On institutional frames in Akie: A Discourse Grammar approach
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Abstract
The paper is based on recent field research carried out by the authors among the Akie, a traditional hunter-gatherer society speaking a language belonging to the Southern branch of the Nilotic family. The language, spoken in the Maasai Steppe of north-central Tanzania, is threatened by extinction. As all the research of the last decades on Construction Grammar has demonstrated, language knowledge is highly constrained with regard to how morphosyntactic and semantic structures are composed. Building on the one hand on findings made in research on what is variously referred to as scripts or frames, and on the other hand on the model of Discourse Grammar, the present paper is concerned with socio-cultural institutions and the implications they have for structuring linguistic knowledge. Central to the paper is the notion of frame marker and the significance it has for understanding such institutions.

1 Introduction
When we embarked on field research in Gitu and Kibirashi of north-central Tanzania on the documentation of the Southern Nilotic language Akie in January, 2013, our Akie informants would kindly point out that they were not entirely satisfied with the way we approached the analysis of their language. We were primarily aiming at studying regularities underlying language use and the compositionality of language structure, but they wanted us to focus on what they thought was more at the core of speech, namely on how language serves as a tool of social and cultural exchange. To this end they tried to introduce us to frequently used patterns of linguistic interaction, ritualized forms of social exchange such as greetings and interjective expressions, etc. indirectly making it clear to us in a gentle way that asking for grammatical paradigms and syntactic relations was something that would fall out naturally once we had familiarized ourselves appropriately with what language use was about.

The present paper is devoted to one aspect of linguistic interaction that the Akie consider to be relevant to understanding essential forms of their socio-cultural behavior. The paper relies on the framework of Discourse Grammar an outline of which is presented in Section 2.
The Akie-speaking people inhabit mainly the Kilindi District of Tanga Region and the Kiteto and Simanjiro Districts of Manyara Region of north-central Tanzania between Handeni to the east and Kibaya and Simanjiro to the west. They seem to have been living in this area before all their neighbors, such as the Maasai or Nguu (Ngulu), arrived (Kaare 1996; Bakken 2004: 38ff.; Schöperle 2011). The language is fairly homogeneous, and there do not appear to be any dialects or other noticeable linguistic cleavages, even if phonetic variation among speakers is quite pronounced. The language is not used in writing.

The Akie call themselves akie (singular akiánte).1 As for the number of Akie speakers, Sommer (1992: 305) mentions a figure of less than 1000 speakers, and Brenzinger (2007: 199) a figure of 50 speakers, both classifying it as a seriously or critically endangered language. According to our own estimate, it is presumably less than 200 people who still speak Akie.

The Akie are known in Tanzania as (N)dorobo, a term originating from the Maasai noun ol-tórobóni (sg.), il-tórobo (pl.) ‘people without cattle, poor people’. The term, also applied to other traditional hunter-gatherer groups in the area, such as Kisankare (kisankáre), Kinyalog’ate (kinalog’áte), and the Cushitic language Aasá (Áasax, Aramaní, Aramanik), clearly having derogatory connotations but used by the Akie people themselves vis-à-vis other ethnic groups.

Earlier information about Akie falls under the rubric of research on “Ndorobo”, “Nderobo”, “Dorobo”, or Móisiro (Maguire 1948; Maghimbi 2005; Legère 1992; 2002; 2006; 2012; Heine et al. 2014a). The only readily available linguistic material stems from Rottland (Rottland 1982). What Rottland’s work demonstrates beyond reasonable doubt is that Akie is a language closely related to the cluster of Kalenjin languages spoken in Kenya, Northern Tanzania, and Southeastern Uganda, including the Kenyan traditional hunter-gatherer communities commonly referred to as Okiek. The Akie are, however, essentially unaware of this relationship;2 there are no contacts of any kind with their linguistic relatives in Kenya and Uganda, or in Tanzania.

Being a member of the Kalenjin cluster, Akie belongs to the Southern Nilotic branch of the Nilotic family (Rottland 1982). The latter has been classified as belonging to the Eastern Sudanic branch of the Nilo-Saharan phylum (Greenberg 1963).

2 On Discourse Grammar
Discourse Grammar, as proposed in Kaltenböck et al. (2011) and Heine et al. (2013), is based on the assumption that there are two domains of discourse organization that need to be distinguished,
referred to respectively as Sentence Grammar and Thetical Grammar,\(^3\) for neurolinguistic correlates of this distinction, see Heine et al. (2014b; 2015).

Discourse Grammar, as understood here, is composed of all the linguistic resources that are available for constructing spoken or written (or signed) texts. Sentence Grammar is well documented; it has been the main or the only subject of theories of mainstream linguistics. It is organized in terms of parts of speech or constituent types such as sentences, clauses, phrases, words, and morphemes, plus the syntactic and morphological machinery to relate constituents to one another. Thetical Grammar consists of a catalog of theticals, that is, formulae and constructions as well as the ability to design new theticals and deploy them for structuring discourse.

The main categories of theticals distinguished so far are (a) conceptual theticals (e.g., discourse markers, such as *well*, *so*, *if you will*, comment clauses, e.g. *I think*, *you know*, etc., formulae of social exchange (*Goodbye*, *please*, etc.), vocatives (*Peter!*, *Sir!*), and interjections (*hey*, *oh*, *wow*, etc.). Theticals have been defined and discussed in a number of different ways, but most authors converge on portraying them as "non-syntactic" *phenomena*, that is, as not being constituents of a sentence. They differ from Sentence Grammar units in a principled way, showing most or all of the properties listed in (1).

(1) Properties of theticals (Kaltenböck et al. 2011: 853)

a. They are syntactically independent, that is, unintegrated.
b. They are typically set off prosodically from the rest of an utterance.
c. Their meaning is non-restrictive.
d. They tend to be positionally mobile.
e. Their internal structure is built on principles of Sentence Grammar but can be "elliptic".

The two domains of Discourse Grammar differ in their semantic-pragmatic scope potential. Whereas the units of Sentence Grammar units have scope over the sentence or some constituent of it, theticals have been described as "meta-textual" or "meta-communicative", and their scope typically extends beyond the sentence over the *situation of discourse* (Kaltenböck et al. 2011: 861; Heine et al. 2013, Section 2.2). The situation of discourse consists of a network of interlocking components, namely the ones listed in (2).

(2) Components of the situation of discourse (Kaltenböck et al. 2011: 861)

Text organization
Source of information
Attitudes of the speaker
Speaker-hearer interaction

\(^3\) The term "thetical" is a back-formation of "parenthetical" (see Heine et al. 2013 for discussion).
Discourse setting

World knowledge

The present paper is restricted to one of these components, namely the discourse setting. Furthermore, we will be restricted to one specific kind of discourse setting, namely one that we propose to call institutional frames.

3 Institutional frames
3.1 Discourse setting, institutional frame and frame marker
The component of discourse setting (König et al. 2015, Section 4.1; Kaltenböck et al. 2011: 862) relates to the human and physical environment in which linguistic discourse takes place. It concerns in particular the following factors:

(a) General setting (e.g., the location, time and function of the discourse event)
(b) Participant setting (the nature of and role relation between interlocutors and other participants in the discourse)
(c) Socio-cultural institution
(d) Medium of communication (spoken, written, or signed discourse)
(e) Genre (conversational style, narrative, procedural text, etc.)
(f) Co(n)text (the knowledge that interlocutors are assumed to have or share on the basis of what was said or written earlier)

Institutional frames (IFs) concern (c), that is, socio-cultural institutions recognized by members of the society as distinct forms of recurrent social, cultural, economic, or other interaction for specific purposes. Such purposes can relate to communication within the family or the neighborhood, to religion, education, the context of work, restaurant visits, recreative activities (such as dancing, singing, or sports), etc.

IFs relate to what has been described with terms such as (knowledge) schemas, frames, or scripts (cf. Goffman 1974; Minsky 1975; Frake 1977; Tannen 1993: 14-21; Wierzbicka 1997; Goddard 2005: 227-237 on cultural scripts).4 IFs are similar to the cognitive frames distinguished by Fillmore and Baker (2015: 792-3), who are concerned with the study of how, as a part of our knowledge of a language, we associate linguistic forms with frames, that is, cognitive structures that largely determine the process (and the result) of interpreting those forms.

4 Nevertheless, institutional frames must not be confused with cultural scripts, which are hypotheses about culture-specific attitudes, assumptions, or norms spelt out in terms of a set of meta-linguistically defined semantic primes (cf. Goddard 2005: 230).
IFs concern, on the one hand, the expectations that people have on the basis of a body of regular experiences associated with a given socio-cultural institution. On the other hand, IFs also concern language knowledge and discourse processing. Once reference is made to some IF, this is likely to activate linguistic conventions associated with that IF. These conventions can take a range of different forms. They may consist of single lexical items or complex pieces of text, and they may be fixed or variable compositionally, and they may be expected or preferred expressions. And each these conventions activate each a specific body of institution-specific experiences and knowledge. Most, though not all of them are theticals, and our interest here is exclusively with these, which we will refer to as frame markers. Once a frame marker is produced, this tends to evoke salient features commonly associated with the institution concerned.

There is a wealth of Akie theticals whose primary function is that of frame markers, even if their use may not entirely be restricted to one IF. Use of the theticals to be discussed in the following sections therefore enables the hearer or others exposed to that part of discourse to activate the pool of shared expectations associated with the frame concerned. For example, if an Akie utters the frame marker ettō, this is likely to activate the IF of a greeting ritual between two unrelated men belonging to the same age-set, where the use of ettō triggers the response wō plus a range of other features of frame-specific behavior. Furthermore, use of ettō implies that the two men have not seen each other for a day or longer and that the speaker is prepared to interact with the hearer. Accordingly, ettō is interpreted as a frame marker of one subtype of the IF of greeting rituals.

Thus, knowing that some particular IF is involved allows not only for predictions on discourse options but also on sociolinguistic behavior. For example, hunting and collecting honey are exclusively the domain of the male population. Accordingly, using frame markers such as the ones to be discussed in Sections 3.3 and 3.4 allow one to predict with some degree of probability that the speaker belongs to one specific segment of Akie society, namely the adult male population— that is, these frame markers are a characteristic of men's speech.

An IF can be based on any of the factors or set of the factors shaping discourse settings that were listed at the beginning of this section. In the present section we will, by way of illustration, briefly look at three discourse settings suggestive of institutional frames that are salient in Akie culture. We are restricted to a few linguistic manifestations of frames, and more narrowly to thetical expressions signaling the presence of a given frame, that is, to frame markers. A comprehensive analysis of the

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5 This position is in accordance with that maintained in the framework of Discourse Grammar (Kaltenböck et al. 2011; Heine et al. 2013), according to which the analysis of discourse structure simultaneously needs to take care of both an inherited knowledge structure and a manipulation of this structure, where the latter may entail a gradual modification of the former. To be sure, these two factors must be conceptually distinguished, as is in fact done in work on frames or scripts, where the former concerns what tends to be called “(knowledge) schemas” and the latter “(interactive) frames” (Tannen 1993: 59-63). Nevertheless, discourse analysis would be incomplete if reduced to only one of the two; what is needed, rather, is an understanding of the nature of interaction between the two.
frames is urgently needed for a more comprehensive understanding of both Akie culture and language use. The first IF is that of ancestor worship (3.2), while the remaining two concern the two foci of traditional economy, namely honey collecting (3.3) and hunting (3.4).

3.2 Communicating with the ancestors

One form of social exchange, one that is central to Akie culture, concerns the communication with the *asǐswe*, the ancestors. That this is a distinct IF is suggested by the fact there are certain times and rituals dedicated and certain forms of behavior expected for this purpose. The *asǐswe* (sg. *asǐswante*) are a constant part of Akie life. When one’s father or mother has died, s/he turns into an *asǐswante*, meaning that s/he is always watching you -- as far away as you may be. One cannot escape from them, everything one does must be shared with the *asǐswe*. Going to town to have a drink in a bar does not help. The *asǐswe* are already there, waiting for their share.

The Akie, therefore, communicate with them at all times. They have blessing ceremonies for them once a year, even if the *asǐswe* keep complaining that this is not enough urging the people to have a ceremony at least every five months.

The *asǐswe*’s main complaint is that they are hungry, that is, they need *kuũni* (beer). In order not to be hit by accidents or death, people practice blessing rituals on all occasions especially when something unexpected has happened or one intends to travel. Another complaint of the *asǐswe* is that the Akie are rapidly discarding their traditional culture in favor of a *puuni* (Maasai) or a *meũye* (“Swahili”) life style.

Speakers dispose of a wide range of frame markers specifically for communicating with the *asǐswe*; we are restricted here, by way of illustration, to a few frame markers. The first consists of the following text piece, which is likely to activate the institutional frame of the Blessing the Hunting Weapons ceremony – it is unlikely to be uttered in any other discourse setting (theticals are printed in bold throughout the paper):

```
tóooró  ṣpáipai  sëkeear  i  kóon-ćeec  i
```

pee.

water.A

‘God, help us! Sekeeri, give us water!’ (1/16)\(^6\)

And this piece also shows the extensive use made by theticals when communicating with the *asǐswe* (Sekeeri is a particularly influential ancestor). The piece consists entirely of theticals. There

\(^6\) This abbreviation refers to our collection of 21 texts, that is, "(1/16)" stands for Text 1, line 16.
are two vocatives (torooró and sekeeri): one discourse marker (ɬ), and two imperatives (Ipáipai, kóón-eech).

God (tóroreita, here addressed in the plural form torooró) is important, but more important are the asíswe. They are here represented by Sekeeri even though people are well aware that addressing just one of the ancestors could be a mistake; rather, one should address them by mentioning all their names. Missing one name might mean that the ancestor concerned will be annoyed and send a punishment.

The above piece is frequently followed by another, fairly complex frame marker consisting of the expression ɬyumayumúun kēên (commonly reduced to ɬyumiún kēên):

ó puaan ó yumayumúun kēên.
2.PL come.PL.IMP 2.PL gather.VEN.IMP REFL

‘Come you all and be together with us!’

The frame marker ɬyumayumúun kēên is a recurrent text piece that has features of a non-compositional, frozen thetical. But it also has a compositional non-theitical counterpart, as in the following text example where the reflexive/reciprocal marker kēên is separated from the verb by the relative clause marker nāā:

kee ley hm̥ ɬ yum-a-yum-u-n
1.PL say DM 2.PL- gather.S- VEN- IMP

nāā kēên hm̥ áko kîkêko
REL REFL DM COLL.A Kikeko

‘We say, you should gather all together, the associates of Kikeko.’ (1/64)

The role of the ancestors in this IF is twofold. On the one hand, the ancestors are worshipped for the power they have over the living. On the other hand, they are the middlemen between the living and God (tóroreita). The following invocation, also marking the ancestor worship IF, is therefore directed at the ancestors but meant to ultimately be passed on to God.

ó koon-eech kurúrrta nāā siing’ôw minka
2.PL give- 1.PL peace REL-SG be:good for

óloishó.
country

‘You (pl.) should give us peace which is good for the country.’ (1/23)
As pointed out in König et al. (2015), the concept of thanking is not frequently invoked in Akie narrative discourse. But this is different in the present IF of ancestor worship, which includes communication with God. Thus, the thetical *aashê* (*nkai*) ‘thanks (God)’, a borrowing from Maasai (Maasai *ashê* ‘thanks!’; *enkáí* ‘God’), is occasionally heard also outside this IF, but it appears to be distinctly more common in this IF than in other contexts. Expressing one’s gratitude for the benevolence received appears to be a salient concept of this frame, as in the following text piece:

lerláá kóyú amót koken aashê nkai!
folks! like yesterday again thanks God
‘Folks, [it rains] like yesterday again! Thank you God!’ (1/30)

An important part of ancestor worship consists of asking the *asíswe* for success in hunting; we will return to this part and the frame markers associated with it in Section 3.4.

3.3 Honey collecting
Up to the present, honey collecting has been at the core of traditional Akie economy, side by side with hunting. Honey plays a central role in both the cultural and economic life. Thus, Kaare notes:

For the Akie honey is more than their major food; it is also a symbol of their being. In their stories about their origin and the subsequent structuring of their social relations, honey features as a major transformative substance. (Kaare 1996: 126)

Although in the village of Ngababa people nowadays use bee-hives (Schöperle 2011: 80), traditionally it is exclusively wild honey that is collected.

The honey-collecting frame includes the knowledge pool that Akie people share on their trips to search for honey, which may lead them more than 50 kilo meters away from their homes. When Akie men go searching for honey they knock at the stem of a tree (other than a baobab) suspected to house a bee gum, using the following frame marker by saying to the *asíswe*:

sikóónkò! (‘We are knocking now, would you please help us to find honey’)

Having knocked at different parts of the stem that are accessible to them, they will know whether, where, and roughly how many bees there are on the tree. Then they will make a fire for smoking out the bee-hole and, while drilling the firestick, they say with a raised voice:

tápi (or tipi)! (Roughly: ‘Be there many bees!’; i.e., much honey)
When the smoke produced by the fire is applied to the bee-hole, the *asiiswe* are addressed with the following expression:

kóóli! (‘Let there be pure honey!’)

Usually the following passage is added: *sikóónkò, yákwaat-tái sekémì*, roughly meaning ‘We knock for you, hoping that you will become fat (from eating lots of honey)!’

Once the smoke has disappeared and the men see that there is honey, they say:

* túmura! ‘Cover your eyes!’*),

which is a shortened version of the following expression taken from Maasai: *túmura nkong’óo oloítíáang* (‘cover the eye he who is at home’), roughly meaning ‘What a pity that you back home cannot join us in this honey harvest!’

Finally, the expressions kóóli and sikóónkò are repeated while the honey is removed from the bee-hole. The use of these frame markers is not restricted to the actual process of honey harvesting but is also extended to other occasions related directly or indirectly to honey collecting. Uttering any of these four frame markers has two main effects: On the one hand, it activates the entire sequence of markers and, on the other hand, it evokes the whole script of a honey searching experience including the taste of what for Akie people is the most delicious food on earth.

3.4 Hunting

Compared to honey collecting, a much richer set of formulaic frame markers needs to be recruited when hunters are in the wild searching for game. These expressions, let us call them hunting calls, are frame markers primarily directed at the other members of the hunting party, but secondarily also at the *asiiswe* (ancestors).

Once a piece of *game* has been shot (with poisoned arrows, spears are not used) the hunter will follow the animal until he has found it being dead. Then he calls the other members of the hunting party, who may be away at some distance, with the call appropriate for the animal concerned, and for each kind of animal there is a different call. The most common calls are listed in (a) of Table 1.

The other hunters will then respond with the corresponding call from the list in (b).

The meanings of (a) are etymologically opaque, but many of those in (b) are not, referring to the most desirable part of the animal. The calls in (b) mean roughly ‘May the *asiiswe* give me X’, but they have been ritualized to the extent that they may have lost their literal significance. For example, the reply call *rorowántee* for an elephant means ‘marrow inside the tusks’, even if the marrow of elephant tusks is no longer highly appreciated these days.
Table 1. Akie hunting calls used when the dead animal has been found

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of dead animal</th>
<th>(a) Hunter’s call</th>
<th>(b) Response by the others of the hunting party</th>
<th>Literal meaning of (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cáiko ‘Lesser Kudu’</td>
<td>tükürüć</td>
<td>iinaï</td>
<td>‘sinews’ (of hindlegs or back, made into bow strings; those of giraffes are considered the best)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nkáía ‘wildebeest’</td>
<td>söt</td>
<td>konta</td>
<td>‘eye’ (fat behind the eyes of hartebeests and elephants is highly appreciated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inkuruwe ‘wild boar’</td>
<td>cptyo</td>
<td>námínënköyyo</td>
<td>‘meat of belly and chest of boar’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frónko ‘dikdik’</td>
<td>kusu kusu</td>
<td>cááti túwai</td>
<td>‘the two hindlegs’ (the only delicious meat provided by dikdika’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyir ‘rhinoceros’</td>
<td>kopolée</td>
<td>namanantipfi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ng’etúunta ‘lion’</td>
<td>tísée</td>
<td>malaá</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>péélíante ‘elephant’</td>
<td>nócpoó</td>
<td>rorowántee</td>
<td>‘marrow (of elephant tusks)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>púúyantee ‘warthog’</td>
<td>táále (or taláá)</td>
<td>mókøyey táá maae</td>
<td>‘skin (and meat) of belly’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saraáme ‘Greater Kudu’</td>
<td>púlot</td>
<td>muuitá</td>
<td>‘skin (of kudu, made into beds)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terkéchantee ‘guinea fowl’</td>
<td>cícil</td>
<td>púútóóni</td>
<td>‘breast meat of birds’ (birds have otherwise not much meat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teweréëta ‘antelope sp.’</td>
<td>pór</td>
<td>pëempe</td>
<td>‘horn’ (horn of young antelopes or of grown-up dikdiks made into flutes (inkurit) used in the forest to call people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tiankáánaye ‘giraffe’</td>
<td>santée</td>
<td>kuunóosye</td>
<td>‘pieces of meat of the upper part of a giraffe’s neck’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most commonly, the theticals listed in Table 1 are frame markers of hunting. Invoking one of them is likely to activate the knowledge associated with a hunting frame. But they may also appear in other discourse settings. One such setting is provided by ritual ceremonies invoking the ancestors (see Section 3.2), especially the Blessing the Hunting Weapons ceremony, as the following text piece shows:

lerlàá kóyu amôt koken aashé nkai!
people! like yesterday again thank you God!

‘Folks, [it rains] like yesterday again! Thanks, God!’

lerlàá nraáak- ò- n dé körö pee
folks pour.out- VEN- IMP DM now water.A
si kée sap-ceen.
PURP PAS heal-1.PL-IMP
‘Folks! Pour out water now so that we can be healed!’

amú ar kée peku-u nén kémọ.
because P-1.PL die-VEN LOC hunger.A
‘Because we die of hunger.’

ar- kée yaamé kóyu ñkedda-isyẹ.
P-1.PL suffer like small.wild.animal-PL.A
‘We have suffered like small wild animals.’

taâle!
‘(Give us) boar (meat)!’

mọkọye táá maae!
skin.A GEN belly.A
‘Skin of belly!’

cipiyọ!
‘Warthog!’

námínënkoọọ!
‘Meat of belly and chest of warthog!’

santééé!
‘Giraffe!’

kuunọọsyẹ!
‘Pieces of meat of the upper part of giraffe’s neck!’

púlọt!
‘Greater Kudu!’

muuiità!
‘Skin of Greater Kudu!’ (1/30-39)
The discourse function that the calls have in this frame is different from the one they have during the hunt: Rather than the hunters it is the elders that use these calls in the blessing frame of 3.2. And rather than announcing a dead piece of game or responding to the announcement, the elders producing texts such as the one above wish to convey something like ‘You, the asiiswe (ancestors), help us to soon be able to say cipyo, santééé, etc. Furthermore, after finishing their singing and dancing, the elders may again communicate with the asiiswe using such hunting calls, asking the asiiswe to provide them with meat of a particular antelope or other animal.

Theticals such as these hunting calls form an important component of cultural communication within Akie society, where communicative interaction includes in much the same way the living and the dead. At the same time, they are also markers invoking the hunting frame. Thus, whenever an Akie speaker uses a thetical such as cipyo or santééé then for other members of the speech community this activates the institutional frame of a hunting trip, including all the rich knowledge of hunting, hunting techniques, the communication among hunters, the rituals associated with hunting, the taste of game meat, and, last but not least, the interaction of hunters with their biological environment.

3.5 Discussion
Frame markers differ from other linguistic forms and structures of the Akie language in a number of ways. First, their use is highly context-dependent, being largely or entirely restricted to the institutional frames in which they occur. Nevertheless, their use can be extended metaphorically or metonymically to other domains of human experience. Since the institutional frames to which they belong are culturally salient, the frame markers provide convenient vehicles of transfer to also express concepts associated with other areas of the social and cultural life.

Second, most frame markers are non-compositional and formulaic, and their meaning may be etymologically opaque. And even if an etymological interpretation is possible, the frame marker tends to be reduced phonologically and/or morphologically in fluent speech. For example, we saw in Section 3.2 that the complex marker ó puaan ó yumayumún kéen ‘Come you all and be together with us!’ is commonly reduced to óyumún kéen.

Third, even when they are not semantically opaque, their literal meaning has little in common with that expressed by the frame markers. We may illustrate this with an example taken from an institutional frame not discussed here, namely that of greeting rituals (see König et al. 2015, Section 4.2.2 for details).

When people meet in the morning, presumably the most common greeting formula is the following (where A and B are two interlocutors):

A:  ar-kó éech!
P-  3 dawn
‘It has dawned.’

B: ar-kó eech!
P- 3 dawn
‘It has dawned.’

And when visiting someone, an additional or alternative exchange is the following:

A: ar-áá it uu!
P- 1.SG arrive-VEN
‘I have arrived.’

B: ar-íí it uu!
P- 2.SG arrive-VEN
‘You have arrived.’

Obviously, the literal meaning of these formulae is not highly informative considering that it would be fully recoverable from the extra-linguistic context. But within the institutional frame concerned, these formulae are in fact meaningful. They signal that the interlocutors are ready to enter into social exchange with one another and prepare the ground for more substantial interaction.

Finally, there is also a somewhat unexpected feature associated with Akie frame markers. The IFs discussed in this paper are deeply entrenched in the traditional culture of the Akie people; there do not appear to be any corresponding institutions among the neighboring peoples, as is also acknowledged by the neighboring Nguu and Maasai people. It is therefore somewhat surprising that a number of the frame markers contain Maasai loanwords. This may not be unusual in cases where there are no appropriate Akie terms for the expressions concerned. Thus, the Akie language does not appear to dispose of dedicated lexical items for thanking (see Section 3.2 above; König et al. 2015, Section 4.2.1), accordingly, drawing on the Maasai borrowing aashé nkai ‘Thank you God!’ in the ancestor worship frame (Section 3.2) seems plausible.

But there are also cases where such an account would not make sense. For example, the noun ōloishó ‘country’ figuring in one of the ancestor worship frame markers (Section 3.2) is a Maasai loanword (ol-o(f)ishó ‘country’) although there is a perfectly corresponding Akie noun, namely kie ‘country’, that could have been used. Another example was provided in Section 3.3. Honey collecting in the southern Maasai Steppe is the prerogative of the Akie people. The numerically, culturally and economic dominant Maasai rely on them to satisfy their needs for this highly valued commodity. Nevertheless, one of central frame markers used by the Akie when they harvest honey is a Maasai borrowing, namely tímura! ‘Cover your eyes!’, even though the addressees of this marker are not Maasai but Akie people.
To be sure, there are many Maasai loanwords in Akie, but this pronounced borrowing in culturally deeply entrenched social institutions such as ancestor worship and honey economy is in need of an explanation.

4 Conclusions
Cultures differ with regard to the role they assign to institutional frames. In English-speaking American contexts, for example, frames that have received some scholarly attention include typical visits to a restaurant, a barbershop, or a hospital (Frake 1977; Tannen 1993: 14-21; Fillmore and Baker 2015). In Akie society, institutional frames play a fairly important role, as our field research suggests. Ancestor worship, honey collecting, and hunting are part of the every-day life of the society, figuring in much of the oral traditions and oral literature. And frame markers, the most prominent linguistic exponents of frames, provide the community with a convenient pool of shared experiences and networks of knowledge complexes.

For example, uttering the hunting call kópcóo (see Section 3.4) is likely to evoke among those hearing it the entire scenario of a successful elephant hunt, beginning with the preparations for the hunting trip, game tracking, shooting, following the wounded animal, calling the other hunters to where the dead elephant is lying, enjoying the meat and carrying the rest home, and the call kópcóo will trigger the immediate response rorowânte, another frame marker whose literal meaning is ‘marrow of the elephant tusks’ but whose frame meaning is roughly ‘we share with you the happiness about the successful kill and are now looking forward to join you in consuming the haul’.

The observations made in this paper could do hardly other than scratching the surface of revealing the rich meaning that frame markers have in structuring the semantic universe of Akie speakers. More research is needed on other institutional frames associated with traditional culture, such as the rite-de-passage ceremonies associated with kalantáste, when boys of approximately ten to fifteen years of age are taken away from their mothers to be chased into the wilderness with sticks and thorns, and with dopwâd, when youths acquire manhood.

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Abbreviations
1, 2, 3 = first, second, third person; A = accusative; DM = discourse marker, IMP = imperative;
LOC = locative; N = nominative; P = perfective; PAS = passive; PL = plural; PURP = purpose; PL,
pl. = plural; REFL = reflexive; REL = relative clause marker; SG, sg. = singular; VEN = venitive

References


8 See König et al. (2015) for the grammatical significance of these abbreviations.


