Full Length Research Paper

Recounting history through linguistics: A toponymic analysis of Asogli migration narratives

Mercy Adzo Klugah

Department of Ghanaian Languages and Linguistics, University of Cape Coast

Accepted 11 June, 2013

Scholars seek to present the history of the Ewe in two main ways, namely, the symbolic and the scientific. Migration narratives constitute good examples of the symbolic historical genre. Using Tent and Blair’s toponymic typology, the paper tried to extract scientific historical information from some of the names of places contained in the migration narratives of the Asogli of the Volta Region. The paper found out that toponyms are history-preserving tools among the Asogli since they are used to mark certain important occurrences on the migration route. The linguistic approach used also revealed that Asogli migration narrative toponyms have brought various grammatical structures together through the process of agglutination. The paper, therefore, concluded that while scholars who adopt the scientific approach may rely, for example, on archaeology, a linguistic approach could provide a complementary alternative for gaining a holistic historical picture of the Asogli.

Key words: Migration narratives, history, linguistics, toponyms, toponymy, agglutination.

INTRODUCTION

Africans typically preserve their history in different oral forms such as songs, narratives, names, and naming processes: the Ewes are no exception. Scholars have attempted to reconstruct the history of the Ewe using various sources such as oral tradition (Mamattah, 1978) and archaeology (Davies, 1965). Thus, there exists an appreciable number of researches in the history of the Ewe people (Lauman, 2005). By and large, there seems to be two types of literature on the Ewe. First, those that present a more scientific genre of history with emphasis placed on drawing empirical facts from events. This genre is demonstrated in the works of Manokian (1952), Kwami (1970). The second type, in claiming historicity, is symbolic and presents ideas in the forms of myths and symbolic history. This is seen in the works of Mamatta (1978) and Kumassah (2009). Amenumey source of historical facts and asserts that the Ewe migrated from Ketu and arrived at their present homes about ten generations back. He is, however, of the view that this conclusion is tentative and could be verified by researches of related disciplines such as archaeology, ethnography, oral tradition, and linguistics. While anthropological, archaeological, and literary approaches are commonly used to study the history of the Ewe, a linguistic approach is hardly found in the literature although language arguably plays a crucial role in history preservation in oral form. This paper argues in favour of a linguistic approach to the study of history.

The migration narratives of the Asogli State

The Asogli, which is an independent state among the (1976), for example, depends on narratives as a major
Ewe tribe of West Africa, like most other independent Ewe states, are immigrants who came to their present homes a few centuries ago. For this reason, Rosenthal (1998) believes that “the Ewe culture travels and is a travelling”. The divergent groups, joined together in the form of a cluster of families and clans, present their own versions of the larger ‘travelling narrative’, which is recounted according to the specific memories present in the family concerned. For that matter, the collective history of the Ewe provides a convenient context for studying the Asogli tradition of the migration narrative. It must be noted that even the Asogli tradition presents different versions of the story of migration (Mamatta, 1978).

The migration narrative of the Ho-Asogli state traces their departure from Notsie to their present settlements in and around the middle sector of the Volta Region. The Asogli themselves call these narratives *xotunyawo* or *blemanyawo*, literally meaning, telling tradition (Anyidibo, 1997). Evidently, the Asogli commence their migration history from Notsie and thereafter. This belief is consistently expressed in the various versions of the narratives except for two informants in Jakob Spieth’s research who trace the beginnings of Asogli migration to Yorubaland. The narratives have it that peace prevailed in Notsie until Agorkorli assumed his reign, which was characterised by chaos, anarchy, and oppression of his subjects. This state of affairs led to a general rebellion and mass migration of some Ewe groups including the Asogli. The Asogli pride themselves on the leading role in initiating the mass migration from Notsie. Each informant reports that it was the Asogli people who broke the *agbogboga* (big wall built around Notsie township) through which they and all the others escaped. They authenticate their conviction by stating that the sword with which the *agbogboga* was broken is still in their possession until date. Reasons for the escape, however, differ from one version to another. Most informants give the much-lauded Agorkorli’s cruelty and vindictiveness saga as the reason behind their escape. Others attribute it to lack of enough land to accommodate the people. Yet others attribute the migration to the submissive nature of the Ewe and their refusal to submit to authority. The difficulty in marrying these diverse viewpoints only goes to confirm that the issue has generated controversy among scholars in recent times.

One cannot overlook recent views of some scholars including Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), Greene (1992), Mitchell-McKnight (2005) who have argued that the Notsie experience is better regarded as an invention of tradition. In fact, a number of recent studies also confirm this idea (Lovell, 2005; Nugent, 2005). To these works, Agorkorli is nothing but an invention by the early missionaries in their attempt to evoke the spirit of ‘we-feeling’ among the Ewe, which makes them, believe they are one people with a common origin. While it is difficult to point to the specific issues that engendered the Asogli migration and to determine the authenticity of the narrative, it is at least evident that some internal wrangling must have been part of the reasons for migration.

Almost all the narratives confirm that not only the Asogli left Notsie. A large number of other people, who found the internal strife worrisome, accompanied them. At least two of informants (Francis Yao Ate and Geoffrey Dzormeku, Ho, personal communication) believe that the Anlo were in the company of the Asogli until the former decided to part company. There is also consensus about the multiple stops, which the Asogli made before reaching their present home. As they journeyed from one settlement to another, the Asogli fought battles; winning some and losing others. At each stop, they gave a name (toponym) to the place, which also served to preserve memories of their travel. Examples of toponyms that appear in the narratives include * Hodzo, Tsevie, Hofedo, Taviefe, Dzamekpo, Fulu*.

This paper seeks to analyse * Hodzo, Tsevie and Hofedo* only because the narratives provide background information on their etymology. Such a background only goes to support the findings of the linguistic analyses in this paper. The analysis is done using Tent and Blair’s (2011) toponymic typology. This analytical framework is preferred because it serves the researcher’s interest in conducting linguistic analyses in the bid to understand the historical reality behind the toponyms in the Asogli migration narratives.

**METHODOLOGY AND DESCRIPTION OF DATA**

The toponyms under study in this paper were collected exclusively from Asogli migration narratives through qualitative research methods outlined by Glesne (2011). There were two sources of data collection. First, data were retrieved from existing documented versions of the narratives by the famous protestant missionary and ethnographer. The second source was by way of interviews conducted with three main informants, who were purposively sampled based on their knowledge of the Asogli migration story. The interviews followed Yow’s (2005) suggested methods for collecting oral history. First, the researcher prepared an interview guide to steer the course of the interview. Second, informants were contacted a week earlier to schedule dates for each interview. During each session, the purpose of the project was explained to informants in order to build good rapport. Where necessary, probing questions were asked to either elicit further information or seek clarifications on unclear issues. Each interview session was recorded on a tape recorder. The informants chose to speak Ewe, their native language; therefore, there was the need to transcribe the raw data for analysis. Although the researcher speaks and writes Ewe language fluently, the services of professional transcribers in the Department of Ghanaiian Languages and Linguistics, University of Cape Coast were employed to do the transcription. This was mainly to ensure objectivity in the transcription. Due to time constraints, the oral narratives were obtained from only two towns of the Asogli State: Ho and Takla. Although the informants chose to narrate their stories in their local language, this did not affect the quality of the research since Ewe is the first language of
the researcher. The commonality of language between the researcher and informants allowed an intensive engagement of a minimum of seven hours with each informant. Although Yow recommends that an hour of steady talk is appropriate for one interview session, some sessions lasted for more than an hour and even extended to other days. In the end, the researcher covered a total of five days of intensive field work. Jakob Speith’s work was valuable because it provided other versions of the migration history of the people of the Asogli State collected from towns other than the two visited. Yet since Speith has not engaged in any linguistic analysis of his compilation, they served as a secondary sources for validating data from fieldwork which was used for analysis in this research. The analysis was conducted within the toponymic typological framework proposed by Tent and Blair (2011).

**Analytical framework**

The toponymic typology developed by Tent and Blair (2011) is adopted for this study. Toponymy, in its broad sense, involves the study of the origin and meaning of names of place (Cano, 2008). Toponyms, as used in this paper, imply names of settlements reported in Asogli migration narratives whose analyses could provide significant meaning and historical information. According to Radding and Western (2010), toponyms are given intentionally to impart a certain meaning; they are not arbitrary and are better considered as ‘signs’ because they have layers of meanings that go beyond ordinary words. Toponyms are essentially history preserving tools for groups of people; hence studying toponyms involves attempts at answering “wh” questions such as what is being named? Where is it located? Who named it? When was it named? And why was it given such a name?

Apart from Tent and Blair’s (2011) toponymic typology, which is chosen for application in this study, there are other toponymic typologies. These include those proposed by Mecken (1967), Stewart (1975), Baker and Carmony (1975), Glaser (1994), Smith (1996), among others. These works build on each other’s findings in their order of succession (Tent and Blair, 2009). For example, Baker and Carmony’s (1975) typology is regarded as an improvement on the work of Stewart. They introduced three new categories which were absent in Stewart’s model. Baker and Carmony’s typology consists of names for a person; names of other places; location names; descriptive names; inspirational names; humorous names; Indian and pseudo Indian names; names from other languages other than English; incident names; folk etymology; coined names; mistake names; legend names.

This typology is critiqued mainly for its use of ambiguous terms, which in effect, allows overlapping classification. An example of this weakness is observed in the overlap between the categories (i) Descriptive names, (ii) Indian and pseudo Indian names and (iii) Names from other languages other than English. The weakness here is that all three categories could be descriptive in nature allowing the possibility of one toponym to belong to all three categories at the same time. This makes it difficult to judge when a particular category helps to explain a given toponym. For such reasons, the typology of Baker and Carmony fails to distinguish clearly between its categories. Other typologies have been criticized for being too language specific or for being too restricted to only certain kinds of toponyms or still for being overly ambiguous.

The literature consulted on toponymic typologies indicates that Tent and Blair’s model is perhaps the latest toponymic model. Its strength lies in its comprehensive character and its capacity for generalisability. This means the authors aim at making their model universal such that it could be used to analyse toponyms of different groups of people and cultures. Tent and Blair challenge existing models for their failure to meet two basic requirements. First, they are not robust enough for testing a wide variety of toponyms. Second, as in the case of Baker and Carmony referred to above, Tent and Blair feel that existing models lack clarity in terms of toponymic generalisation.

In their own theory, Tent and Blair conduct toponymic analysis on three main levels, namely, form, naming process and motivation. The form concerns the generic elements of the toponym. Frequently, generic elements are influenced by the ‘geographic feature terms that apply’ (Tent and Blair, 2011: 2). For example, in a toponym like River Murray, ‘river’ serves as the generic element. The naming process, which is the second level, involves the linguistic substance in the toponym, which discusses the morphological, syntactic and semantic elements in the toponym. The third level deals with the motivation for the toponyms, which concern the specific elements identified in the toponym. This level takes the analysis into the namer’s mind and speculates about the source and significance of such a name to the namer. Based on the levels of analysis, Tent and Blair believe that one can design an effective typology only by distinguishing between specific and generic elements and identifying the linguistic substance (morphology, syntax and semantic) of a typology as the mechanism that underlies the bestowal of the name. The combination of these three levels, Tent and Blair believe, should yield a good toponymic analysis and an effective classification of toponyms.

They propose a nine category typological model for classifying toponyms. The first, they named the descriptive type. The descriptive type will usually consist of the description of three inherent characteristics – topographic, relational and locations - where the topographic will take one or two forms of the physical appearance, that is, qualitative or metaphoric. In the case of a relational description, the toponym will be relating the features of the place to others either chronologically or spatially. If it is a locational description, it will be based on orientational features. The second group, which they
referred to as associative, is local, occupational or structural. The local usually indicates something of a topographical or biological nature seen with certain features. The occupational type may concern habitual activities associated with the feature while the structural indicates a manufactured structure associated with the feature. Occurent is the third category. An occurrent toponym relates to an event, incident or occasion by recording the event, incident, occasion (or date), or action associated with the feature.

The fourth category, they called, evaluative. An evaluative toponym is either commendatory by giving a positive response to a feature as in 'Fair Cape' or condemnatory which is characterised by a negative response to a feature. The fifth category is the shift. Shift toponyms use a toponym in whole or in part from a location feature. The shift can either take the form of a transfer from another place, a feature shift or probably a relational shift where a qualifier is used to indicate orientation from an adjacent toponym of the same feature. The sixth category, which they called indigenous, is those that import indigenous words into the naming process. These indigenous words are either original toponyms or words of the language. The seventh group is the Eponymous group. These toponyms commemorate a person or an entity, both living and non-living. The eighth category, they called, erroneous. This involves introducing a new linguistic form through the manipulation of language. Here they talk of blends, anagrams and humour as the language manipulation methods. The final category is referred to as associative. This involves introducing a new form through garbled transmission, misspelling and mistaken meaning.

Having reviewed the nine categories proposed by Tent and Blair, we shall now concentrate on the eighth category, which is considered to be of direct significance to this paper. We would recall that this category concentrates on blending, anagrams and humour only to the disregard of other language manipulation processes. Manipulation of language involves the various word formation processes through which a language produces the words it uses, therefore, such processes involve clipping, compounding or agglutination and borrowing. In view of these processes, the strength of what Tent and Blair suggest lies in the fact that the category respects all languages for their ability to be productive. It is only in view of this universal respect for the productive character of languages that it makes sense to argue that toponyms are language-specific (Radding and Western, 2010). This implies that the phonological, morphological, syntactic structure of any language is capable of determining the nature of its toponyms. Therefore, any toponymic analysis should take into consideration the internal linguistic structures of the language in which that toponym evolved. This eighth category of Tent and Blair is important but it has some internal flaws, which need to be addressed. For example, the category discusses blends, anagrams and humour as its components without explaining how they lead to the generalisability it envisages. Therefore, this eighth category of Tent and Blair needs to be filled in with other examples that establish its generic validity beyond the limits of Australian toponyms. Tent and Blair are most likely to be aware of this need when they conclude that their typologies are not carved in stone. Thus, outside the Australian context, their model has value to which it helps in studying toponyms in other contexts. Despite the shortfalls identified with the model, it is judged, for the purpose of this paper to be the most robust and flexible toponymic typology.

**Analysis of toponyms**

Tones are phonemic in Ewe because it is a tone language. Put differently, tone variations cause meaning change in Ewe. For this reason, the researcher has endeavoured to transcribe the toponyms, indicating the various tones. This was done mainly to put the toponyms in context and guide both speakers and non-speakers of the Ewe language to pronounce them appropriately. The transcriptions were done to match with pronunciations used by informants.

**Tsevie [Tsévé]**

The analysis applies Tent and Blair's step-by-step procedure for analysing toponyms in order to draw history from Asogli migration toponyms. The first toponym to consider is Tsevie.

**Level 1:** The first level of Tent and Blair's (2011) typology recommends that the elements of the toponyms should be identified. In the case of Tsevie, one finds out that it is made up of three elements that could be segmented as follows:

Tsé - ví- é

Tsé means ‘to bear fruit’; Ví means ‘small’; é, an elided form of ge, is a derivational affix in Ewe. It must be noted that the verb tsé is applied to fruits-bearing trees, which fruits can only be harvested by plucking. Therefore, the use of tsé can only apply to this category of fruits-bearing trees. At this level, it is difficult to distinguish the generic from the specific elements of the term although Tent and Blair's typology would suggest that such differentiation should be possible.

**Level 2:** The second level concerns the “linguistic substance” of the toponym. As mentioned earlier, Tent
and Blair understand linguistic substance to mean morphology, syntax and semantics of the toponym. Applied in our context, then, the linguistic substance of Tsevie as a toponym indicates that its elements are separate morphemes because each of the morphemes has its own meaning in Ewe. The illustration below explains the point and shows the different grammatical categories that come together to form the toponym Tsevie.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tsé</th>
<th>vá</th>
<th>e</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bear fruit</td>
<td>small</td>
<td>DER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERB</td>
<td>Adj</td>
<td>DER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERB</td>
<td>ADV</td>
<td>VP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tsé is a verb; vá is an adjective while e is a derivational affix in Ewe. In Ewe, the derivational affix de or its elided for e is attached to adjectives to form adverbs (Banini, 1986; Amegashie, 2000; Abadzivor, 2007; Atakpah, 1997). For this reason, attaching e to the adjective ví derives vie which is an adverb. The adverb vie describes the verb tse. It becomes clear then that the toponym Tsevie is verb phrase.

The word formation process, which brings the various elements of the toponym Tsevie together, is agglutination. Agglutination involves “word building in which the component morphemes retain their form and meaning even in the process of combining” (Lyons, 1971, p. 188). Ewe is classified as an agglutinative language, which means it uses agglutination as one of its word formation process. Forming words using agglutination may take different forms. For example, words formed from the same word class like nouns by the process of agglutination will differ from those of another word class, say, verbs (Atakpa, 1997). In the case of the toponym under discussion, one word has been formed from two word classes, namely, a verb and an adverb using the process of agglutination.

**Level 3:** The explanation about agglutination brings us to the third level of Tent and Blair. At this third level, meaning is derived from the component elements of the newly formed word. Again, in the case of our toponym, the agglutinated word transliterates to mean, “bear fruit a little”.

**Motivation:** Granted that the meaning derived above applies, it suggests strongly that some farming activity motivated the toponym. This motivation, in turn, allows the toponym to convey an important piece of historical information. The toponym does not only point to some general farming activities, which the people engaged in during the period of migration, but purports to give indications of the specific types of crops that they must have cultivated – fruit-bearing trees and not tuber crops. **Oral source:** The informants report that Tsevie was the first settlement of the Asogli following their departure from Notsie. There are two accounts of its etymology. The first account claims that Tsevie derives its meaning from an exchange that took place between two factions at the first stop after migrating from Notsie. The people had temporarily settled and engaged in farming activities, planting crops such as millet and beans. After a while, one faction, the Anlo, becoming impatient, insisted on continuing the journey to search for safer and better settlement. The response of the other faction to the Anlo’s call for departure was nukuawo natsie vie meaning, “let the crops bear fruits” [before we leave]. This incident, according to informants, explains why the Ewes broke into the various subgroups by which they are known in present times.

The second etymological account suggests that Tsevie derives from the people’s expression of desire to tarry at the first conducive location after a long journey. The Ewe expression mitsi afi sia vie means, “let us rest here awhile”. According to the informants, this expression of desire to rest awhile eventually became a description of the place where the people first rested after migrating from Notsie. One informant explains that the truncated nature of the toponym in present times is caused by speech economy. From a purely linguistic perspective, various language phenomena, such as, deletion and addition can account for the transformation. It is, however, difficult to explain how the verb tsi which means, “to tarry” could change into tse which means “to bear fruit” in a language in which both words have distinct meanings. This calls the informant’s observation to question.

Although the oral accounts concerning the origin of Tsevie are in two versions, the linguistic analysis (done above) points towards an etymology that is closely connected to some agricultural activity that took place at the location. Coupled with the fact that the linguistic analysis does not conflict with the first oral account but rather authenticates it, the study aligns more with the first account rather than the second one. This authentication is plausible considering the fact that the verb tse is appropriately applied to describe the harvesting of crops like beans and millet. Secondly, the Ewe verb for lingering at a place is tsi implying that if the toponym was formed out of the people’s expression of desire to rest at place, then it should have had the form Tsivie and not Tsevie, which bear their fruits on trees to be plucked just as the nature of the verb suggests.

Based on the above discussion, the researcher is inclined to classify Tsevie under the category which Tent and Blair call “associative toponyms”, because, it describes specific activities unique to a place.

**Hodzo [Ho dzó]:** The next toponym to consider is Hodzo. The same procedures employed in analysing Tsevie, which are the levels suggested by Tent and Blair, would be applied to Hodzo as a toponym.
**Level 1:** At the first level, one finds two elements in Hôdzo. These are Hô-dzo

Dzo means ‘to go’ while h4, has multiple meanings. It could mean “a door” or “a python”. As we observed about the elements in Tsevie, Hôdzo also does not make room for a distinction into generic and specific parts at this first level.

**Level 2:** In terms of the role of agglutination in the formation of Hôdzo as a toponym, one realises some difference with Tsevie in grammatical structure. Unlike Tsevie, Hôdzo is made up of a noun and a verb. Consider the syntactical illustration below,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ho</th>
<th>dzo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Python/door</td>
<td>go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBJ</td>
<td>PRED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidently, the toponym derives from a simple sentence consisting of a subject and a predicate. Its syntactic structure, therefore, is S V

**Level 3:** The third level explains the meaning of the toponym. However, the actual meaning of Hôdzo is rather problematic, especially, concerning making a choice between which of the two meanings to ascribe to Hô. On one hand, if we take hô to mean “a python”, then the toponym would transiterate as,

a) The python is gone

On the other hand, if we take hô to mean “a door”, then its meaning would be

b) The door is gone.

This problem could be resolved by applying semantic roles which are proposed in case grammar (Donnelly, 1994). The roles posit that for any linguistic item to perform an agentic role, it must be animate. This is because only animate beings can instigate an action. From a linguistic perspective, therefore, this principle makes the first meaning more plausible than the second meaning. This is because a python, an animate item, is capable of performing the action expressed in the verb dzo better than a door; hence, its ability to serve as the agent of the sentence.

**Motivation:** As shown previously, this level speculates whatever gave impetus for naming a toponym as such. Turning to Hôdzo as a toponym, the previous level shows that the first meaning is more appropriate within the context of toponyms than the second one. The motivation for this toponym, therefore, ties closely to its elements, which suggest that a python must have disrupted the course of their journey. The disruption in effect necessitated their temporal settlement at the place.

**Oral account:** It is remarkable that Spieth records an account that alludes to a settlement of the Asogli after their departure from Notsie. Paradoxically, however, Spieth’s recorded account suggests that the place was named Hôdzo because it was too dark. Apart from the fact that this account does not provide any clear basis for the toponym, it is also difficult to relate the name Hôdzo to the account. On the contrary, the oral account obtained from informants in the present research would seem to provide more meaning particularly when subjected to the linguistic analysis proposed by Tent and Blair. Such analysis allows, as in the case of Tsevie, a glimpse into some historical occurrence, namely, that the people must have encountered some form of hazard on their journey. The python symbolized, or most likely was, the object of danger. This idea may be uncertain, but the toponym still provides some relevant historical suggestions.

From another perspective, “the door is gone” could be explained metaphorically to mean “the door of exit”. This information is worth preserving in a toponym. Yet, supposing this was the case, it presupposes that the settlement had had a wall surrounding it through whose door the people must have exited. The elements in the toponym, on the contrary, do not allude to any such wall neither do the oral accounts mention any other wall apart from the agbogboga which surrounded Notsie, their home before migration. In view of the fact that neither the linguistic analysis nor the oral account supports this metaphorical explanation, the paper does not align with the metaphorical implications of “the door is gone” as the motivation for Hôdzo.

Hôfêdo [Hôfêdô]

**Level 1:** The third toponym for the study is Hôfêdo. Again, Tent and Blair’s framework would be employed to analyse Hôfêdo. At the first level, one finds out that Hôfêdo could have two elemental subdivisions depending on how one looks at it. This is because each possible division makes meaning in the Ewe language. The illustrations below demonstrate the two possible segmentations that Hôfêdo could have.

a) Ho 5e do

Or

b) Ho 5edo

**Level 2:** Considering the “linguistics substance” of the first elemental division, ho refers to “the people of Ho”, 5e is a possessive marker and do means “a hole”. These elements belong to various grammatical categories
adjoined through the process of agglutination. The grammatical categories are illustrated below.

```
Ho  5edo  do
Ho  POS  hole
N   POS  N
NP
```

From the above illustration, *Hofedo* derives from a Noun Phrase whose constituents are a noun, a possessive marker and noun.

**Level 3:** The agglutinated structure above means “the hole for the Ho people”

**Motivation:** The motivation level is where one conjectures the possible etymology of the toponym under study. In the case of *Hofedo*, the meaning derived from this first elemental division points towards two main possibilities. The mention of a hole in the toponym first indicates that the people lived either in a hole or in an obscure place. Such a place was surely not comfortable and that demanded that they vacate the place. Secondly, the hole suggests that the people must have escaped through a hole. If the second option was the case, then as in the case of Hodzo, the toponym presupposes that there was a wall or a fence surrounding the settlement through which they bore a hole for escape. Obviously, both possibilities appear questionable since it seems rather farfetched to think that the people lived in a hole or that they escaped through a hole when there is no mention of wall surrounding any settlement other than Notsie. On the other hand, if this motivation is to be taken seriously, then the people certainly used a hole in doing something significant, which the toponym is not explicit about. It is therefore difficult to state the actual role that the hole played in the lives of the people. This inconclusive discussion leads the analysis to the second elemental subdivision of the toponym (labelled (b) above). The discussion commences with the second level where the “linguistic substance” of the toponym is examined.

**Level 2:** The second elemental subdivision of *Hofedo* has *ho* to mean “the people of Ho” and *bedo* to mean “a deserted” or “an abandoned” place. Agglutination again accounts for the adjoinment of the toponym. The grammatical structure is different from all the others identified earlier on because it consists of nouns only. The grammatical structure is elaborated below.

```
Ho  5edo
Ho  deserted place
N   N
NP
```

Similar to the previous elemental division discussed earlier, this second division also draws from a noun phrase but with all its elements being nouns. Because both elements are nouns, possession is covertly marked. The toponym has a deep structure, which reveals the omitted elements of the toponym. The deep structure, therefore, is

```
Ho fe (a)bedo
Ho POS deserted place
```

The deep structure elaborates upon the relationship that the possessive marker establishes between the first noun and the second one. It demonstrates that the Ho people are the “possessors” while the deserted place is the “possessed”. The deep structure further shows that *bedo* is a dialectal variant of *afedo*, the standard form. Both the dialectal and the standard forms convey the same meaning hence their interchangeability.

**Level 3:** The deep structure of *Hofedo*, which is shown above would transliterate as “the deserted place of Ho people”.

**Motivation:** Since the motivation level, according to Tent and Blair, infers the driving situation behind the toponym from the meaning of the toponym, this portions looks at the motivation of *Hofedo*. However, there is first, the need to make certain observations about the toponym. Since the toponym attributes the deserted place to the people of Ho only, it implies that the settlement concerns exclusively the people of Ho rather than any other Asogli town. Put differently, the meaning of the toponym directs us to believe that not all the Asogli people settled there: only the Ho people. Furthermore, the toponym fails to state the reason why the Ho people deserted the place. Though this is so, it would not be too farfetched to assume that they encountered some form of threat at the place. This threat, which compelled them to migrate, must be the motivation for the toponym *Hofedo*, which information they have preserved in the toponym.

**Oral Account:** Spieth’s account reports that the people stayed in *Ho5edo* for a protracted period before migrating to their current home. The informants, on the contrary, recount a very brief stay. However, the contrast observed does not affect the research as both sources agree on the cause of their departure, which is the most important aspect of the toponym. All informants pin the cause of their departure to certain misunderstandings that ensued between the Ho people and their neighbours. They report that the misunderstanding became violent, thereby, compelling them to relocate to their present home. Spieth’s report further informs us that *Ho5edo* was their last settlement before their current home.

Supposing the oral account is reliable, then, the second meaning derived from the linguistic analysis reveals the motivation of the toponym *Hofedo* better than the first.
meaning. The second meaning, though limited in level of information contained, at least indicates that the people lived there before deserting the place. Moreover, the verb "desert" implies that the people abandoned the place infelicitously. The linguistics analysis, therefore, provides a hint about the state of affairs during and after their departure. It would therefore be right to conclude that the linguistic analysis appears less educational but it sufficiently complements the oral account on past events that informed the process of naming the place. The paper, thus, considers the second elemental subdivision of Hofedo as the most appropriate division that brings out the information therein.

**EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION**

Except for a few steps, which were not applicable to the toponymic analysis of Asogli migration narrative toponyms, it can be said on the whole, that the analytical framework of Tent and Blair has been helpful to this linguistic analysis. One such step, which was inapplicable, was the identification and differentiation between the specific elements and their generic counterparts. This difficulty was due mainly to variations in languages. The implication is that the model needs a little modification to work perfectly for Asogli migration toponyms in particular and Ewe toponyms in general. Considering how robust Tent and Blair's model is, any attempt at modifying it to suit Ewe toponyms would be a bold step toward developing a framework that could help to analyse all Ewe toponyms.

This paper, undoubtedly, touches on relatively uncharted grounds in the study of Ewe language and Ewe history. Therefore, it appears that it yields only minimal results now but all the same opens sufficient room for developing research in the subject. This fact notwithstanding, the analysis brings to the fore three important features of Asogli (Ewe) toponyms. They are:

a) Toponyms are constructed in Ewe through the process of agglutination.

b) The elements that feature in Asogli migration toponyms belong to various word classes. For example, one finds nouns, adverbs, adjectives among others in the structure of these toponyms. In effect, the toponyms have various grammatical structures.

c) Toponyms are used to mark certain important occurrences on the migration route and are therefore truly history-preserving tools among the Asogli.

In conclusion, while one may have oral tradition and archaeology as sources of historical fact, one other way of drawing history would be through linguistic analysis. This is shown from this analysis of toponyms.

**SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This work opens the door for further research into Ewe toponyms as it reveals that very different language manipulation processes other than those observed in Australian toponyms are inherent in the formation of Ewe toponyms. The internal structures of these language manipulation processes needs to be explored and documented.

The ultimate aim would be to propound a good typology robust enough to analyse and classify Ewe toponyms on its own merits.

**REFERENCES**


This paper was first presented at an international conference held from October 18 to 20, 2012, at Goethe Institute, Accra, under the theme NARRATING ORAL HI(STORIES): storytelling in/about West Africa.