gloss
	Class 4: i-...-Ø		Class 4: i-...-Ø		
	Noun (pl)	Stem	Noun (pl)	Stem	
1	íkòkón	-kòkón-	íkòkón	-kòkón-	thorns
2	ínyáán	-nyáán-	ínyáán	-nyáán-	roots
3	ímíí	-míí-	íḡmèè	-ḡmèè-	fires

A comparison of the plural forms in table 5b, representing noun class 4 does not suggest any variation between LiC and LiN in terms of plural marking.

Table 7a: Noun class 5

S/N	LiC		LiN		Gloss
	Class 5: li-...-l		Class 5: li-...-l		
	Noun (sg)	Stem	Noun (pl)	Stem	
1	lītáàl	-tàà-	lītáàl	-tàà-	leg
2	līkúùl	-kúú-	līkúùl	-kúú-	hoe
3	lijóòl	-jóó-	lijóòl	-jóó-	mountain

Table 7b: Noun class 6

S/N	LiC		LiN		Gloss
	Class 6: ḡi-...-Ø		Class 6: n-...-Ø		
	Noun (pl)	Stem	Noun (pl)	Stem	
1	ḡītàà	-tàà-	ńtàà	-tàà-	leg
2	ḡīkúú	-kúú-	ńkúú	-kúú-	hoe

3	ɲijóó	-jóó-	ńjóó	-jóó-	mountain
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Class 6 plural formation in LiC and LiN shows a difference as *ɲi-...-∅* for LiC becomes *n-...-∅* for LiN. In this case, the LiC *ɲi-* is in complete compliance to the Gurma class 6 prefixes (Winkelmann, 2012b) while the LiN *n-* is a deviation from the norm and a possible pointer to linguistic evolution in LiN.

Table 8a: Noun class 14

S/N	LiC		LiN		Gloss
	Class 14: bu-...-b		Class: bi-...-b		
	Noun (sg)	Stem	Noun (sg)	Stem	
1	būsūb	-sū-	bīsūb	-sū-	tree
2	būmóɓ	-móɓ-	*kīnyóɓ	-nyóɓ-	mouth
3	būɲóɓ	-ɲóɓ-	bīɲóɓ	-ɲóɓ-	canoe

Table 8b: Noun class *ci

S/N	LiC		LiN		Gloss
	Class *ci: i-...-i		Class *ci: i-...-i/ N-...-m		
	Noun (pl)	Stem	Noun (pl)	Stem	
1	ísúí	-sū-	ísúí	-sū-	trees
2	ímóí	-móɓ-	*ń-nyóm	-nyóɓ-	mouths
3	íɲóí	-ɲóɓ-	íɲóí	-ɲóɓ-	canoes

The examples provided in table 7b indicate that while class *ci nouns in LiC maintain some consistency with the plural marker, *i-...-i*, it is possible for a *ci item in LiN to rather take the *N-...-m* affix, which, otherwise, is typical of class 22. Example 2 in table 7b is a case in point about this phenomenon.

Table 9a: Noun class 12,15

S/N	LiC		LiN		Gloss
	Class 12,15: ki-...-k		Class 12,15: ki-...-k		
	Noun (sg)	Stem	Noun (sg)	Stem	
1	kītààṅámbìk	-tààṅámbì-	kītààṅámbìk	-tààṅámbì-	toe
2	kījúk	-jū-	kījík	-jī-	knife
3	kīchók	-chó-	kīchók	-chó-	axe

Table 9b: Noun class 22

S/N	LiC		LiN		Gloss
	Class 22: N-...-m		Class 22: N-...-m		
	Noun (pl)	Stem	Noun (pl)	Stem	
1	ńtààṅámbím	-tààṅámbì-	ńtààṅámbiám	-tààṅámbì-	toes
2	ńjúm	-jū-	ńjím	-jī-	knives
3	ńchóm	-chó-	ńchóm	-chó-	axes

A comparison of LiC and LiN plurals in class 22 does not point to any difference. This ties up with the scenario in class 4, table 5b. However, something interesting is an observed possible tonal variation between the full forms of classes 12,15 and 22 nouns and their stem forms as can be seen in tables 9a and 9b above. It appears that a stem final vowel, if high takes a mid-tone, in contrast to the tone in the full form. Although this phenomenon requires further investigation, we find it intriguing as it could provide a basis for distinguishing a stem from a full form in the noun classes concerned.

Table 10a: Noun Class 12,15

S/N	LiC		LiN		Gloss
	Class 12,15: ki-...-k		Class 12,15: ki-...-k		
	Noun (sg)	Stem	Noun (sg)	Stem	
1	kīyìk	-yí-	kīyíík	-yíí-	calabash
2	kīsààk	-sàà-	kīsààk	-sàà-	farm

3	kīnyéék	-nyéé-	kīnyéék	-nyéé-	night
4	kīdíík	-díí-	kīdíík	-díí-	room

Table 10b: Noun class 21

S/N	LiC		LiN		Gloss
	Class 21: ti-...-r/-l		Class 21: ti-...-r		
	Noun (pl)	Stem	Noun (pl)	Stem	
1	tīyír/tiyíl	-yíí-	tīyír	-yíí-	calabashes
2	tīsàr/ tīsàl	-sàà-	tīsàr	-sàà-	farms
3	tīnyér/ tīnyél	-nyéé-	tīnyér	-nyéé-	nights
4	tīdīr/tīdīl	-díí-	tīdīr	-díí-	rooms

From the data in table 9b, it can be noted that, in addition to *ti-...-r* pluralising affix in class 21, LiC again subscribes to *ti-...-l* as a free variant, which could not be ascertained from the forms used in LiN. Another striking observation with class 21 is the shortening of a stem vowel in adding a plural suffix. This becomes very clear when one compares forms such as *kīdíík* and *kīsààk* in table 9a with their plural counterparts, *tīdīr* and *tīsàr* in 9b.

7. Summary of Plural and Noun Class Comparisons between LiC and LiN

With respect to plural formation in LiC and LiN, one can say generically that the two linguistic forms resort to a similar morphological process for noun pluralisation as in the use of class and, for that matter, number affixes (see Winkelmann, 2012a: 473; Cahill, 2000/01: 50; Gibbard, Rohde & Rose, 2007). Nonetheless, a number of interesting variations hold between LiC and LiN pertaining to specific plural forming items in certain noun classes of Līkpākpāln. First and foremost, the class 2a plural suffix alternant *-mam* in LiC is replicated as *-mba* in LiN. The LiN *-mba* is clearly a preservation of Common Gurma class 2a suffix (see Manessy, 1975) whereas the LiC *-mam* can be described as a possible on-going metamorphosis after *-mba* (since LiN seems a more evolving Gurma member than LiC is (see discussion in section 8). Nevertheless, a novelty in our observation is the fact that *-mam* (per its usage by LiC speakers) seems to be interchangeable with *-tiib* in almost every context as shown in table 4b. Again, we note a point of difference between LiC and LiN with respect to the suffix *-tiib*. While *-tiib* appears restricted to only +human nouns in LiN, it (*-tiib*) tends to be applicable to any class 2a noun (whether +human or -human) in LiC. This is somewhat at variance with a previous account (in Winkelmann, 2012a) that *-mam* was restricted to only a few nominal terms. Furthermore, although LiN and LiC share the class 2 plural suffixes *-b* and *-m*, there is also a *-liib* plural suffix which is more common with the class 2 nouns in

LiN. **-Liib** suffixed plural nouns in LiN mostly maintain **-b** in LiC. One may say, hypothetically, that the **LiN -liib**, which is a form containing a high vowel /i/ is a trace of the tendency for high vowels in Gurma class affixes. As indicated in Winkelmann's (2012b) *Gurma Comparative notes*, low vowels in Proto-Gurma class pronouns are raised to high front vowels in the Gurma languages. Another point of divergence between LiC and LiN in noun pluralisation lies with the class 6 prefixes. LiC uses the prefix **ɣi-** while LiN has **n-** for the pluralising function in class 6. Although in the pronominal form, LiN also uses **ɣi**, it becomes **n** when used as a plural prefix. This evolution in LiN appears analogous with the phenomenon of some Gurma noun prefixes deviating segmentally from the pronominal form for class 6. Nonetheless, the LiN case, as observed in the present analysis, may also have a curious theoretical implication (now or, at least in the future) regarding Gurma noun class linguistics. This particularly relates to the claim in Winkelmann's (2012: 531) *Gurma: Comparative notes* that noun prefixes deviate segmentally from the pronominal form only in Akasele and Ncam.

On the issue of noun class distinctions between LiC and LiN, the following may be observed: Class 14 **bu-** in LiC is **bi-** in the case of LiN. That is, there is the fronting of a class 14 prefix vowel in LiN. With respect to this tendency, one will say that LiN is more reflective of the attested evolutionary trend in the Gurma noun class system. Also, we discover that it is possible for the class of a noun in LiC to change when its equivalent is cited in LiN. A typical example is the item **būmɔ́b** (mouth), which is cited as ***kīnyɔ́k** (mouth) in LiN. Comparing the forms of this item as appears in classes 14 and *ci affixes in tables **7a** and **7b** will show that the right place for ***kīnyɔ́k** and its plural **ń-nyɔ́m** is class 12,15 and class 22 (plural of 12,15) respectively in LiC.

8. Līchából (LiC) and Līnàjùúl (LiN) Vis-à-vis Gurma Noun Classes

Based on data and analysis, it can be said that both LiC and LiN typify the features of Gurma noun classes. This is seen in the class pronouns and affixes that are operational in these varieties of Līkpākpáln. However, a number of differences between LiC and LiN in the face of Gurma noun class linguistics may provide a basis for the assertion that LiN is probably a more radical variant than LiC appears to be. LiC maintains **bu** both as a class 14 pronoun and prefix as LiN resorts to **bi**. This could have been the case that the LiN **bi** is in total response to a vowel raising and fronting paradigm in Gurma class pronouns and affixes. A similar occurrence is found with a more prevalent use of a class 2a suffix, **-liib** in LiN. The commonest alternatives of **-liib** in LiC remain **-b** and **-m**. Again, although both LiC and LiN have a common pronominal form, **ɣi** for class 6, the two varieties tend to differ in terms of corresponding class prefixes for the pronominal, **ɣi-ɣi-** is conserved in the LiC class 6 prefix whilst LiN digresses to **n-**. If the idea that LiN is a more evolving Gurma member anything to go-by, then **n-** is more appropriately analysed as a transition from **ɣi-**. This transition can potentially degenerate into **n-** totally deviating from the pronominal form, **ɣi** as is the case with Akasele and Ncam.

9. Conclusion

In this paper, we discuss noun-pluralisation and noun classes in Līkpākpáln by comparing data from the Līchából (LiC) and the Līnàjùúl (LiN) variants of the language. In doing so, we have examined nominal affixation and provided an overview of Līkpākpáln noun classes based on their pronominal and affixal markings. Our findings suggest that LiC and LiN manifest some curious variations. Probably, the most important

of the plural number affixal differences between LiC and LiN has to do with the shift of LiN from Gurma class 6 prefix *ɲi-* to *n-*. Besides, we also note that it is common for class 2 nouns in LiN to take the prefix *-liib* for a plural function while LiC mainly keeps to *-b* and *-m*. Similarly, whereas LiN has *-mba* as a plural suffix variant in class 2a, this seems to find an equivalent in *-mam* for LiC. On the issue of the noun classes, we also note that it is possible for a word denoting the same nominal concept to vary its class placement between LiC and LiN. This is exemplified in the LiC *būmɔb* (mouth), which falls in classes 14 and *ci, but the corresponding **kīnyɔk* (mouth) in LiN changing to class 12,15 and the 22 plural thereof. Additionally, based on the analysis herein, one would say that LiC is more of a preservative linguistic system in Gurma than LiN is. A case in point is the digression of LiN from the prototypical Gurma *ɲi-* to *n-*. This situation, the authors think carries a consequence, at least, for future arguments on Gurma noun classes, especially per views put forth in Winkelmann's (2012b: 529-31) *Gurma: Comparative notes*.

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Appendix 1 : Map of Ghana Showing Districts where Likpakpaln is Spoken

