

PRONOMINALIZATION IN SOME KWA LANGUAGES

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It is a common feature of most natural languages that a definite noun phrase of animate or inanimate reference is optionally replaceable by the 3rd person pronoun, singular or plural, when the definite noun phrase functions as subject, object or indirect object.

This paper is restricted to a description of the phenomenon of pronominalization of a definite inanimate noun phrase in object position in a simple transitive clause as it operates in some Ghanaian languages (i.e. Nzema, Akan, Ga, Dangme, and Ewe) of the Kwa sub-family known to the author.

In many languages of the Kwa sub-family, a definite animate noun phrase object is normally pronominalizable. Thus by the application of the optional rule of Pronominalization, the Nzema transitive clause (1a) below involving the verb stem mwu 'to see, find' becomes (1b):

- (1) a. Kofi mwu panya ne
Kofi has seen the man
- b. Kofi mwu ye
Kofi has seen him

On the other hand, a definite inanimate noun phrase object may be pronominalized after some verbs but not after others. In the illustrative pairs of transitive clauses (2-3) below, there is one and the same inanimate noun phrase object, ezukoa ne 'the money', but two different verb stems, minli 'to lose' and dia 'to receive':

- (2) a. Kofi minli ezukoa ne
Kofi has lost the money
- b. Kofi minli ye
Kofi has lost it
- (3) a. Kofi dia ezukoa ne
Kofi has received the money
- b. Kofi dia
Kofi has received it

In the above examples, (i) after the optional application of the rule of pronominalization, ye 'it' in (2b) substitutes for the definite inanimate

object noun phrase ezukoa ne 'the money' in (2a); but (ii) the same nominal object occurring in (3a) after the verb die 'to receive' is either not pronominalized or is replaced by zero pronominal object in (3b).

It should be mentioned that clauses such as (3b) above, which are related to a corresponding transitive clause like (3a), are not regarded as intransitive in comparison with their English translation equivalents which are clearly transitive.

And on the evidence of perception, such clauses as (3b), in which the 3rd person pronoun object has been deleted, are characterized by a stronger glottal stop in pre-pause position than in corresponding clauses with either a nominal object as in (3a) or a pronominal object as in (2b) in clause-final position.

The presence or absence of the 3rd person pronoun object in surface structure is accounted for by two transformational rules:

- (I) the optional rule of Pronominalization which applies to substitute the 3rd person pronoun for a definite noun phrase object; and
- (II) the obligatory rule which applies, in the case of a definite inanimate noun phrase object, to delete the resultant 3rd person pronoun object occurring after members of a certain sub-class of transitive verbs.

We shall refer to the obligatory rule, which is ordered after the rule of Pronominalization, as the 3rd Person Pronoun Object Deletion rule.

Thus with sentences (2-3) above, the optional rule of Pronominalization applies to (2a):

- (2) a. Kofi eminli ezukoa ne
Kofi has lost the money

to yield (2b):

- (2) b. Kofi eminli ye
Kofi has lost it

The operation of the obligatory Deletion rule on (2b) is, however, blocked, and sentence (2c) below is ungrammatical:

- (2) c. *Kofi aminli Ø
Kofi has lost it

We shall refer to verbs such as aminli 'to lose', which belong to the sub-class of transitive verbs after which the inanimate 3rd person pronoun object is retained, as transitive verbs which favour retention and positively specify them as [+PRONOM].

On the other hand, the rule of Pronominalization optionally applied to a string such as (3a):

- (3) a. Kofi elie szukoa ne
Kofi has received the money

to yield the intermediate string:

- (3) c. Kofi elie ye
Kofi has received it

on which the Deletion rule operates to yield the terminal string:

- (3) d. Kofi elie Ø
Kofi has received it

By way of contrast, we shall refer to verbs such as ɕie 'to receive' which belong to the sub-class of transitive verbs after which the inanimate 3rd person pronoun object is deleted as transitive verbs which favour deletion and negatively specify them as [-PRONOM].

One of the syntactic conditions for the operation of the 3rd Person Pronoun Object Deletion rule is that the 3rd person pronoun object immediately following its verb must be clause-final. Thus the Pronominalization rule operates on a string such as (4a) below involving the verb stem kpongba 'to sew':

- (4) a. Kofi kpongba tsɛɛɛ ne
Kofi has sewn the dress

to produce the intermediate string:

- (4) b. *Kofi ɛkpongba ye
Kofi has sewn it

in which the 3rd person pronoun object ye 'it', like its corresponding nominal object tsɛɛɛ ne 'the dress' in (4a), is clause-final. The Deletion rule then operates on (4b) to produce the terminal string:

- (4) c. Kofi ɛkpongba Ø
Kofi has sewn it

On the other hand, with strings such as:

- (5) a. Kofi kpongba teladee ne kenlema
Kofi has sewn the dress nicely

in which the nominal object teladee ne 'the dress' is followed by a manner adverbial kenlema 'nicely', the Pronominalization rule applies to yield:

- (5) b. Kofi ekpongba ye kenlema
Kofi has sewn it nicely

but the application of the Deletion rule is blocked because the 3rd person pronoun object, like the definite inanimate noun phrase object it substitutes for, is not clause-final, and a string such as (5c) below is ungrammatical:

- (5) c. *Kofi ekpongba \emptyset kenlema
Kofi has sewn nicely

In respect of the feature of the 3rd person pronoun object retention or deletion, two main sub-classes A and B may be set up among verb stems which may, in a transitive clause, take a definite inanimate nominal object.

Sub-Class A consists of transitive verbs which favour the retention of the 3rd person pronoun object (substituting for the definite inanimate nominal object) and are specified as [+PRONOM].

Sub-Class B, on the other hand, consists of those transitive verbs which favour the deletion of the 3rd person pronoun object and are specified as [-PRONOM].

Sub-Class A: [+PRONOM] Transitive Verbs

Two sub-sets (I and II) may be distinguished among transitive verbs of Sub-Class A.

Sub-set A. I consists of transitive verbs which only take an inanimate nominal object and favour the retention of the 3rd person pronoun object which replaces the nominal object.

Sub-set A. II, on the other hand, consists of transitive verbs which can take either an inanimate nominal object and favour the retention of its corresponding 3rd person pronoun object or an animate nominal object which, as a rule, is pronominalizable. Taking the verb stem ezake 'to spoil, destroy' as an example of Sub-set A.II transitive verbs, we may employ it with an inanimate object:

- (6) a. Kofi ezake ekponle ne
Kofi has spoiled the table
b. Kofi ezake ye
Kofi has spoiled it

and with an animate object:

- (7) a. Kofi cɛkɛ ɔ rɛ rɛalɛ nɛ
Kofi has spoiled his daughter .
- b. Kofi cɛkɛ yɛ
Kofi has spoiled her

Thus with verbs of Sub-set A.II, a transitive clause involving the 3rd person pronoun object yɛ 'him, her, it' as in (6b) and (7b) may, in isolation at least, be two-ways ambiguous as between an inanimate (6b) or an animate (7b) reference to the pronominal object. Transitive verbs of Sub-set A.II cannot, therefore, serve to distinguish between animate and inanimate nouns in the language.

In the lists of verbs supplied below, members of each sub-set are further sub-divided in respect of a combination of syntactic and semantic features.

Sub-set A, I: Members of this sub-set include:

(Ia) Ergative verbs of change of state

- | | | | |
|----------|-------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. bo | 'to break' | 9. fiti | 'to make a hole in' |
| 2. bu | 'to break' | 10. tulu | 'to untie, loosen' |
| 3. te | 'to tear' | 11. kolo | 'to melt' |
| 4. sua | 'to tear' | 12. solo | 'to make fade (of cloth)' |
| 5. wɛ | 'to finish' | 13. bondo | 'to dent' |
| 6. nu(a) | 'to extinguish' | 14. tenda | 'to make tangled (of thread)' |
| 7. kpoto | 'to make muddy
(of water)' | 15. pingbi | 'to crease' |
| 8. kpuke | 'to burst' | | |

(Ib) Ergative verbs of change of state with intransitive use

16. tenrɛ 'to straighten'
17. kpo 'to bend, make crooked'
18. kyɛ 'to bend, tilt'

(Ic) Ergative verbs of change of position

19. tu 'to remove'
20. butu 'to overturn'
21. gyinla 'to stop'
22. minli 'to lose'

Sub-set A, II: Members of this sub-set include:

(IIa) Ergative verbs of change of state

1. sɛkɛ 'to spoil, destroy'
2. yɛlɛ 'to burn, scorch'
3. ɔɔa 'to make wet'

(IIb) Activity verbs of transitional events

4. kye 'to bind, catch'
5. tone 'to sell'

(IIIc) Verbs of perception which may take a ke 'that' -clause

6. ze 'to know'
7. nwu 'to see, find'

Sub-class B: [- PRONOM] Transitive Verbs

As in the case of Sub-class A transitive verbs, two sub-sets I and II may be set up among verbs of Sub-class B.

Sub-set B.I consists of transitive verbs which only take an inanimate nominal object and favour the deletion of the 3rd person pronoun object which substitutes for the nominal object.

Sub-set B.II, on the other hand, consists of transitive verbs which can take either an inanimate nominal object and favour the deletion of its corresponding 3rd person pronoun object or an animate nominal object which is normally pronominalizable.

Transitive verbs of Sub-set B.II, unlike members of Sub-set A.II, serve to distinguish animate from inanimate nouns. Thus with the verb stem kakye 'to remember', we shall find, with an animate object:

- (8) a. Kofi kakye renya ne
Kofi remembers the man
b. Kofi kakye ye
Kofi remembers him

but with an inanimate object:

- (9) a. Kofi kakye nwora ne
Kofi remembers the story
b. Kofi kakye \emptyset
Kofi remembers it

Sub-set B.I: Members of the sub-set include:

- | | | | |
|------------|-----------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| (Ia) 1. bo | 'to weed' | 10. kpola | 'to break open
(of groundnuts)' |
| 2. do | 'to weed' | 11. so | 'to solder' |
| 3. pe | 'to pound' | 12. kpo | 'to wash (clothes)' |
| 4. si | 'to pound' | 13. kpuda | 'to wash up' |
| 5. ti | 'to grind' | 14. kpongba | 'to sew' |
| 6. to | 'to cook' | 15. wada | 'to blow' |
| 7. tondo | 'to toast' | 16. twe | 'to gnaw' |
| 8. sinzi | 'to peel' | 17. kposa | 'to chew' |
| 9. kpongbo | 'to remove
corn off cob' | | |

(Ib) Activity verbs of communication

18. kele 'to write'
19. kenga 'to read'
20. ka 'to say'

(Ic) Activity verbs of transitional events

- | | | | |
|------------|--------------------|-----------|------------------------------|
| 21. no | 'to drink' | 28. kpulu | 'to spew out' |
| 22. fe | 'to struggle for' | 29. wola | 'to pour' |
| 23. fende | 'to scatter' | 30. tafe | 'to lick' |
| 24. kponde | 'to scatter' | 31. rsle | 'to dry' |
| 25. dua | 'to sow' | 32. fula | 'to collect' |
| 26. fa | 'to take' | 33. senza | 'to change (money, clothes)' |
| 27. fili | 'to buy on credit' | | |

(Id) Activity verbs of durational events

34. fe 'to bale out water'
35. fu 'to dig (hole)'
36. sa 'to hang (rope)'
37. gya 'to parcel out'
38. nye 'to cut down'
39. tolo 'to descend'
40. tie 'to listen'

(Ie) Activity verbs of adornment which may be used ditransitively

- | | | | |
|----------|------------------------------|----------|--------------------------|
| 41. soa | 'to wear (or carry) on head' | 44. ho | 'to put on (turban)' |
| 42. keda | 'to put on (cloth)' | 45. mo | 'to put on (loin cloth)' |
| 43. kye | 'to put on (belt)' | 46. wula | 'to put on (shoes)' |

Sub-set B.II: Members of this sub-set include:

(IIa) Verbs of inert perception or cognition which may take a ke- 'that' -clause

1. kulo 'to like, love'
2. kakye 'to remember'

(IIb) Activity verbs which may be used ditransitively

3. biza 'to ask'
4. kile 'to show, point out'
5. die 'to receive, take'
6. sela 'to syringe, take enema'

(IIc) Activity verbs of transitional events

7. di 'to eat, fuck'
8. so 'to peck (at)'
9. wua 'to steal'
10. kpoda 'to separate, pacify'
11. nea 'to look at/after'
12. baka 'to wind round'
13. kakyi 'to turn over'

(IIId) Activity verbs of durational events

14. sukoa 'to learn, imitate'
15. kponde 'to look for'

We have already indicated that for the 3rd Person Pronoun Object Deletion rule to apply the 3rd person pronoun object (like the nominal object that it substitutes for) must be (a) inanimate and (b) clause-final in a transitive clause. On the basis of the above sub-classification of verbs, we can add a third possible syntactic condition. The sub-classification would seem to indicate that, generally speaking, the 3rd person pronoun object is retained after ergative verbs, whereas it is deleted after non-ergative (activity) verbs. Thus a third syntactic condition for the Deletion rule to apply is that the 3rd person pronoun object must occur after a verb which is not ergative.

At this juncture, it will be in order to explain why the Deletion rule does not apply in instances where the 3rd person pronoun object occurs after ergative verbs; or, put differently, why ergative verbs favour the retention of the 3rd person pronoun object. Lyons (1968:352) defines the term 'ergative' in the following way: "The term that is generally employed by linguists for the syntactic relationship that holds between (1) The stone moved and (3) John moved the stone is 'ergative': the subject of an intransitive verb 'becomes' the object of a corresponding transitive verb, and a new ergative subject is introduced as the 'agent' (or 'cause') of the action referred to. This suggests that a transitive sentence, like (3), may be derived syntactically from an intransitive sentence, like (1), by means of an ergative, or causative, transformation." On the basis of this definition, the explanation which is offered here is that it is a characteristic property of an ergative verb, in its possible transitive use, that it is a two-place verb, requiring a subject noun phrase, usually animate, which functions as the actor or agent responsible for the verb action, as well as an object noun phrase which functions as the goal or the 'affected' of the action referred to. With an ergative verb used transitively, then, the 3rd person pronoun object is as required as the object noun phrase which it substitutes for.

It should be mentioned that, in Nzema, the verb stems so 'to kindle, light', tukus 'to open' and buke 'to open' are the only known cases of ergative verbs

after which the 3rd person pronoun object is deleted and not retained. Thus the Pronominalization rule operates on (10a) below involving the ergative verb so 'to kindle, light':

- (10) a. Kofi so sele ne
Kofi has lit the fire

to yield the intermediate string:

- (10) b. *Kofi so ye
Kofi has lit it

on which the Deletion rule operates to yield the terminal string:

- (10) c. Kofi so \emptyset
Kofi has lit it

Similarly, (11a), involving the ergative verb buke 'to open', becomes (11b) and (11c) after the Pronominalisation rule and the Deletion rule have applied:

- (11) a. Kofi buke alenke ne
Kofi has opened the door
b. *Kofi buke ye
Kofi has opened it
c. Kofi buke \emptyset
Kofi has opened it

It would seem, then, that the deletion or retention in surface structure of the 3rd person pronoun object of inanimate reference is a feature of the particular verb stem which the pronominal object immediately follows in a transitive clause, and such features of 3rd person pronoun object retention (specified as [+PRONOM]) or deletion (specified as [-PRONOM]) should be indicated in the lexicon as part of the characteristic properties of verbs capable of occurring in a transitive clause.

It should be noted that the Akan equivalents so 'to kindle, light' and bue¹ 'to open' have the same property; that is, the 3rd person pronoun object occurring after them is deleted. Thus by the application of the Pronominalization rule and the Deletion rule, (12a) involving bue 'to open' becomes

1 In Nzema as well as in Akan, this verb may take either an animate (e.g. Nzema: Kofi buke panya ne/Akan: Kofi buke banyin no 'Kofi has opened the man') or an inanimate nominal object. In both languages, the verb is truly ergative only with an inanimate nominal object.

(12b) and (12c):

- (12) a. Kofi abue abow no
Kofi has opened the door
- b. *Kofi abue no
Kofi has opened it
- c. Kofi abue \emptyset
Kofi has opened it

The phenomenon of the retention or deletion of the 3rd person pronoun object described above with particular reference to Nzema occurs, under the same set of syntactic conditions, in other languages of the Kwa sub-family. Of the southern Ghanaian languages of the sub-family, it occurs among the Western (Nzema),² Central (Akan (Twi - Fante)), and Eastern (e.g. GR) members. Dangme and Ewe, the other members of Eastern Ghanaian Kwa, are alike in not exhibiting the feature. Its occurrence in the Akwapim Twi dialect of Akan was probably first reported on by Riis (1854:55,85):

"No generally denotes the particular person spoken of, in contradistinction to the person speaking or spoken to; it is accordingly in this character a personal pronoun and has been mentioned among the pronouns of this class ... The reference to an inanimate thing, corresponding with the English it, it can only express as the object of a sentence, and is then very frequently left out."

"When the object of a transitive verb is an individual person or thing, which has been mentioned just before, it is denoted in English merely by a pronoun, e.g. A book is lying on the table, go and fetch it. The same is the case in Oji (i.e. Twi) when the object is a person, e.g. We nnuu nnya ombai, ko fra no. 'Your brother is not come yet, go and fetch him'; but if it is a thing, the pronoun is generally left out, e.g. Osram ayera, miffo bio. 'The moon has vanished, I see (it) no more' ... OdaM no ayɛ go, yerebɛbu. 'This house is going to decay, we will break (it) down'"

2 L. A. Boadi (1976:3-5) observes that "when we come to consider the Western members of the larger family covering Western Ghana and the Eastern border of the Ivory Coast, we find that the rule of Pron-3-Object-Del is not part of their synchronic grammars." The Western members of the larger family in Ghana include the closely-related languages of Nzema, Ahanta, Aowin, and Sefwi. As has been convincingly shown, the deletion or retention of the 3rd person pronoun object is a feature of the grammar of Nzema and, I should think, also of the grammars of Ahanta, Aowin and Sefwi. Of the two verbs, nuu 'to see' and die 'to receive', which occur in Boadi's illustrative sentences, the first favours the retention of the 3rd person pronoun object whereas the second favours its deletion, with the result that his Nzema example (13a) mi niele ezukwa ne 'I received the money' + (13b) mi niele ye 'I received it' is ungrammatical.

And Christaller (1875, 1964:114), who was influenced by his fellow missionary of the Basel Mission Society, reported on the phenomenon as follows:

"When the object is a person or animal that has been mentioned just before, it is, as in English, denoted by a pronoun. E.g. Oguñā ne atāw, kōkyerē no, 'the sheep has broken loose, go catch it. But when the object is an inanimate thing, the pronoun is usually omitted. E.g. Wōdā nām no beye dā? MānSa madf, 'what will you do with the meat? I will cook (it and) eat (it).'"

A more accurate description of the phenomenon in the Fante dialect of Akan was provided by Brown (1913:60):

"The personal pronoun, third person, neuter gender, objective case, referring to inanimate things, is only implied, not expressed. Oye, 'take' (it); Twirow, 'scratch' (it); So hwa, 'taste' (it). Obs. When, however, the verb indicates a change in the position or condition of the object, the Pronoun is usually expressed, such as Dun, 'to extinguish'; Tē, 'to place on its bottom'; Butuw, 'to overturn'; Tsin, 'to straighten'; Kyia, 'to make crooked'; Sakyir, 'to change'; Sikyew or Se 'to spoil'; Buwa, 'to whiten'; Biri, 'to blacken'; Pun or Kun, 'to bend'; Mun, 'to lessen or make narrow'; Yiv, 'to lose'; Gyina, 'to stay or make steady'; Sum, 'to push', and a few others".

Among languages of the sub-family, a verb stem in one language may have the same property as its equivalents in the other languages in favouring the retention or deletion of the 3rd person pronoun object. Thus, for example, the Nzema ergative verb sake 'to spoil, destroy' favours the retention of the 3rd person pronoun object like its equivalents in Akan see and in GE fite:

- Nzema: (13) a. Kofi sɛkɛ sɛkɛ ne
Kofi has spoiled the box
- b. Kofi sɛkɛ ɛ
Kofi has spoiled it
- Akan: (14) a. Kofi asɛ asɛka no
Kofi has spoiled the box
- b. Kofi asɛ no
Kofi has spoiled it
- GE:³ (15) a. Kofi efite adɛka ɛs
Kofi has spoiled the box
- b. Kofi efite ɛs
Kofi has spoiled it

3 I am indebted to Messrs. J. K. Amoyaw and B. M. Tetteh for the data on GE.

Similarly, the Nzema ergative verb kolo 'to melt', like its equivalents nan in Akan and sele in GE, favours retention:

- Nzema: (16) a. Kofi sholo ngu ne
Kofi has melted the shea butter
b. Kofi sholo ye
Kofi has melted it
- Akan: (17) a. Kofi anan nku no
Kofi has melted the shea butter
b. Kofi anan no
Kofi has melted it
- GE: (18) a. Kofi esele nku le
Kofi has melted the shea butter
b. Kofi esele le
Kofi has melted it

On the other hand, the Nzema verb stem wus 'to steal' and its equivalents wis in Akan and dsu in GE are alike in favouring the deletion of the 3rd person pronoun object, as in the following pairs of examples:

- Nzema: (19) a. Kofi ewus sarve ne
Kofi has stolen the key
b. Kofi ewus \emptyset
Kofi has stolen it
- Akan: (20) a. Kofi swia safee no
Kofi has stolen the key
b. Kofi swia \emptyset
Kofi has stolen it
- GE: (21) a. Kofi edsu samfle le
Kofi has stolen the key
b. Kofi edsu \emptyset
Kofi has stolen it

When, however, the nominal object is followed by, for example, a time adverbial such as Nzema anloma, Akan ndeda and GE nye 'yesterday', the 3rd Person Pronoun Object Deletion rule is blocked and the pronominal object substituting for the nominal object is retained and not deleted:

- Nzema: (22) a. Kofi wualé ye anloma
Kofi stole it yesterday

Akan: b. Kofi wian^h no ndeda
Kofi stole it yesterday

GE: c. Kofi dzu lg nye
Kofi stole it yesterday

- 4 Akan (e.g. Fante) orthography indicates the presence or absence of the object in a transitive clause (and also of the locative adjunct in a semi-transitive clause) with particular reference to clauses in the past tense of affirmative polarity as well as those in the perfect tense of negative polarity. In the illustrative clauses, which involve the different verbs hyew 'to burn', hu 'to break (down)'; ton 'to sell', gye 'to receive' but the same nominal object dan no 'the house', the (a) examples are perfect tense negative. When a nominal or pronominal object is present, the vowel letter in the final or only syllable of the verb word is doubled, whether

(a) the syllable ends in a consonant letter as in hyew 'to burn':
(1) a. Kofi hyeww dan no / no
Kofi burnt the house / it

b. Kofi nhyesew no
Kofi has not burnt it

or (b) the syllable ends in a vowel letter as in bu 'to break (down)':

(2) a. Kofi bun dan no / no
Kofi broke the house / it down)

b. Kofi nabun no
Kofi has not broken it down

When, however, the pronominal object is absent or deleted, the vowel letters ee / ii or e / i (depending in either case on the vowel harmony) are suffixed to the verb. ee / ii are suffixed in the case of verbs whose final or only syllable ends in a consonant letter, for example ton 'to sell':

(3) a. Kofi tonnee Ø
Kofi sold it

b. Kofi ntonee Ø
Kofi has not sold it

e / i is suffixed in the case of verbs whose final or only syllable ends in a vowel letter, for example gye 'to receive':

(4) a. Kofi gyee Ø
Kofi received it

b. Kofi nngyee Ø
Kofi has not received it

It should be mentioned that the transitive verb hu 'to see, find', which may be regarded as irregular, is realized as hun when a nominal object is present:

(5) a. Kofi hun dan no
Kofi found the house

b. Kofi nahun dan no
Kofi has not found the house

On the other hand, when the pronominal object is absent or deleted, the double vowel letters ii are suffixed to the verbal form hun (i.e. in this instance, the verb behaves like a regular verb such as ton 'to sell', whose final or only syllable ends in a consonant letter):

(6) a. Kofi hunii Ø
Kofi found it

b. Kofi nahunii Ø
Kofi has not found it

As already mentioned, Dangme and Ewe do not exhibit the feature under examination, and sentences like the following, which parallel (16a-b) above, occur regularly in both languages:

- Dangme:⁵ (23) a. Kofi sre nyenu 3
Kofi has melted the shea butter
b. Kofi sre le
Kofi has melted it
- Ewe:⁶ (24) a. Kofi lolo yokumi la
Kofi has melted the shea butter
b. Kofi loloe
Kofi has melted it

Similarly, sentences such as those below, which parallel (19a-b) above, occur regularly in both Dangme and Ewe:

- Dangme: (25) a. Kofi dzu sika a
Kofi has stolen the money
b. Kofi dzu le
Kofi has stolen it
- Ewe: (26) a. Kofi fi ga la
Kofi has stolen the money
b. Kofi fi
Kofi has stolen it

There are, however, instances in the languages exhibiting the feature where a verb stem in one language of the sub-family may favour the retention of the 3rd person pronoun object, whereas its equivalent in another language may behave differently in favouring the deletion of the pronominal object. Thus the Nzema verb stems tone 'to sell' and nu 'to find' favour the retention of the 3rd person pronoun object, as the following sentences exemplify:

- Nzema: (27) a. Kofi edone sua ne
Kofi has sold the house
b. Kofi edone ye
Kofi has sold it
- and (28) a. Kofi enwu sanve ne
Kofi has found the key
b. Kofi enwu ye
Kofi has found it

5 I am indebted to Messrs A. K. Quarcoo, E. O. Apronti and B. M. Tetteh for the data on Dangme.

6 I am indebted to Mr. E. Y. Egblewogbe for the data on Ewe.

but their Akan equivalents: ton 'to sell' and hu 'to find', behave differently in favouring the deletion of their 3rd person pronoun object:

- Akan: (29) a. Kofi aton dan no
Kofi has sold the house
- b. Kofi aton \emptyset
Kofi has sold it
- and (30) a. Kofi ahu safee no
Kofi has found the key
- b. Kofi ahu \emptyset
Kofi has found it

Similarly, their GE equivalents favour the deletion of 3rd person pronoun object, as in:

- GE: (31) a. Kofi eh5 ɔia le
Kofi sold the house
- b. Kofi eh5 \emptyset
Kofi has sold it
- and (32) a. Kofi ena nanfle le
Kofi has found the key
- b. Kofi ena \emptyset
Kofi has found it

Conclusion

Enough examples have been provided to indicate that the phenomenon of the retention or deletion of the inanimate 3rd person pronoun object occurring in clause-final position in a transitive clause occurs, under the same set of syntactic conditions, in Nzema, Akan (Twi - Fante) and GE and possibly in many other languages of the Kwa sub-family. Boadi (1976:9) hypothesises that "the rule (of Pronoun-3-Object-Del) was not originally part of Akan grammar but borrowed from GE by some Akan dialects". My own hunch is that the retention or deletion of the 3rd person pronoun object must have been a feature of the grammar of Proto-Kwa which has been retained in some present-day Kwa languages, but not in others. I suggest that this feature of the retention of the pronominal object, positively specified as [+PRONOM], or its deletion, negatively specified as [-PRONOM], should be indicated in the lexicon of the various languages of the sub-family which exhibit it as part of the characteristic properties of their transitive verbs, and that the criteria employed in sub-classifying such verbs in Nzema may be applicable to the other languages of the sub-family.

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