MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX

Noun

Most Akan nominals consist of a stem with a prefix. The stem is neutral in the sense that it is not coded for function. Noun-forming prefixes may be oral: *a, ɛ, e, ɔ, o*; or nasal: (*a*)*m/n/ŋ*.

ɔ and *o* are used to form nouns denoting animates: *o.nipa* 'man', *ɔ.sebɔ́* 'leopard', and exceptionally for some inanimates: *ɔ.bó* 'stone', *o.sú* 'rain'; also, certain abstract nouns: *ɔ.kɔ́m* 'hunger'.

a- forms animates: *a.gyá* 'father'; inanimates: *a.kyené* 'drum'; abstracts: *à.bóro* 'injury'. The homorganic nasal, sometimes preceded by *a-*, forms nouns denoting collectives and substances: *n.sú* 'water', *ŋ.ŋó* 'oil', *m.fɔ́té* 'termites', *nna < n.da* 'sleep'.

Suffixes may be added: *didi* 'to eat', *a.didi.i* 'eating place'. *-ni* following the stem X indicates 'one who does/suffers X': *ohĩá* 'poverty', *ohĩá.ní* 'poor man'.

COMPOUNDS

Noun + adjective/noun: e.g. *ade.bòné* 'bad (*bòné*) thing (*a.dé*)' = 'evil', which can also be expressed by *ɛbòné* (note change in tonal pattern); *sika.guá* 'gold(en) stool' (enshrining and symbolizing the soul of the Ashanti people).

Compounds containing three components plus prefix are frequent: *o.fie.asétrǎ.sɛm* literally 'home – life – matters' = 'the affairs of this life'.

Example of word-building: base *yaré* 'to be sick':

ɔ.yàré 'sickness'
ɔ.yaré.dɔ́m 'epidemic'
ɔ.yaré.fó 'sick person'
ɔ.yare.súsow 'to be an invalid'
a.yare.sá 'the act, art of healing'
a.yare.sá.bèa 'hospital' (*bèa* is a locative marker)
a.yare.sá.de 'fee for curing a disease'
ɔ.yare.sá.fò 'doctor'

Nouns may also be expressed as construct forms, i.e. noun + annexed noun; e.g. from *ɔ.héne* 'king' and *o.fi* 'house' Akuapem makes *ahem.fi* 'king's house' = 'palace'. Here, Akan has (*Asante*).*héne.fié* 'the king of Ashanti's palace'. In a compound AB, A may retain its isolate tone, while B takes the annexed nominal tone(s).

The normal possessive order in Akan is possessor–possessed: *Ghánà mãn* 'the country of Ghana'. A pronominal link marked for person may be inserted: *abofára nó nhómã* 'the child (his) book'.

This word order – noun plus annexed noun – is reversed in compounds involving the word *kwa < akoá* 'slave': *kwà.safo* 'belonging to the community'. In boys' names the *kwa* component is followed by a truncated version of the name of the jinn presiding over the relevant day of the week: Ayísi over the first day, Adwó over the second. Thus a boy born on the first day of the week is called Kwàsí, on the second day Kwàdwó, and so on. Corresponding female names are Akosuwa, Adwowa. See Christaller 1933: 599 for a full list. As Christaller points out, the departure from normal Akan (Kwa) construct order, and the presence of feminine inflection, suggest that these forms originate in a non-Kwa sociolinguistic milieu.

CASE

Case is reflected in the prevailing SVO order: *ɔ.frɛ̀ nɔ̀* 'he (ɔ) calls him (nɔ̀)'. Indirect object precedes direct object:

ɔ.mã̀à me akutù 'he gave (*ɔ.mã̀à*) to-me (*me*) an orange (*akutù*)'
ɔ.mã́ no biribí 'he gave him something'

Action which many languages express by means of an instrumental case is expressed in Akan as the product of two verbs, e.g.

ɔ.de pomá bɔɔ̀ no 'he took stick struck him', i.e. 'he struck him with a stick' (*de* 'take', *pomá* 'stick', *bɔ* 'strike')
ɔ.de siká yɛɛ̀ kaá 'he took gold made ring', i.e. 'he made a ring from gold' (*siká* 'gold', *kaá* 'ring')

There are several ways of making a singular noun plural. *-nṍm* is a pluralizing suffix: *ɔyére* 'wife', pl. *ɔyérenṍm*.

Pluralizing prefixes:

m-: *ɔba* 'child', pl. *mma*;
a-: *ɔkérãmã̃ñ* 'dog', pl. *akérãmã̃ñ*;
n-: *ɛdá* 'day', pl. *nná*.

Some plurals are suppletive: *osáni* 'warrior', pl. *asáfoɔ*.

Adjective

As attribute, adjective follows noun, and is often reduplicated: *mmára fófòro pii* 'many new laws' (*mmára* 'law', *fófòro* 'new'); *búùku kétewaa tuntuḿ* 'a small black book' (*tuntuḿ* 'dark in colour').

Exceptionally, some adjectives make a plural form.

Comparative is made with *sẽñ*: *eyé duru* 'it is heavy', *eyé duru sẽñ búùku nő* 'It is heavier than the book.'

Pronoun

Emphatic personal independent + subject markers (here + copula):

	Singular		Plural	
	Independent	Subject marker	Independent	Subject marker
1	mẽ	mẽyɛ	yέŋ	yɛyɛ
2	wó	wóyè	mő	mőyè
3	ɔnő	ɔyɛ	wɔ́ŋ	wɔyɛ
impersonal	ɛnő	ɛyɛ	ɛnő	ɛyɛ

The objective forms: *mẽ, wo, nõ* are reduced as verbal suffixes to *-ṁ, -ẁ, -ṅ.*

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN
(ɛ)há 'this/here'; *(ɛ)hó* 'that/there'. *Eyí* is a demonstrative adjective: *nhőmã yí* 'this book'.

INTERROGATIVE PRONOUN
ɛhẽna 'who?'

RELATIVE PRONOUN
nea, áà; ɔyaresáfóɔ áà ɔ́ɔkɔ 'the doctor who is going'

Verb

The stem is formally immutable, but may be reduplicated. Also, Akan euphony requires initial *b-* to mutate to *m-* when in contact with the negating element *-m-*: e.g. *bisa* 'to ask', *mmisá* 'do not ask'. Similarly in the perfect tense: *wammisá* 'he has not asked'.

Subject markers prefixed to stem: *hu(nu)* 'to see', present tense:

	Singular	Plural
1	mĭhu	yehũ
2	wúhũ	mŭhũ
3	ohũ	wohũ

Negated by a low-tone nasal prefixed to stem: *mẽte Twíì* 'I speak Twi'; *mẽnté Twíì* 'I don't speak Twi'.

Prefixed pronominal object: *mẽte aséɛ* 'I understand' (*aséɛ* 'meaning'), e.g.:

mẽte	wásè	I understand	you	ɔte	mase	he understands	me
	nasè		him		wase		you
	másè		you (pl.)		wɔn ase		them

TENSE AND MOOD MARKERS

Progressive tense: the pronominal vowel is lengthened: *mẽkǎ* 'I speak': /*mẽekã*/ 'I'm speaking' (lengthening not notated in script).

Future positive: prefix *bɛ́*: *wóbɛko* 'you will go' (+ tonal changes).

Immediate future: with *kɔ* 'to go': (+ lengthening of vowel as in progressive): *mẽekɔtɔ́ nsuomnám* 'I'm going to buy fish' (*tɔ* 'to buy').

Past tense: lengthening or gemination of final vowel: -*y* is added for intransitives: *mẽbaay* 'I came'.

Perfect: *a*- prefix + specific tonal pattern + contractions. For example, *kɔ* 'to go':

	Singular	Plural
1	makɔ	yɛakɔ
2	woakɔ	moakɔ
3	wakɔ	wɔakɔ

The *past* negative is the *perfect* affirmative + low-tone nasal before stem; the *perfect* negative is the *past* affirmative + low-tone nasal before stem: e.g. *mẽŋkɔɔ* 'I haven't gone'; *mẽŋkóhũù* 'I haven't gone to see it'; *minnii* 'I haven't eaten'; *onnii* 'he hasn't eaten'; *wonnii* 'they haven't eaten'.

CAUSATIVE

ma + low-tone nasal prefix on verb: *mã nõ ŋkò* 'have him go!'

SUBJUNCTIVE

Low-tone nasal prefix + high tone on verb.

Stem + low tones; the plural prefix is *mɔ̃n-* + high tones: *mɔ̃nkasa* 'would you please talk'.

CONSECUTIVE FORM
a- prefix: e.g. with *tumí* 'to be able', *mĩtumí àkɔ̀* 'I can go'.

THE VERB IN THE AKUAPEM LITERARY LANGUAGE (SUMMARY OF TENSE FORMS)

Present: bare stem with prefixed personal marker: *ɔ́.fà* 'he takes', negated by nasal infix plus tonal change: *ɔ.m.fà* 'he doesn't take'.

Stative: stem changes tone; *-e* or *-i* may be suffixed: *sɔ̀* 'large': *ɔ̀.sõ* 'he is large', negated by nasal infix: *ɔ.n.sɔ̃́* 'he is not large'.

Preterite: stem has high tone; *-e/-i* suffix or gemination of final: *ɔ.fá.è* 'he took it', negative: *ɔ.m.fá.è.*

Perfect: *a-* is prefixed: *ɔ.a.fa > wá.fà* 'he has taken', negative: *wa.m.fá.*

Progressive: *re-* prefix: *ɔ.ré.fà* 'he is taking', negative: *ɔ́.re.ṁ.fá.*

Future I (unspecified): *bɛ-* prefix: *ɔ̀.bɛ́.fa* 'he will take', negative: *ɔ̀.mṁ.fá*, where *-mm-* represents coalescence of stem initial with nasal infix.

Future II (immediate): *re-* + *bɛ-* prefixes: *ɔ.re.bɛ.fa* 'he will take right now', negative: *ɔ.re.ṁm ɛ.fá.*

Resultative: (Christaller calls this tense 'consecutive') *a-* prefix as in perfect, but tone changes: (*na*) *wafá* 'that he may/should/might take' (cf. perfect *wáfà*), negative: *wa.m.fá.*

Imperative I bare stem: *fá* 'take', negative: *m.fá* (2nd person only)

Imperative II: *ɔ̀mfa* 'he is to take' (the *-m-* here is not the negative marker).

Postpositions

Nouns are used to define spatial relationships: e.g. *ɛso* 'upper part (of sth.)', *ɔpɔ́ŋ nɔ̃́ só* 'on the table('s top)'; *ase* 'lower part', *ɔ.pón* (*no*) *ase* 'under a/the table'; *emu* 'interior', *a.dáká no mù* 'in the box'; *akyi* 'back', *ɔ.dáŋ akyì* 'behind the house'.

Word order

Any part of speech can be stressed by being promoted to initial position, and additionally stressed, if a noun, by the topicalizer *déɛ*. SVO is normal.