

SOCIOCULTURAL ASPECTS OF ANIMAL METAPHOR IN AKAN

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Abstract

The paper examines animal metaphor in Akan. It hinges on cultural linguistics and its sub-branches cultural metaphor and worldview metaphor by Sharifian (2017, 2015) and Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor (1980). The paper postulates that Akans use animal behaviour, structure and movements to represent human behaviour in metaphors. The areas to be covered are proverbs, panegyric poetry, Akan state and clan totems and symbols. The paper argues that Akans use animal metaphor to depict their indigenous knowledge, philosophy, worldview and environmental knowledge about fauna. The study is qualitative, and employs library studies, internet sources and interviews from four renowned Akan scholars. The paper argues that even though animal metaphor is universal, the attributes for specific animals are language and culture specific. This paper delves into Akan interdisciplinary research in cultural linguistics, ethnography of communication, cognitive linguistics, anthropology and oral literature.

Keywords: *cultural linguistics, cultural and conceptual metaphor, animal metaphor, proverbs, panegyric, totems.*

Anim muabɔsem

Adesuadee yi hwehwe mmoa nnyinahoma wɔ Akan mu. Egyina amammere lingwesteks ne ne nkorabata a efa amammere nnyinahoma ne sedee ɔmanfoɔ hunu wiase a Sharifian (2017, 2015) dii ho dwuma no so. Afei nso ehwe Lakoff ne Johnson (1980) adwenemusem nnyinahoma no. Nhwehwemu yi da no adi se Akanfoɔ hwe mmoadoma suban, won bɔbere ne won anammɔntuo so de kyere won Nnipa suban wɔ nnyinahoma mu. Mmee a ahodoɔ a yede bedi dwuma ne mme, apae- anwonsem, Akanfoɔ ne abusua ahodoɔ akraboa ne nsenkyerenne ahodoɔ. Nhwehwemu yi kyere mu se Akanfoɔ gyina mmoadoma nnyinahoma so kyere won nimdee, adwenemusem, wiase nhunumu, ne atenaee mu nimdee a efa mmoadoma ho. Nhwehwemu yi gyina kwaliteetif nhwehwemu dwumadie kwan so. Yegyinaa nwomakorabea adesua, intanɛte mu nnooma, ne nsemmisa ahodoɔ a yenyaa firi Akan nwomasua mu animdefoɔ nnan ho so. Nhwehwemu yi da no adi pefee se amansan nyinaa de mmoadoma ho nnyinahoma di dwuma dee, nanso suban ahodoɔ a yede ma mmoadoma ahohoɔ no dee egyina okasa ne amammere biara so. Saa nhwehwemu yi rebue kwan ama adesuadee ahodoɔ nhwehwemu wɔ Akan kasa ne amammere mu. Saa afa yi bi ne amammere lengwesteks, amammere ne kasa nkutahodie, adwenemusem lengwesteks, antropology ne anomsem kasadwini.

Nsemfua titire: amammere lengwesteks, amammere ne adwenemusem nnyinahoma, mmoadoma nnyinahoma, mme, amoma, akraboa.

1. Introduction

Metaphors are one of the most researched literary devices in language and cognition. This is because our human life is basically metaphorical; we use metaphors daily to indicate our relationship with nature, environment, our body, emotions, society, culture, religion, etc. Lakoff and Turner (1989: 55) characterize one aspect of metaphors as CONVENTIONALIZED. A metaphor is conventionalized since it is automatic, effortless, and generally established as a mode of thought among members of a linguistic community.

In the last two decades, there have been researches in Akan cognitive semantics, with emphasis on metaphor. These have culminated in many published works. My library search in Akan indicates that none of the papers on metaphor has turned attention to animal metaphor hence the need for this work. The legendary Nana Kwame Ampadu I composed many songs on Akan folktales and dwelt much on animals; people ridiculed him as an animal-oriented musician. I will look at works by other scholars in Africa, Asia and Europe. The current paper covers only animal metaphors in proverbs, praise poetry (panegyrics) and ethnic symbols.

2. The Akan Language and People

The word “Akan” refers to the people as well as their language. Akans are considered from both ethnographic and linguistic perspectives. The ethnographic Akans encompass the linguistic Akans plus the Ahantas, Aowins, Nzemas, and Sefwis, who do not speak Akan as a first language, but rather as a second language, and share cultural similarities with the Akans (Obeng 1987). The linguistic Akans speak Akan as their native language and are the largest ethnic group in Ghana. In the 2010 national population census, 47.5% of the Ghanaian population was

linguistic Akans and about 44% of the rest speak Akan as non-native speakers (see Agyekum 2020). The linguistic Akans occupy the greater part of southern Ghana.

Akan is spoken as a native language in nine out of the sixteen regions in Ghana, namely Ahafo, Ashanti, Bono, Bono East, Central, Eastern, Oti, Western, and Western North. The Akan speaking communities in the Oti Region are sandwiched by the Ewe and Gur(Mabia?) language communities. Akan has 13 dialects: Agona, Akyem, Akuapem, Akwamu, Asante, Assin, Bono, Buem, Denkyira, Fante, Kwawu, Twifo, and Wassaw. There are some Bono speakers in Côte d'Ivoire. Akan is studied from primary school up to the university level (Agyekum 2020:2). The dialect names, such as Bono and Asante, refer first to the people, then to the dialects and the regions they occupy in Ghana.

2.1 Methodology

The methodology for this paper was qualitative and it involved secondary data from library, internet sources and interviews. Using the Google search on the internet sources, I researched and read much into metaphor, conceptual metaphor and then animal metaphor in Nzema (Ghana), Yoruba (Nigeria) and Bukusu and Gusii (Kenya), in Africa and further into animal metaphor in English and Persia (see section 1.3). The commonalities in the attributes of certain animals based on the cultural knowledge and the philosophies of the respective cultures were considered. Nketia's book *Amoma* and Christaller's 1933 Akan dictionary found at the Institute of African Studies library at the University of Ghana were consulted. The dictionary provided some of the English equivalents of some archaic terms that we did not have their English equivalents. Four renowned Akan scholars, namely Agya Koo Nimo, Mr. Bosie Amponsah, and Mr. Baniing Peprah and Nana Ampadu were interviewed.

I spent four hours with my first interviewee, the late Nana Ampadu, who was well versed in Akan language and culture in October 2019. He was a renowned and talented Akan highlife musician who relied greatly on Akan folktales especially those on animal metaphors. Mr. Bosie Amponsah, the second person was interviewed for four hours in August 2020. Mr. Baniing Peprah was the next, and was interviewed in May 2021. The last expert, interviewed in July 2021, was Mr. Daniel Amponsah, popularly known in the Akan folk music circles as Agya Koo Nimo. Agya Koo is a folklorist who has composed many songs since the 1960's. He is a well-known expert in Akan language and culture. Some of his folksongs are sourced from folktales with animal metaphors. We spent about four hours looking at the negative and positive traits of animals in Akan including those he had used in his compositions.

The interviewees were given a list of animals and we spent on the average four hours to find out the positive and negative characteristics they know about Akan animals especially the domestic animals. I further interviewed them on animal metaphors for the Akan clans, totems and state emblems; they had ample knowledge about animal characters.

In the case of the panegyrics (appellations), I consulted some praise singers at the Otumfo's palace in Kumasi Manhyia, who explained some of the animal metaphors in the panegyrics to me. I took the opportunity to get more knowledge and insight into some other panegyrics on flora. The four experts finally crosschecked the authenticity of the attributes of the animals gathered from the secondary data, and gave their feedback.

Apart from the four renowned Akan scholars, I interviewed ten Level 300 students in my Oral literature class made up of five male students and five female students. However, most of the youth, especially my Oral literature students were not familiar and well versed with the animal symbols of the Akan clans and their metaphoric interpretations. I employed my own introspection as a native Akan scholar to analyse the expressions.

The methodology also tested any evidence on current use of the animal metaphors. It came out that since generally metaphors are part of life; these animal metaphors are in current use in ordinary conversations, proverbs, folksongs, and in institutionalised genres like panegyrics and in ethnic totems that people are very proud of (see Table 1).

2.2. Literature review

The paper reviewed various works on cultural linguistics, cognitive semantics, and metaphors. These include metaphors for the expression of anger, patience, distress, wellbeing, and face concepts (see Agyekum 2020, 2018, 2016, 2015a-b and 2006). Akan, Nzema and Yoruba belong to the Kwa family group of West Africa languages, and may therefore have some common animal metaphors.

The library and internet materials I read were the Akan books including Appiah et al., (2000), who work on over thousand proverbs, some of which were on animals. Christaller's (1933) dictionary helped with the translations of some of the animals, Crayner's (1975) book discussed the Akan clans and their totems. In the case of Gyekye (1997), he looked at the metaphors from a philosophical point of view, while Nketia (1978), provided the panegyrics out of which we took examples that relate to animals. The internet sources were the Google search for electronic articles and books. Ansah (2014) discussed the metaphoric and metonymic conceptualisations of fear among the Akans. Other scholars who have worked on areas of Akan conceptual metaphor include Dzokoto (2010), Dzokoto and Okazaki (2006). Dzokoto (2010) worked on various aspects of metaphor including some emotions that relate to body parts. Barasa and Opande (2017) discussed animal metaphors in the representation of women in Bukusu and Gusii proverbs of Kenya. Olateju (2005) discussed Yoruba animal metaphor and Pourhossein (2016) worked on animal metaphors in Persian and Turkish proverbs, and Yakub (2019), analysed Nzema animal metaphor. The above works on conceptual metaphors, animal metaphor and proverbs are great contributions to this paper.

Barasa & Opande, (2017: 84) aver that "Animal metaphors have been studied from various perspectives, with focus on the source domain, particularly on the manifestation of the concept ANIMAL in the metaphorical expressions and those on various animals in spoken and written discourse." They looked at both the universal and cultural specificities of animal metaphor and remarked as follows:

The literature on animal metaphors has informed us that culture does play a vital role in determining the meanings attached to the animal metaphors, as different languages will have different meanings ascribed to the same animal. This is to say that one same animal may not be equally conceptualised in different languages and cultures (Barasa & Opande, 2017: 85).

2.3. Theoretical Framework: Cultural Linguistics

The theoretical framework for the paper is Cultural linguistics with its sub-branches conceptual metaphor and cultural metaphor.

2.3.1. Cultural Linguistics

Sharifian (2015: 473) posits, "Cultural linguistics is a multidisciplinary area of research that explores the relationship between language, culture, and conceptualization." It is founded on the principles of cognitive linguistics hence its applicability for the discussion of animal metaphor in Akan. Sharifian (2015:476) further postulated that Cultural Linguistics has drawn on several other disciplines to arrive at a framework best described as *cultural cognition and language* because it affords an integrated understanding of the notions of 'cognition' and 'culture', as they relate to language (see Sharifian, 2011). To Sharifian, one important function of Cultural cognition is that it embraces the cultural knowledge that emerges from the interactions between members of a cultural group across time and space. The use of animal metaphor among the Akans of Ghana would be based on the participants, the setting (time and space), the ends (the goals) and the genre (subject matter) as well as compliance to the Akan cultural norms. In effect, it touches on Del Hymes' (1972) acronym SPEAKING. Our discussion on state and clan totems, proverbs and panegyrics would attest to this.

Sharifian (2015:477) further considered the analytical tools that are used in the workings of cultural linguistics and came out with the super-ordinate term cultural conceptualizations.

Under this he identified ‘cultural schema’, ‘cultural category’ (including cultural prototype’), and ‘cultural metaphor’. The focus of the current paper is on the **“cultural metaphor”**. The cultural metaphor relates very well to Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphor and both of them will help to discuss Akan animal metaphor. Sharifian (2015: 482) refers to cultural linguistics that is interested in exploring culturally constructed conceptual metaphors as Cultural metaphors (see Sharifian, 2011).

In the conceptualization of the Akan animal metaphor, we will see that some of the metaphors have been fossilized based on the strong interrelationship between the Akans and the animals in those times when we were farming in the rural areas. With urbanisation and the distancing of animals from human beings, the present generation may see some of the animal metaphors as abstract. Sharifian (2015:482) hammered on fossilized conceptualizations as follows:

Some cases of conceptual metaphors are simply ‘fossilized’ conceptualizations that represented active insight at some stage in the history of the cultural cognition of a group. Such metaphors do not imply current speakers of the language have any conscious awareness of the cultural roots of the expressions, or are engaged in any conceptual mapping when they use them. In such cases, the conceptual metaphors may serve rather as cultural schemas which guides thinking about and helps with understanding certain domains of experience (Sharifian 2015:482).

Sharifian (2015:482) summarised cultural linguistics as follows “Cultural Linguistics explores human languages and language varieties to examine features that draw on cultural conceptualizations such as cultural schemas, cultural categories, and cultural conceptual metaphors, from the perspective of the theoretical framework of cultural cognition.” Sharifian (2017:2) echoed the tenets of cultural linguistics as follows: “Cultural linguistics engages with features of human languages that encode or instantiate culturally constructed conceptualizations encompassing the whole range of human experience.” We will see how this works in the Akan data on proverbs and panegyrics.

2.3.2 Conceptual Metaphor (CM)

Agyekum (2020) used conceptual metaphor to discuss Akan emotions on distress, stress, sorrow and depressions and we are adopting the same conceptual metaphor theory that will usher us into animal metaphor. The most common analytical framework employed by cognitive linguistic researchers is the Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) as follows:

Many aspects of our experience cannot be clearly delineated in terms of the naturally emergent dimensions of our experience. This is typically the case for human emotions, abstract concepts, mental activity . . . Though most of these can be experienced directly; none of them can be fully comprehended on their own terms. Instead, we must understand them in terms of other entities and experiences, typically other kinds of entities and experiences (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 177).

In Conceptual metaphor, concepts expressed in metaphors, idioms, and proverbs correspond to cultural traits, sociocultural interactions, natural experiences, and basic domains of human life, including bodily perception and movement, basic objects, and the environment (see Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Based on these, it is ideal to discuss Akan animal metaphor using conceptual metaphor. Semino (2008: 5), posits that “conceptual metaphors are defined as systematic sets of correspondence, or ‘mappings’, across conceptual domains, whereby a ‘target’ domain is partly structured in terms of a different ‘source’ domain.” In this paper, we would be mapping animals as source domains to human behaviour as our target.

3. What is Animal Metaphor?

Olateju (2005: 368) posits; “Animal metaphors involve transference of meanings, and whatever meanings or interpretations are assigned to a particular animal metaphor, are culture and context dependent.” Animal metaphors are used to represent human beings because they all have the

semantic feature [+animate], and share certain common attributes including, life, sickness, motion, emotion, death, etc.

Animal metaphors refer to metaphors that make corresponding relations between animals and human behaviors based on certain behavioural traits, habits, shape or physical characteristics. These are based on cultural linguistics and cultural and conceptual metaphors, indigenous knowledge, philosophy, social psychology, religion, and worldview of the particular culture and their long-standing association with the animals. Animal metaphors are widespread in most societies including Akan because of man's traditional closeness to wildlife than other forms of creation. The more agrarian a culture is, the more their close ties with animals, and the more animal metaphors they can tap from both wild and domestic animals. In their daily activities as farmers and hunters, agrarian societies constantly have direct contact with animals; they study animal behaviour, traits, physique, manner of living, eating, sleeping, walking, running, etc. They then form evidenced based cultural conceptualisations about the animals and therefore use them metaphorically to represent human beings (see Olatuje 2005:369, 372). Akans, Nzemas, Yorubas, and most Africans use these familiar animals, as the source for creativity in their oral literary poetry including elegiac poetry, panegyric poetry, folksongs and surrogate language.

The societies' cultural conceptualizations and knowledge about the animals and the subsequent animal metaphors are mostly sourced from hunters and farmers. Olatuje therefore avers as follows:

For the wild animals in the forest, hunters come home from their hunting expeditions (games) to narrate their observation and experiences about the wild animals. Sometimes, they are fascinated by the physical appearance, beauty or gait of a particular animal... The physical attributes and characteristic cry, gait and habits of these animals, as observed by hunters and farmers, form the bases of the metaphorical allusions made to a particular animal (Olatuje 2005:372).

Apart from the above characteristics, some animal metaphors are based on the benefits that cultures get from the animals. For instance, the **dog** is considered in terms of social or economic benefits, the security it offers humankind and the hunting it does to bring meat home. Animals have both negative and positive attributes based on cultural linguistics and cultural conceptualizations.¹ My Akan informants stated that outside the positive sides of the **dog**, we metaphorically transfer its promiscuity to human beings.

From linguistic ethnographic point of view, the participants involved and the speaker's assertiveness determine the chosen animal metaphors. The speaker may use the negative downgrading animal metaphor on the addressee in order to assert his superiority and ego. The positive and negative sides of the animal metaphors are based on the cultural linguistics, socio-cultural context and the intentions of the speaker or literary artist (see section 4.3 on findings). Olateju (2005: 380) opines that

Another stylistic import of animal metaphors is that they perform emotive functions. They can be used positively in paying tributes, compliments and in eulogizing an animal or human being who have aroused their interest. Similarly, they can be employed uncomplimentarily to satirize, rebuke or castigate any person whose conduct is condemnable. Some of the animal metaphors have more than two readings – complimentary and non-complimentary – and depending on the circumstance and context, an animal metaphor can be used either way (Olateju (2005: 380).

1 A specific animal attribute can stand for the entire animal resulting in animal metonymy in the part-for-whole configurations. For instance, the swiftness of a cat could stand for the entire cat (see Pourhossein 2016 128). In the animal metaphor relating to a dog, the sharpness of its senses, especially olfactory, or its courageous nature can stand for it.

In employing animal metaphor for negative connotations, the speaker relies on the strategy of indirection to avoid being offensive and depicts mastery of politeness, cultural linguistics and indigenous knowledge and culture. Olateju further asserts that:

Through anthropomorphism, metaphors are created by ascribing such human characteristics as thoughts, emotions and feelings to animals. The essence of this, ostensibly, is to create a parallel between animals and humans, a condition considered necessary for a proper understanding of the nature and emotions of humans through animals. It is clear that animal metaphor in Yorùbá are shrouded in anthropomorphism by ascribing to them actions, behaviour, and attributes such as naming, which are proper only for human beings (Olateju 2005:375)

We can refer to the above as personification metaphor or “depersonalized metaphor” where animals are accorded human qualities, intellect, emotions and experiences.

Animal metaphors are socially owned by respective cultures; they are based on the shared assumptions, cultural conceptualisations and basic knowledge that the interlocutors have about the animals and their characteristics. This is certified by similar answers given by my four interviewees. The reverse is applicable where human attributes can be transferred to describe animals because of their specific characteristics (see Olateju 2005:376 and personification metaphor). In his work on animal metaphors in Nzema proverbs, Yakub (2019:179) states, “animal attributes in Nzema proverbs provide essential source domain through which human characteristics and day-to-day occurrences in our socio-cultural setting could be conceptualised.”² Yakub (2019) concluded his thematic discussions of animal metaphors in Nzema proverbs as follows:

Both domestic and non-domestic animals including birds, flies, insects and reptiles are prevalent in Nzema proverbs to advise people against undesirable attitudes like recalcitrance, procrastination, greed, selfishness and all sort of social vices. These creatures are also used through the proverbs to direct people towards positive behaviours; such as tolerance, forgiveness, patience, cooperation, obedience, kindness, faithfulness and hard work among others (Yakub 2019: 192).

The above confirms that animals have negative and positive traits and each of the paradigms can be tapped cross-linguistically to describe human behaviour. However, the selected behaviour would be language and culture specific and be based on the sociocultural and cultural linguistic context of the discourse. The negative and positive traits are from human perspectives based on their experiences that have evolved and conceptualized through natural selection to enhance or negate the animal survival prospects. To Deignan (2003), the culture-specificity of animal metaphors roots from different degree of saliency that different cultures attribute to different animals. Pourhossein postulates:

The tendency to use animal metaphors to refer to human being -no matter for which purpose, belittling, or any other reason- is universal, however, there is a high degree of culture specificity in the pervasiveness of animal metaphors on the one hand, and the type of animal which is used to refer to a certain human trait on the other hand Pourhossein (2016:2).

While Yakub worked on Nzema animal metaphors in proverbs, the current work discusses animal metaphor on Akan state and clan emblems, proverbs and panegyrics.

² He reviewed some previous works on animal metaphor in proverbs in English, Yoruba, Chinese, Malay, etc. and consulted works by Barasa & Opande (2017: 85), Fu (2008), Kobia (2016), Liu, (2013:1848) and Muhammed and Rashid (2014).

4. Animals in the Akan State Symbols

Every Akan state has an iconic symbol (totem) that identifies it, and some of these symbols are animals that reflect the cultural traits of the group. This section will only look at the Asante and Akyem symbols.

The Asantes, one of the major ethnic groups of the Akan use the *kɔtɔkɔ* ‘porcupine’ as their symbol. Their slogan is **Asante kɔtɔkɔ wokum apem a, apem bɛba**. ‘Asante the porcupine, if you kill a thousand, thousand more will come. This refers to the quills of the porcupine; it is envisaged that the porcupine shoots its quills at its attackers in self-defence. Apart from this self-defense mechanism, it is said that if one quill is pulled out, another will replace it. The Asantes use this animal metaphor as a symbol of their power, prowess, tactics and invincibility in wars. Traditionally, like the quills of the porcupine, the Asantes always had a standby army to attack the enemies when the going became tough. Apart from the number, the porcupine has long, large and sharp quills. It is believed that the porcupine is not vulnerable in any way to any animal, no matter how carnivorous, huge and wild the animal may be. The Akyem-Akan group has the leopard that they call **etwie**, **ɛkyɛm**, or **kuɔtɔwiamansa**. Their symbol coincides with the symbol of the Bretuo clan that we will see in Section 3.1.

4.1 Akan Clan (Totems) Symbols

Among the Akan, each of the eight clans has its emblem and symbol, which are normally totems of the clans that have some historical allusions; they are conceptualized culturally based on animal metaphor. The individual clans conceptually associate and affiliate themselves with the totems in the Conceptual Metaphor: ANIMAL X IS CLAN Y. Agyekum (2006) worked on aspects of Akan semiotics and recorded the clans and their corresponding animals as in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Akan Clans and their Respective Totems

CLAN	SYMBOLS	
Akan Clan Name	Akan Animal	English Equivalent
Aduana - Aberade	ɔkraman	dog
Agona	ako	parrot
Asakyiri	kɔkɔsakyi/ɔkɔrɛ	vulture
AsenneE	apan	bat
Asona	kwaakwaadabi	crow
Ayokɔ	Asansa	hawk
Bretuo/Twidan	ɔseɔ	leopard
ɛkoɔna	ɛkoɔ	Buffalo/bush cow

(a) Aduana

The **Aduana** Clan was the first to bring fire into the Akan tradition. The fire was carried by the **dog** in its mouth hence the symbol. According to oral history, one day, the ancestors of the clan were travelling and up to some point, they felt very hungry but did not have a faggot. One of them had a dog that had been trained to carry fire always. When the dog sensed that its masters did not have fire, it jumped into a river and swam to the other bank and run home to bring fire. The dog thus became a helper and a totem (see Crayner 1975:55, Agyekum 2006). The Aduanas see the dog first as a companion because it is normally closer to its owner. The source of fire (energy) is a very important aspect of human life; the dog serves as the security, guides people, and provides meat and food. My interviewees confirmed all these. When an Aduana proudly says that **meyɛ ɔkraman nana**, ‘I am the grandchild of dog’; it carries a positive connotation. This notwithstanding, in other contexts, the dog may carry some negative connotations as we find in some Akan folktales (see section 4.3). Pourhossein records as follows:

As the first domesticated animal in human history, which is estimated to be between 1300-30000 years, dog has played a significant role in human life through millennia. Human being has always been dependent on

dog both as a protective animal and as a loyal friend. Dog has protected either human being in wilderness or it has protected the human properties, on top of all flocks of sheep. Therefore, the commonality of the presence of dog in both languages' proverbs was the life requirement in rural life style (Pourhossein 2006:71).

(b) Agona

Agyekum (2006) reported that the symbol for the **Agona** is the **parrot**. According to the legend, one day one of the ancestral grandmothers of the clan was travelling and she met a murderer.³ The sound made by the parrots saved the woman, and she got some wealth and food from them. The woman and her descendants took the parrot as their totem. The Agonas pride themselves of eloquence because the parrot (their totem) can speak (see Crayner 1975:48). If the Akans say **n'ano ate te sɛ ako**, it means the person is communicatively competent.

(c) Asakyiri

The symbol of the **Asakyiri** group is the **vulture**. One day an ancestor of the Asakyiri group was traveling and it saw that the vulture was eating a dead person. The ancestor exclaimed **ade a asɛ (ɔdansani) kyiri na aboa yi redi yi**, 'it is eating something that human beings do not eat'. Since then they thought it wise to bury their corpses. According to the group, the vulture has taught them a lesson. The name **asɛkyiri** made up of **asɛ** 'human being' and **kyiri** 'abhor' became the name of the clan and the vulture, their totem. The irony of this is that even though people think the vulture is always at the refuse dump as a scavenger, it has taught them a good hygienic procedure.

Another animal metaphor the Akans attach to the vulture is the need to seek for longer life. The Akans have the proverb **Kɔkɔsakyi, ɔsɛ mede me kwasea repɛ nyinkyereɛ**. 'The vulture says: I am using my foolishness to seek for longer life.' The group is sober and calm because they think that life supersedes anything.

(d) Asona

The **Asona's** totem is the **Crow**. The legend states that one day the Asona group was traveling with one of their great grandmothers. The woman and the younger people took the lead while the men kept at the vanguard. As they went round, the woman came across a pot full of gold with a snake coiled round it. The woman wanted to take the money but the snake threatened to bite her. As she struggled to get it, two crows suddenly appeared and struck the snake with their wings; before the snake fell, it had already bitten the old woman. Notwithstanding this, the group was able to carry her home together with the pot of gold. They became richer and realized that the crow had helped them so it became their totem. The Asonas do not kill a crow because it is a relative (see Agyekum 2006, Crayner 1975: 42-43). The Asonas associate themselves with beauty, an Akan will proudly and boldly say **kwakwaadabi nana ne me, m'atiko te sɛ obi anim**, 'I am the grandchild of the Crow and my occiput is like the face of somebody's child.

(e) Bretuo/Twidan

The symbol for the **Bretuo/Twidan** clan is the **leopard**. The legend states that one day a hunter from this clan went hunting and saw a leopard that had killed two big animals. As soon as the leopard saw the hunter, it moved one of the animals to the trunk of a big tree and hid it. When it left, the hunter run away with the other animal. The leopard later on repeated the same process

³ The murderer asked the old woman whether she was alone; she responded that she was walking with someone called **Kwame Nyame**, 'God'. The murderer gave her the opportunity to call **Kwame Nyame**, if he responded, she would be free; else she would be killed. The woman started shouting **Kwame Nyame ee!!!**. Anytime she called, the response was "Uu-uu-uu!". On hearing the sound, the murderer realized that the woman was with a group, so he ran away. Later on, the woman traced the "Uu-uu-uu!" sound to a palm tree with ripened palm-nut and many parrots and a golden necklace hanging on it. She took some of the palm nuts home and realized that it was full of oil.

and the hunter noted the place as a location for hunting. When the hunter informed his old woman at home, she advised him not to kill the leopard. The leopard later became their (relative) totem. Another name for leopard in Akan is **etwi(e)**; the name **twidan** is made up of (e) **twi** ‘leopard’ and the verb **dan**, ‘to rely/depend’. The composite means the group that relies on the leopard. The animal metaphor here is courageous, resilient and fast in the bush. In Asante, the second in power after the Asantehene is the Mamponghene, who is the head of the Bretuo clan, and he is very bold.

(f) **εκοῶna**

The symbol of the **εκοῶna** clan is the bush cow. The story says that, one day an old woman was traveling with her children. Suddenly, they heard the question “Hei Madam who are you travelling with?” The woman later realized that it was a murderer and she cunningly responded, “Please I am walking with God.” The man retorted that it was going to be a tug of war then. Surprisingly, a bush cow appeared in their midst and saved the woman from the hands of the murderer.⁴ On arrival home, she said **εκοῶ no a**, ‘it is the bush cow’; they had their name **εκοῶna**, and their totem **εκοῶ**. The bush cow symbolises strength, indefatigability and invincibility of the group. They **εκοῶna** will say **εκοῶ Asimpi ne yen**. ‘We are Asimpi the Bush Cow, to scare anyone who threatens the group.

(g) **Oyokoῶ**

The symbol of the **Oyokoῶ** clan is the **hawk** or **falcon**. The symbol represents power, control and swiftness. The hawk has control over chicken and it comes unannounced to prey on it. The **Oyokoῶ** clan is headed by the Asantehene and it has the power to snatch any land and any mineral resource and even dethrone a chief from office as the falcon can just take away a chicken from its mother. Among the Asantes, the Asantehene is the first among equals; the group see themselves as the leaders of the Asante state, and they have leadership qualities.

5. Proverbs with Animal Characters

This section looks at proverbs that have animal characters representing human behaviour. The experiences of these animals have something to offer humanity. The proverbs are constructed by considering the animal kingdom and their behaviour. The proverbs are used as forms of indirection to advise and admonish human beings to put up good behaviour. Before we start discussing the few sampled proverbs with animal names, let us briefly talk about the concept of proverbs.

Agyekum (2005: 9) states that “proverbs are interpretations of traditional wisdom based on the experiences and socio-political life of our elders.” Proverbs are part of the cultural linguistics based on the cultural conceptualizations and cultural worldview of the people’s holistic experiences. Agyekum (2020:15) further opines that

In Akan indigenous communication, the use of proverbs is the acknowledged mark of one’s communicative competence. Proverbs are time-tested expressions that give a philosophical window into the Akan worldview and their indigenous knowledge. Akan proverbs are literary devices that depict holistic experiences in life (see Agyekum 2020:15).

We see from the above that the Akans’ knowledge about proverbs transcend into how they metaphorically consider animals’ behaviour and relate them to human behaviour.

⁴. It later accompanied the old woman and her children to the outskirts of the town and retreated. The woman came home and continued mentioning **εκοῶna** ‘bush cow’ several times as their saviour. The **εκοῶna** story is similar to the Agonas.

5.1. Proverbs on Individual Differences, Ability and Skills

There are proverbs that use animal metaphor to depict that every human being is created and endowed with specific abilities and skills and people must know their strengths, weaknesses and limits.

1. **Aserewa su Agyenkuku su a, ne to pae.**
 Sunbird cries 'Red-eyed Dove's cry then its anus burst
 'If the 'Sunbird' cries like the Red-eyed Dove, it bursts its anus.'

The sunbird is smaller than the red-eyed dove, if it wants to imitate the cry of the red-eyed dove it will have to shout and overstretch its muscles and other body parts thereby bursting its anus.

2. **Abɔfra bɔ nwa na ɔ-m- mɔ akyekyedɛ**
 Child cracks snail and it. NEG. crack tortoise.'
 'A child cracks snail's shell but not that of a tortoise.'

Both the snail and the tortoise have shells; however, the snail's shell is very soft compared to the tortoise. A child should weigh his strength and move to crack the snail's shell and not that of the tortoise (see Appiah, et. al, 2000). This is synonymous to the English proverb 'Do not bite more than what you can chew.'

3. **Aserewa hwɛ ne kɛsɛ so ansa na w-a-nwono ne buo.**
 Sunbird looks POS big on before it CONSC weave POS. nest.'
 'The Sunbird looks at its size before weaving its nest.'

The sunbird knows itself very well and therefore does things in accordance with its natural size and ability. It cuts its coat according to its size.

4. **Nwansena n-ni hwee koraa no, ɔ-m-pepa ne nsam kwa.**
 Housefly NEG. have nothing at all DET. It- NEG. rub POS. hand nothing
 'Even though the housefly has not got anything yet it does not rub its palms in vain.'

5. **Aboa a ɔ- n- ni dua no Onyame na ɔ- pra no ho.**
 'It is God Rel. it NEG. have tail DET God FOC. 3SG drives its body
 'It is God that drives away the insects of the tailless animal.'

God in his wisdom has given every creature the ability to be able to fit into the world and live within its own limits. The proverbs above indicate that God will cater for all human beings, both the rich and poor. In examples 4 and 5 the Akans know that no matter how vulnerable the housefly or the tailless animal finds itself among devourers, God is there to protect it. To the Akan when the housefly rubs its palm it become dry for any activity it wants to embark upon God will thus provide the necessary solutions for all creatures including the housefly.

6. **Futukokɔnini ne ɔkɔɔ n- sere afe korɔ mu**
 Dust bug and crab NEG. laugh year same in
 'The dust bug and the crab do not laugh in the same year.'

In life, there are individual differences and people will not be in the same emotional status at the same time. Since people live in different social, cultural, political and economic environments,

they should be content with their lots and environment, and these are part of their cultural conceptualisations. The two animals in this proverb differ in terms of weather. The dust bug feels more comfortable in dust and therefore enjoys dry season. On the contrary, the crab is an aquatic animal and therefore rejoices during the rainy season where there is water and the ground is muddy. Any time one of them is enjoying life and laughing, the other one is in tears. The lessons from these animal metaphors are that all human beings have different states of life and people should see them as a realistic worldview metaphor. Sharifian (2017:21-22) states clearly that

The worldview metaphors are cultural conceptualisations that are part of the speaker's world. They are real and indisputable beliefs about the world and life, and are understood as literal statements and not involving any figurative language. There is nothing rhetorical about them Sharifian (2017:21-22)

There are similar worldview animal metaphors found in proverbs like (6b) **ɔkɔtɔ nwo anoma**, 'the crab does not give birth to a bird'. Realistically, one is a bird that flies, and has other physical features that are different from the crab that is an aquatic entity with a shell. Their features, respective behaviours, and their breeds are different. The Akans know this from their basic environmental knowledge and encyclopedic ecological worldview.

The seven proverbs above use animal categories to advise human beings to know their capabilities, skills and limits, and should confine themselves to what they can do best instead of comparing themselves with others. They should not lament too much since time changes.

5.2. Proverb on Mutual Dependency

The proverb below relates to how an entity cannot be independent always, and needs the services of others.

7. **Akyekyedee se nsa kɔ na nsa a- ba**
Tortoise say hands go and hands PERF. comes
'The tortoise says hands go hands come.' (mutual dependency)

Human beings can look at the physical motion of certain animals and use it to depict what can occur in human behaviour. In proverb 7, the tortoise's movement metaphorically depicts mutual dependency and human reciprocity. It literally means that if I stretch my hands to give you something, you are the recipient, and the society expects that your hand should also be stretched to me or somebody (worldview metaphor).

6.0. Animal metaphors in Amoma 'Panegyrics' (Appellations)

In Akan cultural linguistics, animal metaphors are captured in panegyric (praise poetry). This section will look at some of these examples from Nketia's book *Amoma*.

(a) Poem 28.

ɔno no!

Odwammara katakyi birekuo,

Wohɔn anini abɛn.

ɔsɛ Tutu, wohɔn anini abɛn.

Wohɔn anini abɛn, ɔdɛ!

Apampammire a ɔsi abura,

Kosua di ayiye

Na awusu nkɔmmɔ a ɔdie ne ɔsɛ Tutu. And all that is talked about is ɔsɛ Tutu'

'Here he is!

The warrior ram (sheep)

You pull the horns of males

Osei Tutu you pull the horns of males

You really pull the horns of males

The creeping plant that covers the well

The egg deserves praises

In (a) above, the King Osei Tutu is likened to the strong sheep that can forcefully pull other animals' horns (see Nketia 1978 Poem 28). This metaphor connotes strength and the martial

nature of the king. Apart from the animal metaphor, the poem uses a plant (flora) metaphor by equating the King to **apampammire**, ‘a creeping plant that covers a hidden waterlog area and traps people to death. This connotes the traditional power of the Asante king to kill (in those times) through diverse ways, including laying ambush.

(b) Poem 43.

ɔno no!

ɔprammiresiakwa a ɔrekɔ ne baabi,

Na mmɔfra hu no a, yɛredwane no

ɔkyereben Aduesare Tententu

A ne ho yɛ fɛ, na n’ano yɛ ya.

ɔsɛ Tutu wo ho yɛ fɛ

Na woyɛ ɔbarima, ɔdɛ!

‘Here he is!

The black snake (blocker) when it is on its way

And children see it they run away

The Tree Mamba Aduesare Tententu snake

That is beautiful, but its mouth is painful

Osei Tutu you are handsome

And you are a real man’

In poem 43 above, the animal metaphors are sourced from two poisonous snakes (see Nketia 1978, Poem 43). One of them, the black snake is so fearful that when children see it, they run away. The **siakwa** appellation comes from the verb **si**, ‘to block’, and **kwan**, road/path’. By its fearful nature people are afraid to use the road and it thus monopolises it. The snake represents the King who is much powerful, and the children represent the chiefs of the smaller states who are afraid of this powerful king and therefore would not like to come anywhere near his kingdom for safety reasons. In using the **ɔkyereben** ‘tree mamba’ snake, the cultural linguistics deals with contrasts, the snake is very handsome and would be attracted to people, however it is poisonous and it will bite you to death. It is prudent for the younger states and their subjects not to be deceived by the king’s handsomeness and magnanimity, but rather be cunning in dealing with him.

(c) Poem 47.

ɔno no!

ɔsansa kurokotiako a yɛgye no afoofi
Na ɔnni ne ho adaagyeɛ.

ɔsansa duru-

Amponyinamoa duru-dwamu,

Akwagyiramo a Takyirifa se ɔnim asa

Nso ɔsa a, nkura nhwɛ nhwɛ!

Akwagyiramo a Takyirifa

A yetware no a, ɔsi ta.

ɔsɛ Tutu, yetware wo a,

Wosi ta.

'Here he is!

The roaming hawk that is asked to stay at home
 But it has no time for itself

The Busy Hawk arrives

The Accept -all-animals arrives in the gathering

The Invincible Cat knows dancing

But when it dances, the mice should check

The Cat who does not land on its back

When it is swung up, it lands steadily

Osei Tutu when we swing you,

You land steadily on your feet.'

The above panegyric (Nketia 1978, Poem 47) conceptually employs two animals to praise the Asante king Osei Tutu. These are the **asansa**, 'the hawk' and **akwagyinamoa** 'the cat'. The two are well known sources for Akan **worldview metaphors**. The Akans know the hawk as a very busy bird that is always hovering and watching from the sky to spot chickens and come swiftly to prey on them. It is always spying and scouting for chicken exactly like how a warrior walks around the war front hunting for enemies to kill them. The appellation **kurokotiako** is derived from **ɔko tia ba tia**, 'it goes to one outskirt of the town and comes to the other'. It is so busy and has no time to rest.

The hawk is further given the appellation **Amponyinamoa**. This is a borrowed appellation normally used for Mother Earth. It is derived from **ampo**, 'it does not reject' + **mmo**, 'animals' + **nyinaa**, 'all'; the composite is 'it accepts all animals'. The Akan cultural metaphor indicates that Mother Earth allows all animals to live on it and when they die, it accepts to bury their carcasses. We see that appellation **A** can be transferred to entity **B** and further used as animal metaphor to describe some of the qualities of a King in praise poetry of the Asante King (see Nketia 1978:19, and 44).

In poem C above, we have the worldview metaphor CAT IS INVINCIBLE. The cat has the appellation **Takyirifa**, derived from **ta**, 'the back of a cat' + **kyiri**, 'to abhor/hate' + **fa**, 'dust or ground'.⁵ The composite means that the cat's back will never touch the ground. This is supported by the expression **yetware no a, ɔsi ta**, 'when it is swung up, it lands steadily on its feet'. It implies that the king who conceptually has the cat's attributes is invincible, and thus no state can defeat him in any war. The cat is further described as someone who has the agility in dancing and therefore the mice should watch and not dare the cat. The cultural and worldview metaphoric transfer is that the smaller states should be careful with this powerful and invincible chief. Let us look at our findings from the interviews that match with some of the animal metaphor in proverbs, state and clan symbols and panegyrics.

7. The Interview Results and Findings:

All my informants unanimously agreed that animal metaphors are prevalent in Akan because animals conceptually share some aspects of human beings and there are both negative and positive traits of animals found in people. Some of the characteristics of the domestic animals are seen below.

The **Fowl** is positively seen as caring and patient for its chicken. It is vigilant and protective on its chickens especially from the attack by the hawk and other predators. Agya Koo Nimo gave the Akan proverb-**Akoko nan tia ba nanso ɛnkum ba**. 'The feet of the fowl step on the chicken but does not kill it.' Finally, in Akan, the fowl is a great timekeeper since in the

⁵ The expression **fa**, dust or soil is found in some Akan words like **fasuo**, 'wall', **afasini**, 'short wall' fadan, 'mud house' **fapem**, 'foundation' **fam**, 'ground' (see Nketia 1978:45).

traditional days without watches/clocks; people relied on the cockcrow to know about the daybreak. In the negative sense, the Fowl is ungrateful, discriminatory and wicked since it takes care of its chickens and maltreat others. It is a bully, and this is manifested in one proverb from Agya Koo Nimo, **Tɛfrɛ nim asa nso Akokɔ Antwiwaa amma no ansa**. ‘The cockroach knows how to dance but the fowl did not allow it to dance.’ Any time it sets on the floor, the fowl will chase and catch it.

All my informants agreed and commented that the **Goat** is very wise and cunning and recognises its own species even when it is angry. This is depicted by the proverb **Abusua ntɔkwa te sɛ Abirekyie ntɔkwa, yɛpagya no sorosoro nso yɛagyae no bɔkɔɔ**. ‘A family conflict is like goats’ fight; it is initially raised very high but lowered calmly’. They see that it is a good example for people to learn from the animals. This is a higher level of patience; this is reflected when a goat wants to cross a road where cars are speeding. It takes its time and uses its intellect like human beings to ensure that the road is clear and safe before it crosses. This could be part of the Akan worldview metaphor (see Sharifian 2017). On the negative side, my informants see the **goat** as a destroyer, who can spoil things, and eat raw foodstuffs in the house. It is so stubborn, violent and recalcitrant that it is difficult to catch it. It is because of this nature that it is not used in any conciliatory ritual among the Akan but rather a sheep is used.

My interviewees mentioned that the **Sheep** is very peaceful, non-violent and calm, and that is why it is used in all rituals at the chieftaincy, religious and family levels especially in conflict resolution. They mentioned the term **mpatadwan**, ‘sacrificial or conciliatory lamb’. The negative character traits of the sheep include being foolish, impolite, dirty, and having multiple childbirth.

The next animal from my interview was the **Cat**. Its positive traits include, being observant, patient, a tactician, a strategist, a planner; it can see and think from afar; it is vigilant, tolerant, very neat and conscious of responsible childbirth. One of the informants heightened the neatness of the cat as follows:

8. **ɔkra, ɔ-m-pɛ efi, ɔ- fɛrɛ ne ho**
 ‘Cat, it NEG. like filth, it ashamed POS. body
 ‘Cat, it does not like filth, it keeps to itself.’

9. **Obi a- hunu sɛ ɔkra barima bi re- fa**
 Somebody PERF. see that Cat male DET PROG. take
ɔkra baa wɔ petee mu sɛdɛ mmoa bi yɛ no?
 Cat female LOC. plain inside how animals DET do it?
 ‘Has anyone seen a male cat mating a female cat in public like some animals do?’

As part of the Cat’s tolerance, one of them quoted a proverb **Asɛm a ɔkra hunu a na wabu no anikyie no, ɔkraman hunu a, na ɔrɛpɔ**. ‘A very irritating issue that the Cat will just ignore, the Dog will vehemently bark at it.’ The informants further see the Cat as a real hunter that hunts for mice, it can catch a snake, and it can catch from both the left and the right claws.⁶ It was noted that it does not like cheating and cannot be easily overcome; it can even fight the Dog and spoil the eyes. The notable negative characteristics of the Cat by all of them was that it is a thief, overly crafty, naughty and disrespectful.

All the interviewees saw the **Dog** as wise, friendly, especially to humanity; it is a hunter, a security expert, very observant and vigilant. Again, it has an extraordinary higher level of perceptual sense especially vision, olfactory and auditory and hence it is normally used as a watchdog and a detective. Its negativities lie on being a thief, fraudulent, a bully, promiscuous,

⁶ According to oral tradition, the Tiger and the Cat lived in the home; and the Cat trained the tiger on how to pounce and grab things. The Tiger did not master fully how to grab from both the left and right, and left into the bush. The Cat is thus sharper in shooting than the Tiger.

roaming uselessly and being dirty. One informant stated a common Akan expression on aimless roaming as **X awe ɔkraman gyawa**, ‘X has chewed the feet of a dog.’ This means that the person roams about and does not stay at home, but s/he does not come home with any proper thing.

They noted that the **Pig**’s positive side lies on giving more piglets, which fetches the owner more money. It also solves the protein needs of the community. In the negative side, they remarked that, it is gluttonous, filthy, lazy, and irresponsible in childbirth by producing many piglets it cannot cater for.

8. Conclusion

The paper used Sharifian’s (2015, 2017) **cultural linguistics** with its sub-branches *cultural metaphor* and *worldview metaphor* coupled with Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) conceptual metaphor, to discuss animal metaphor in Akan. We saw that Cultural Linguistics is a multidisciplinary area of research that explores the relationship between language, culture, and conceptualization. We found in the discussion that Cultural Linguistics explores human languages and language varieties to examine features that draw on cultural conceptualizations such as cultural schemas, cultural categories, and cultural conceptual metaphors, from the perspective of the theoretical framework of cultural cognition. It was therefore prudent to employ **cultural linguistics** and its tenets on Akan animal metaphor.

We have found out that since creation, the closest entities to human beings are animals. It is not surprising that animal features are used to describe human behaviour. All animals have their negative and positive attributes that can be used accordingly; however, we concentrated on the major and popular features. The paper has argued that Akans use animal metaphor to depict their indigenous knowledge, worldview, philosophy, religion and environmental knowledge about Akan fauna. As farmers, hunters and fishing folks, they came closer to animals, studied them very well, and knew their traits that could correspond with human behaviour.

The paper consulted some works by African scholars on animal metaphor, which support the notion that human behaviour could be comprehended via animals. The paper tapped data from Akan clan totems where animals are affiliated to specific clans and are therefore considered as family members. It is alluded that the clans have some common traits with the animals such as eloquence, beauty, swiftness, indefatigability, bravely, resilience, etc. Another data was sourced from interviews from four renowned Akan experts and ten (10) Akan oral literature students on some Akan proverbs, state emblems, clan totems and panegyric poetry.

The current trend is that because of the lack of in-depth knowledge of the Akan language by the current generation, most of them are not well versed in the use of animal categories even in daily conversations, idiomatic expressions and proverbs. Again, most of the animal metaphors have become fossilized and we need to educate the youth and our children on the importance of animal metaphor in our cultural linguistics. We should intensify our literacy rate in the reading of Akan literature books and in the engagement of the youth in oral literature genres like folksongs, riddles, puzzles, folktales, proverbs, rum language, speech play, poetry and others.

Animal metaphors are found in Akan folktales, folksongs, riddles and **ayan**, ‘drum language’; but research into these genres are reserved for the future.

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