The Kikuyu Conceptualization of Adoption: A Cognitive Grammar Approach

Abigael Wangari Mbua

Faculty, Languages Linguistics and Translation Department, Africa International University
Email: *abigael.wangari@yahoo.com*

Abstract

The process of Bible translation entails interpretation of concepts in the original text. Such interpretation calls upon translators/exegetes not to just reconstruct and analyze the conceptualization evoked by a biblical concept with regard to the conceptual universe of the author and his original recipients but also to analyze the conceptualization evoked with regard to the speakers of a receptor language. The underlying idea is to aid the translator/exegete, in a complementary way, to gain an understanding of the meaning of the original text. The aim of this approach to the translation task is to come up with a translation that is clear to the speakers of a receptor language. This paper concentrates on the concept of 'adoption' represented by the Greek term, huiothesia in Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; and Eph. 1:5 Which is variously rendered in the English translation versions. Focusing on Kikuyu as a receptor language, the concept of adoption is represented by gũciarwo na mbũri 'to be procreated by means of (slaughtering) a goat' the Kikuyu label for adoption. The evoked conceptualization is analyzed using a Cognitive Grammar approach. Cognitive Grammar enables first the semantic characterization of the expression gũciarwo na mbũri and its components as grammatical constructions, second the analysis of the conventional conceptual content evoked by gũciarwo na mbũri and its components in the conceptual universe of the Kikuyu speakers. The evoked conceptual content is incorporated in the emergence of the meaning of the expression.

Key terms: interpretation, conceptualization, receptor language, Cognitive Grammar, grammatical constructions, conventional conceptual content

1.1 Introduction

The process of Bible translation entails interpretation of concepts in the original text. Such interpretation calls upon translators (hereafter simply referred to as translators) not to just reconstruct and analyze the conceptualization evoked by a biblical concept with regard to the conceptual universe of the author and his original recipients, but also to analyze the conceptualization evoked with regard to the speakers of a receptor language. The analysis of the conceptualization evoked with regard to the speakers of a receptor language aids the translator in

a complementary way[1] in inferring the meaning of the original text. The aim of this approach to the translation task is to come up with a translation that is clear to the speakers of a receptor language. This approach is based on the following claims: first, readers of a translated text unavoidably interpret what they come across from their native language and culture because cognition is partially contingent on one's language and culture. Second, there is no reader who comes to a text with an empty mind: When he/she encounters a linguistic expression in a text, it evokes a conceptualization informed by his/her cultural context which becomes the basis for the meaning of that expression.

This paper concentrates on the concept of 'adoption' represented by the Greek term, *huiothesia* in Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; and Eph. 1:5. *Huiothesia* is variously rendered in English translations as: "adoption" (KJV, NAB), "adoption to sonship" (NIV), "sonship", "adoption as sons" (RSV), "adopted children" (NLT). Focusing on Kikuyu as a receptor language, the conceptualization of adoption is evoked by *gũciarwo na mbũri* 'to be procreated by means of (slaughtering) a goat' the Kikuyu label for adoption. The evoked conceptualization is analyzed using a Cognitive Grammar approach.

1.2 Cognitive Grammar theoretical framework

Cognitive Grammar as developed by Langacker (1987; 2008; 2013) is a theory that accords a prominent place to meaning and attempts to make "substantive" and "plausible" psychological claims about meaning (Langacker, 2008, p. 11, 15). Vital to this paper is the notion that the meaning of a linguistic expression in discourse resides in the conceptualization it evokes in the minds of the interlocutors. The knowledge in their long-term memory[2] is incorporated into the

---

[1] The translator uses cognitive tools (concepts and their conceptual networks) of the receptor language to complement others sources he/she engages with in the interpretation of the source text.
[2] There has been a debate of what counts as long-term memory and short-term memory. According to (Richardson, 1996, p. 134), long-term-memory is seen as a "long-term store…consisting in permanent structural changes" of

ongoing mental representation of the discourse as it unfolds, and the end result is the emergence of meaning of the expression in the ongoing discourse. Langacker (2008) shows how the evoked conceptualization is organized into related "sets of cognitive domains" (p. 44) and how those domains "are mentally accessed" (p. 47).

From a CG view, the conceptualization evoked by an expression as the basis of its meaning is extensive. It includes what the expression instantiates as a grammatical construction and the conceptual content the expression evokes in the long-term memory of the interlocutors. CG provides tools for the analysis of the evoked conceptualization.

1.3 Semantic characterization of *gũciarwo na mbũri* as a grammatical construction

The semantic characterization of *gũciarwo na mbũri* includes a description of the grammatical category it instantiates as a composite structure—a complex nominal expression— and the grammatical categories instantiated by its components: the nominalized verb *gũciarwo* and its modifier *na mbũri.* The argument is that each is a member of a grammatical category and each instantiates a schematic conceptual characterization specific to its grammatical category (Langacker, 2008, p. 122). The schematic conceptual characterization specific to the grammatical categories instantiated by each is essential: it imposes a construal on what each represents conceptually and contributes in part to the total semantic value of the composite expression.

The characterization of the grammatical constructions instantiated by *gũciarwo na mbũri* and its components includes a description of the relationships *gũciarwo na mbũri* exhibits as an assembly of symbolic structures. That is, together with its components, *gũciarwo na mbũri* is an

---

associative network, of which working memory is the "currently activated" part of that store. The structural changes in the long-term memory are in "domains" dominantly coded by language and humans acquire them over time through social interaction (Kintsch, 2000, p. 126).

assembly of symbolic structures with both horizontal and vertical relationships. The horizontal relationship is *integration* realized in corresponding elements which link the component structures. The vertical relationship is partial *composition* realized in the corresponding elements which link the components with the composite structure. Conceptually the components are not invoked for their own sake. Instead, their role is to evoke the "composite structure, provide a way of comprehending it" (Langacker, 2008, p. 166), and supply much of its semantic characterization. They are thus conceptualized as resources that are drawn on to arrive at *gũciarwo na mbũri* as a composite structure.

1.3.1 *Gũciarwo na mbũri*: a complex nominal expression

As a grammatical construction, *gũciarwo na mbũri* is an instance of a complex nominal expression comprised of a nominalized verb (*gũciarwo*) serving as a nominal head, and a modifier (the prepositional phrase *na mbũri*) (see (1) below). Being a nominal expression instantiates a schematic description representing the abstract commonality assigned to nominal expressions. According to Langacker (2008), a nominal expression "profiles a thing, typically expressed" by the nominal head (p. 123) — the "primary focus" of the nominal expression whose tendency is "to impose its holistic perspective on the construal" of the other elements in the expression (p. 124). A nominal expression may also include modifiers (p. 123) whose function is to refine the basic profile represented by the nominal head (Langacker, 2008, p. 312). This schematic description of *gũciarwo na mbũri* as a complex nominal expression imposes a construal—how the situation it represents is conceptually portrayed, that is, it subsumes the grammatical roles of the components and the grammatical categories they instantiate. Furthermore, being a nominal expression makes the situation represented by *gũciarwo na mbũri*

to be portrayed as a *thing*[3]—expressed by the nominal head *gũciarwo*[4]—meaning that "whatever is profiled by the nominal head is profiled" by the overall nominal expression (Langacker, 2008, p. 312). The overall nominal expression profiles the process/relationship schema represented by the nominalized verb *gũciarwo,* and reified as a *thing* at a higher conceptual level.[5] This process is the primary focus of the nominal expression and it imposes its holistic perspective on the construal of the modifier *na mbũri.*

1) *Gũ-ciar-w-o   na   m-bũri*

   CL15-give.birth.to/procreate-PASS-FV through   CL9-goat

   'To be given birth to/to be procreated through a goat.'

1.3.2 *Gũciarwo*: nominalized verb

Within the complex nominal expression, the nominalized verb *gũciarwo* is the central component and takes the grammatical role of a nominal head. The term *nominal head* is metaphorical suggesting that it is the controlling "element" (Langacker, 2008, p. 311). As such, *gũciarwo* imposes its profile on the entire nominal expression—it establishes the *thing* the entire nominal expression designates. Thus, as a nominal head, it is "the profile determinant" of the entire nominal expression (Langacker, 2008, p. 311). That is, what *gũciarwo* profiles is profiled

---

[3] *Gũciarwo na mbũri* as a nominal expression is a composite expression profiling a thing, thus a "a complex noun" to use Langacker's (2008, p. 321) terms.

[4] *Gũciarwo* is able to function as a nominal head because the verb it is derived from has been made "atemporal by infinitivalization" to use Langacker's (2008, p. 124) terms.

[5] According to Langacker (2008, p. 95), humans have "conceptual capacity for construing events as abstract objects"—conceptual capacity "for conceptual reification" where in this case, the complex nominal expression, *gũciarwo na mbũri*, is naming a conceptually reified event.

by the overall nominal expression. So, *gũciarwo* imposes its summary view on *gũciarwo na mbũri*.
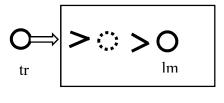
As a nominalized verb, *gũciarwo* is constructed through morphological derivation and is thus morphologically complex. Being morphologically complex imposes a construal—it raises the question of the grammatical roles of its component morphemes. It comprises the following morphemes: the prefix *gũ-* —a noun class marker (CL15) and a nominalizer enabling *gũciarwo* to function as a noun within the nominal expression, and thus is the profile determinant. *-ciar-* 'give birth/procreate' is a verb root and as such, *gũciarwo* is a nominalized verb having the structure of an infinitive.[6] The primary focus is on the process that is conceptually represented by *-ciar-*, not so much on *gũ-ciar-w-o* as a *noun*, since as a noun it is historically and conceptually secondary. To demonstrate this, it is possible to turn the entire nominal expression into a verbal clause with a finite form of the verb inflected both for tense and aspect, and with overt participants (trajector and landmark)[7] (see 2 (a) below). In 2 (a) the subject (1SG [SBJ]) is morphologically marked on the verb. Note that the prepositional phrase remains the same. As such, it is the conceptualization of the finite verb—the process schema that is reified as a *thing* at a higher level of conception in Langacker's (2008) terms.[8] Then that *thing* becomes a constituent in discourse: "discourse-manipulable" (Hopper and Thompson, 1984). From the outside the conception is of a *thing* but

---

[6] *Gũciarwo* is derived from a verb. Derivation is a morphological process that Bantu languages are rich in (Nurse and Philippson 2003, p. 71), and infinitives are nouns derived from verbs marked by "having a nominal prefix" (Nurse and Philippson 2003, p. 80).

[7] A verb evokes a process—a relationship with participants at varied levels of prominence. A participant in this relationship may be the primary focus thus the trajector (trajector) and some other participant may be the secondary focus, thus the landmark (landmark) (Langacker 2013, p. 113). The trajector in the profiled relationship is the participant "construed as being located, evaluated or described." A landmark (lm) is the participant with secondary focus in prominence in the profiled relationship (Langacker 2008, p. 70).

[8] As a nominalized verb, *gũciarwo* is a noun thus profiling a *thing* at a higher conceptual level, but for its essential conceptual content it evokes a process.

internally it is a process made evident by the verb root *-ciar-*. Figure 1.1 below is a graphic

representation of the process showing the trajector/*agent* and lm/*patient* of *ciar-*.

-ciar-

Figure 1.1 semantic structure of the verb root *-ciar-*

In this regard, the process represented by the finite verb is primary and the focus of analysis

because the finite verbal form requires the elaboration of complements which the nominal form

does not. Hence, the verb root *-ciar-* in the nominal form imposes a construal on what the

nominalized verb profiles—a process—the Kikuyu notion of procreation with covert

participants. (That is, the participants are not morphologically marked on the nominal form but

are schematically evoked. The one procreating (the adopter) is the trajector, and the one being

procreated (the adoptee) is the landmark. The suffix *-w-* is a passive marker whose effect is the

elevation of the landmark into primary prominence since in a passive, the focus is on the

experiencer (Langacker, 2013, p. 126). This is illustrated in 2 (b) below which is a passive verbal

clause. Focus is on the experiencer (Njagi) of the profiled process—Njagi is the focal participant

of the passive thus the trajector. This is trajectory/landmark realignment: the passive tells the

conceptualizer that the agent of the profiles process is not the trajector neither the lm. In the

process profiled by the *gũciarwo*, participants are covert, and the passive evokes them giving

focal prominence to the experiencer. The final vowel *-o*[9] *is* in the passive form of a verb.

2 (a) *nda-mũ-ciar-ir-e*   *na*   *m-bũri*

1SG (SBJ)-3SG (OBJ)-give.birth to/procreate-RMT PST-FV through   CL9-goat
'I gave birth to/procreated him through a goat'

(b) *Njagi a-ciar-ir-w-o*   *nĩ*   *Ndua na*   *m-bũri*
Njagi 3SG-give birth to/procreate-RMT PST-PASS-FV   by   Ndua   through   CL9-goat
'Njagi was given birth to/procreated by Ndua through a goat'

The nominalized verb is also an assembly of symbolic structures (comprised of itself and

the morphemes that combine to form it), and its description includes the description of the

relationships it exhibits as an assembly of symbolic structures. The relationships it exhibits

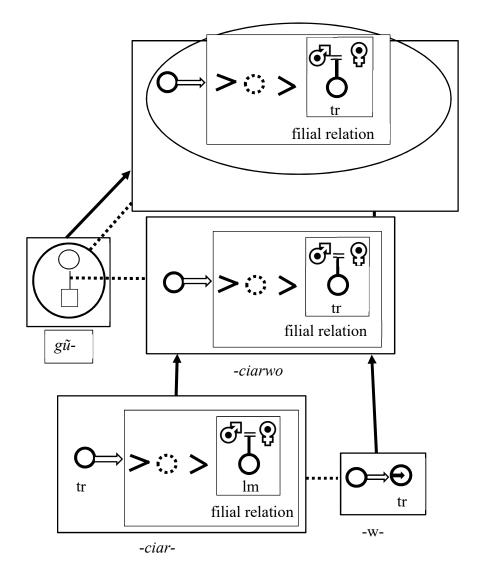(*integration* and *composition*) are shown in Figure 1.2 below.

Figure 1.2. Integration and composition relationships: the nominalized verb *gũciarwo*

To start with, integration is shown by the dotted lines showing correspondence in the sematic structures of the morphemes. The morphemes (as bound morphemes) are dependent on each other—they combine to form a meaningful whole, and they reveal the internal structure of *gũciarwo*. At the lowest level in the bottom tier, the integration relationship is between the verb root -*ciar*- and the passive marker -*w*-. That integration is realized in the correspondence between their semantic structures. The morpheme -*ciar*- is a three-place predicate whose semantic structure has three schematic e-sites[10] for participants: the trajector/*agent* who procreates the landmark/*patient* or causes the patient to come into existence, lm/*patient* who is affected by the action of the *agent*, and the resulting *relation*—filial kinship relation). Without an object (*child*), the domain of filial kinship is not in focus, but when you add *child* (see Figure 1.3 below) the filial domain becomes salient. *Child* necessarily evokes a filial kinship relation because c*hild* cannot be apprehended without simultaneously apprehending *father* and *mother,* and the relation between *father/mother* and *child*.

filial relation

Figure 1.3 Child relation

---

[10] When an expression qualifies to be a composite structure, one of its component structures typically contains "a schematic substructure which the other component serves to elaborate, i.e., characterize in finer-grained detail" (Langacker 2008, p. 198). Langacker illustrates this claim using the expression *"jar lid"*. He explains that the component "*lid* evokes a schematic container specified in finer detail by *jar*." He calls the component structure which contains a schematic substructure and is elaborated by another "an elaboration site or e-site" (p. 198). In this regard the schematic container evoked by *lid* is the e-site elaborated by *jar*.

With respect to the participants, the passive marker *(-w-)* alters the trajector/landmark alignment: it makes the *patient* the trajector, and there is not a landmark. In the *-ciar-* box (at the bottom tier) the *agent* of *-ciar-* is the trajector, but the passive alters this. Its effect is to make the *patient* the trajector as shown in the *-ciarwo* box in the mid-tier—to assign primary focus to the *patient*. Note that the effect of the passive on the landmark does not change the profile of *-ciar-* in any way.

In the mid-tier level is the integration relationship between the nominalizer *gũ-* and -*ciarwo*: *gũ-* is a noun prefix for nouns in CL 15 in Kikuyu and has a schematic e-site which is elaborated by the complex structure of *-ciarwo* (verb root plus the passive). The top-tier level shows the full nominalized verb showing a complex sematic structure.

The vertical relations of composition are shown by the vertical bold arrows. At the highest level in the top-tier, the vertical arrow from the nominalizer *gũ-* box to the full nominalized verb box shows that *gũ-* is the profile determinant at that level in the sense that the nominalized verb is categorized as a noun. So the *gũ-* box has the same profile as in the top tier. In other words, *gũ-* is the morpheme that reifies the process evoked by the *gũciarwo* allowing it to function as a noun at discourse level. Note that the nominalizer *gũ-* does not alter the internal semantic structure of *gũciarwo*. At the same level, the vertical arrow from *-ciarwo* box to the full nominalized verb circle shows that the *-ciar-* is the profile determiner of the process evoked by the nominalized verb.

At the middle level in the mid-tier, the profile of *-ciarwo* is determined by the verb root -*ciar-* shown by the vertical arrow from the *-ciar-* box at the lowest level. The arrow from the passive marker box to the *-ciarwo* box shows the contribution of the passive in *–ciarwo,* the

patient gains focal prominence. The vertical arrow from the passive marker box to the *-ciarwo*

box indicates fusion, the passive is fused into the semantic structure of *-ciar-*.

1.3.3 *Na mbũri:* verb phrase modifier

Within the organizational structure of the complex nominal expression *na mbũri* is an

instance of a prepositional phrase and is a dependent component with respect to the nominalized

verb. It instantiates a verb phrase modifier modifying the process profiled by *gũciarwo*. That is,

it specifically codes[11] the instrument[12] for achieving the process. This follows what Langacker

(2008, p. 358) says concerning the roles of prepositional phrases in a clause organizational

structure—they code "nonfocused participants such as instruments." So, *na mbũri* syntactically

combines with *gũciarwo* to specify the means (instrument) by which the profiled process is

accomplished—through the ritual that involved the slaughtering of a goat whose end result was

the creation of the filial kinship relation between nonkin. In other words, *na mbũri* forces a

different interpretation of the process evoked by *ciar-* (give birth/procreate) to that of creating a

filial kinship relation between nonkin.

---

[11] Langacker (2008, p. 357) uses the term "coding" to refer to "how conceptual structures relate to the linguistic structures invoked to express them."
[12] In a clause, "an instrument is something used by an agent to affect another entity" (Langacker 2008, p. 356).
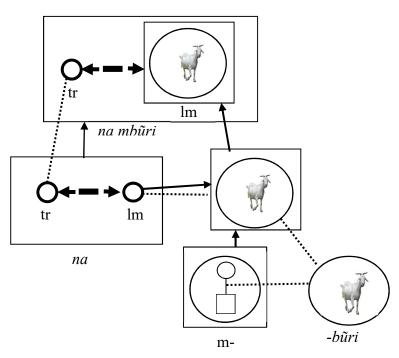
Figure 1.4 Integration and composition: prepositional phrase *na mbũri*

Being a prepositional phrase makes *na mbũri* a composite structure (a combination of the preposition *na* and the nominal *mbũri*. As such, it imposes a construal—it raises the question of the role of its components as grammatical constructions. To begin with, the preposition *na* is the head of the prepositional phrase thus the profile determinant of the prepositional phrase. That is, the prepositional phrase inherits its profile from the preposition (Langacker 2008, p. 202). Moreover, *na* marks its object (*mbũri*) as the means/instrument of accomplishing the process invoked by the temporal process cued by *-ciar-*—— the process of establishing a filial kinship relation between nonkin.

The component *mbũri* as the object of the preposition *na* elaborates the schematic lm/e-site of *na* as shown in Figure 1.4. Elaboration is shown by the arrow from the landmark of *na* in the mid-tier to the box of the nominal *mbũri* in the top-tier. The dotted line running parallel to the arrow indicates that the landmark of *na* and the profile of the nominal *mbũri* refer to the same

entity. *Mbũri* is also an autonomous component which in Langacker's (2008, p. 200) terms "does not feel conceptually incomplete if used in some other way than as a prepositional object." As a noun in the prepositional phrase *mbũri* profiles a thing—an animal ritually slaughtered to accomplish many things in the Kikuyu society. Its discourse context (its co-occurrence with -*ciar*-) specifies the ritual it was used to accomplish: the ritual of adoption. So, in its discourse context, the use of *mbũri* is metonymic: its use does not just evoke the concept of a domestic animal. Instead, it is its instrumental use that is in focus. Note that there are other expressions in Kikuyu where *mbũri* takes the instrumental role marked by the preposition *na* (see 3 below), a statement is said by a man saying that he paid bride price using *mbũri*.

3. *Nda-mũ-gũr-ir-e*   *na   m-bũri*
   1SG (SUB)-3SG (OBJ)-buy-RMT PST-FV   with   CL9-goat
       'I bought her with goats.'

At the bottom-tier in Figure 1.4, the noun *m-bũri* is also morphologically complex. The prefix *m-* is a noun class marker (CL 9) and -*bũri* is the noun root. The noun class prefix has a schematic e-site which is elaborated by the noun root. Note that it is not possible to have a noun without a prefix in Kikuyu. Thus, noun roots need a prefix, just as a prefix needs a noun root.

As a prepositional phrase *na mbũri* conceptually represents a nonprocessual relationship—an atemporal relationship—and apprehending the relationship evokes entities that participate in it as the trajector and the landmark as shown in Figure 1.4 above in the mid-tier. Its object *mbũri* elaborates its lm. Its schematic trajector/e-site is elaborated by *gũciarwo*—the temporal process cued by -*ciar*- as shown in Figure 1.5 by the dotted line between the -*ciar*- box and the trajector of *na* at the bottom-tier. The parallel arrow to the dotted line indicates that the trajector of *na* and the profile of -*ciar*- refer to the same entity. That is, the trajector of *na* corresponds to and is elaborated by the *agentive process* as a whole in the -*ciar*- box in the

bottom tier (Figure 1.5). Note that the *agentive process* is the main process evoked by the nominalized verb which subsumes the trajector/*agent* procreating the lm/*patient.* The *agent* exerts force on the *instrument* which exerts force on the *patient*. Note also that the *na* phrase is adverbial and takes as its trajector the process cued by -*ciar*-. This does not mean that the trajector of *na* is the agent of the main process. It rather indicates that the trajector of instrumental *na* is an agentive process. The semantic contribution of the *na* phrase to the action chain is the addition of the instrumental participant (its landmark, *mbũri*). So, in the action chain, the instrument represented by the *mbũri* box is between the trajector/agent and the lm/patient—the agent exerts force on the instrument which exerts force on the patient. Thus in the -*ciar*- 'adoption' scenario, the agent/adopter uses the goat/instrument (metonymically standing for the ritual in which the goat plays a crucial role) to cause the patient to acquire a new kinship role—a *son* who necessarily evokes a filial kinship relation that subsumes the conception of the *father* and the *mother* domains in the filial relation box inside the top-tier box (Figure 1.5).
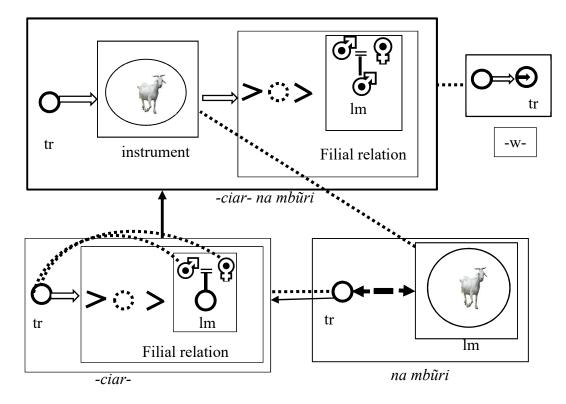
Figure 1.5. Preposition *na* and its focal participants: tr and lm

Note that the trajector/agent in the action chain corresponds to the *father* and *mother* domains in the filial relation because the lm/patient in the new kinship role becomes a *son* to the adoptive father and his wife as shown in the description of the ritual of adoption.

1.3.4 *Gũciarwo na mbũri*: the nominal expression

The box in top-tier in Figure 1.6 is a graphic representation of the semantic structure of the entire nominal expression. Conceptually, though related to its components, the nominal expression is a distinct entity. Although the *gũciarwo* is its profile determinant, the semantic characterization of the entire expression differs from that of the nominalized verb in the following respect: it includes the instrument (*mbũri*) a participant added by the prepositional phrase. As indicated above, the addition of the instrument shifts the interpretation of *-ciar-* from the primary sense to that adoption. Thus in the adoption scenario, the agent/adopter uses the *mbũri*/instrument to cause the patient to acquire a new kinship role as a *son* represented by the filial relation box: a role that necessarily evokes the conception of *father* and *mother* domains.
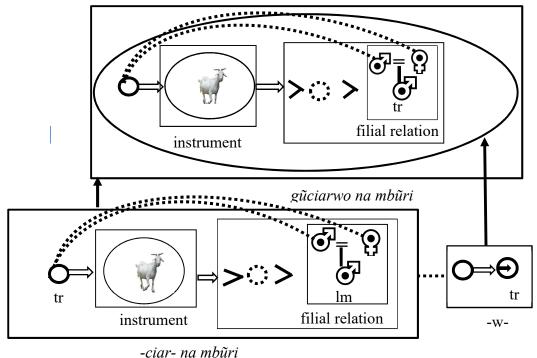
gũciarwo na mbũri

-ciar- na mbũri

Figure 1.6. The semantic structure of the nominalized expression

1.4 Conceptual content evoked by *gũciarwo na mbũri*

The meaning of *gũciarwo na mbũri* depends also on the conventionalized conceptual content it evokes in the conceptual universe of the Kikuyu speakers informed by their linguistic and cultural background. Since it is a complex expression, the analysis of its conceptual content subsumes and presupposes that of its components—the nominalized verb *gũciarwo* and the prepositional phrase *na mbũri.* Each contributes in part to the total sematic value of the entire expression.

1.4.1 Conceptual content evoked by *gũciarwo*

The analysis of the conceptual content evoked by *gũciarwo* primarily focuses on the process conceptually represented by *-ciar-* the verb root of *gũciarwo.* Within the Kikuyu folk theory of procreation, the conceptual base *-ciar-* has two primary senses: the process of giving birth to an infant by a woman and the process of procreation. Example 4 (a) below exemplifies the former

sense and (b) the latter. The focus of this paper is on the latter sense (procreation) but not in its primary sense. As already mentioned, the co-occurrence of the *gũciarwo* with the prepositional phrase *na mbũri* shifts the interpretation of *-ciar-* to that of creating a filial kinship relation between nonkin.

4. (a) *Mũ-tumia*   *wake*   *a-ciar-a*   *ka-irĩtu*
    CL1-wife   of.his   3SG (SUB)-give.birth-FV   CL12-girl
    'His wife has given birth to (a baby) girl.'

  (b) *Waithaka*   *na*   *Wambui*   *ni-o*   *ma-ciar-ir-e*   *Wangari*
    Waithaka   and   Wambui   are-the.ones 3RD (PL)-procreate-ir-FV Wangari
    'Waithaka and Wambui procreated Wangari.'

The procreation profile is a substructure within the conceptual base of the Kikuyu folk theory of procreation. In its primary sense the profile of *-ciar-* activates the following domains: participants, marriage, *nyũmba* 'family', *mbarĩ* 'extended family', *mũhĩrĩga* 'clan', and Kikuyu kinship philosophy. The participants are a man and a woman *aciari* (*mũciari* sg) 'the procreators', and *mũciarwa* 'the procreated' (offspring). The *aciari* activate the marriage domain within which procreation is expected to take place, which in turn activates the Kikuyu concept of *nyũmba* 'family'. *Nyũmba* is the basic "social and administrative unit under the headship of the father" (Muriuki 1974, p. 115). Once a man has his own *nyũmba* (made of himself, his wife/wives and children), when his sons get married and have children, the entire extended family, now with several *nyũmba*, qualifies to be a *mbarĩ* under his name. Note that those belonging to *mbarĩ* are essentially relatives extending from the same *rũrĩra*[13] 'umbilical cord'

---

[13] Literally speaking, at birth an infant is connected to its mother by an umbilical cord. That connection metonymically represents the kinship relation according to the Kikuyu philosophy of kinship.

(kinship tie/link). Note that adoption entailed creation of a kinship tie enabling one to become kin in the *nyũmba* and *mbarĩ* of his adopter.

   A closely related concept to *nyũmba* and *mbarĩ* is *mũhĩrĩga* (*mĩhĩrĩga* pl*)* 'clan'. Every individual in the Kikuyu society belongs to a sub-clan of one of the ten *mĩhĩrĩga*. A man and his *nyũmba* which later grows into a *mbarĩ* belong to his *mũhĩrĩga.* In the Kikuyu society, it is the *mũhĩrĩga* of a man that is perpetuated in the future lineage. So, the children born in a marriage belong to the *mũhĩrĩga* of their father. "Several *mbarĩ* units" descended from a single *mbarĩ*, thus bearing a common *mũhĩrĩga* name, are referred to as *mũhĩrĩga* (Kenyatta, 1938, p. 1)—a sub-clan of one of the ten Kikuyu *mĩhĩrĩga*. The affairs of such a *mũhĩrĩga* (sub-clan) were handled by *kĩama kĩa mũhĩrĩga* 'a council of *mũhĩrĩga*' made up of male elders (Muriuki, 1974, p. 115–116). Members of the same *mũhĩrĩga* had obligations to one another, for example, they exercised heightened hospitality to their own (Cagnolo et al., 2006, p. 20). When a member of a *mũhĩrĩga* wished to 'adopt' a nonkin, he did so in consultation with members of his *mũhĩrĩga* because the person he adopted became a member of his *mũhĩrĩga*.

1.4.2. Conceptual content evoked by *na*

  The analysis of the conceptual content evoked by *na* starts with its profile. As a Kikuyu lexeme *na* has two profiles: As a coordinate conjunction it profiles the relationship between two grammatical constituents of equal status as illustrated in 5 (a) below and 5 (b). As a preposition, in Langacker's terms (2013, p. 198) *na* profiles "a nonprocessual relationship between two things"—two schematic e-sites (trajector and landmark/object). In respect to its landmark/object, *na* is the conceptually dependent constituent—it needs its object to complete it. In Kikuyu speech the lm/object of *na* can be one of the following: an *instrument* as we have already

observed, can express *manner* [5 (c)], can indicate *direction* [5 (d)], or is an *accompaniment* [5

(e)].

5. (a) *Mũthoni* a-*ruga*   **na**   *a-thambia*   *n-yũmba*
    Mũthoni CL1 (3ʳᵈ SG)-cook   **and**   CL1 (3ʳᵈ SG)-clean   CL9-house
    'Mũthoni has cooked and cleaned the house.'

  (b) *ma-cungwa*   **na**   *ma-embe*   *nĩ*   *ma-tunda*
  CL6-orange   **and**   CL6-mango   are   CL6-fruit
   'Oranges and mangoes are fruits'

  (c) *Twa-tind-a*   **na**   *mw-ago*
  CL2 (1ˢᵗ PL)-spent.the.day-FV   **with**   CL3-happiness
    'We have spent the day happily.'

  (d) *Tũ-ra-thiĩ*   **na**   *mũ-ciĩ*
  CL2 (1ˢᵗ PL)-PRE-go   **toward**   CL3-home
    'We are going toward home.'

  (e) *A-gũr-ir-e*   *mũ-gũnda*   *me* **na** *mũ-ka*
  3SG (SUB)-buy-RMT PST-FV   CL3-land   they **with** CL1-wife
    'He bought land accompanied by/together with his wife.'

As such, it is the discourse context where *na* occurs that determines its profile and the

conceptual content foregrounded by that profile. In the nominal phrase, it is a preposition and its

object *mbũri* is an instrument.

1.4.3 Conceptual content evoked by *mbũri*

As claimed earlier, the use of *mbũri* in the prepositional phrase is metonymic. When an

expression is used metonymically, its "usual reference provides mental access to the entity it is

actually construed as designating" in that context (Langacker, 2008, p. 504). Langacker

demonstrates metonymy with example (7) below.[14]

6. *Vietnam marked a turning point in American history.*

---

[14]*Vietnam* is metonymically used. "Vietnam does not refer to the country per se, but rather to a war that was fought there. Coherence demands that the subject designate an event, and knowledge of recent history leaves little doubt as to which event is intended. Owing to their strong association, naming the country readily calls the war to mind" (Langacker 2008, p. 504).

Figure 1.7 below illustrates the mental path of what *mbũri* metonymically accesses as used in the nominal expression. As Langacker (2008, p. 504) puts it, "it is a mental progression from a reference point (R) to a target (T)." The conceptualizer (©) evokes the reference (R$_1$) for *mbũri*—the concept of a domestic animal[15] which provides access to sets of "entities" (domains) which according to Langacker (2008, p. 504) "constitute its dominion" (D$_1$)—all the possible uses of *mbũri* in Kikuyu culture but as a potential target (T$_1$). The use of *mbũri* in the nominal expression constraints the use *mbũri* access. The potential target (T$_1$) in turn functions as the next reference (R$_2$), and it provides access to sets of domains constituting its dominion (D$_2$)—the ritual of adoption also as a potential target (T$_2$). Then the ritual of adoption functions as the next reference (R$_3$) and it in turn provides access to sets of domains constituting its dominion (D$_3$)—the entire adoption practice in Kikuyu culture. The ultimate target (T$_3$) is the resulting filial kinship tie. Thus, focus is not on *mbũri* being a focal participant (landmark of the preposition), but its instrumental use in the Kikuyu adoption process.

The Dominion (D$_1$) accessed by *mbũri* comprises the uses of *mbũri* in the Kikuyu society. According to Leakey (1977 Vol. I, p. 207), *mbũri* were vital in the community's economic, religious, and social life, and there, many circumstances where custom required the slaughtering of *mbũri*. They were thus the "most universally owned animals" (p. 207). As such, the profile of *mbũri* metonymically activates the community's economic life, religious, and social occasions that required the use of *mbũri*.

---

[15] *Mbũri* could either be a goat or a sheep since the Kikuyu refer to both goats and sheep collectively as *mbũri* unless it is necessary to make a distinction when goats are referred to with the general term *mbũri* and sheep are referred to as *ng'ondu*.
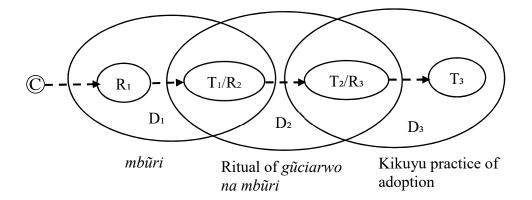
Figure 1.7 Mental path of what *mbũri* designates

1.4.4 The ritual of adoption in Kikuyu culture

The ritual of adoption accessed metonymically by the reference of *mbũri* as a potential target (T_2) constitutes the second dominion (D_2 in Figure 1.7). During the ritual, *mbũri* was slaughtered in order to provide essential body parts and meat for the feast that accompanied the ritual.

Kikuyu culture provided for the adoption of children, adults males and foreigners. The motivating factors varied in each case, but the overarching idea was the creation of a filial kinship link. In the case of the adoption of adult males, the *mũciarwa*[16] 'the one procreated' (adoptee) was either a single or a married man. Without being a member of the hosting *mbarĩ*[17] the *mũciarwa* could not participate in important ceremonies and rituals that pertained to that *mbarĩ*, and he was not entitled to any inheritance. At times, it was the head of a *mbarĩ* who took the initiative of reaching out to the *mũciarwa* with the consent of the members of his *mbarĩ*. When approached the *mũciarwa* did not hesitate because of the benefits which he would reap

---

[16] Kenyatta (1938, p. 22) defines *mũciarwa* as "a man who is adopted into the family of a clan other than his own by means of a special religious ceremony."

[17]In the frontier areas, new *mbarĩ* founders hosted some people who were not their kin who were referred to as *ahoi* 'requesters'—tenants with cultivation and building rights on their lands on a friendly basis (Kenyatta 1938, p. 22). They were the ones who were sometimes adopted by *mbarĩ* founders.

once he was 'procreated'. The 'procreating' father and the entire *mbarĩ* benefited because they increased in number and that meant a stronger and a wealthier *mbarĩ*. Alternatively, it was the *mũciarwa* who requested the head of the *mbarĩ* to 'procreate' him. It was the prerogative of the head of the *mbarĩ* to accept the request or to reject it. He rejected the request if the *mũciarwa* was of questionable character.

Data forming the description of the actual ceremony was collected in the field from informants through an interview schedule. The actual ceremony was preceded by talks between the *mũciarwa* and the 'procreating' father and consent by members of the procreating *mbarĩ*. At the appointed time, the *mũciarwa* if married set out together with his wife/wives, children, and livestock before dawn and headed for the homestead of the 'procreating' father. Once they arrived as part of formal introduction, the *mũciarwa* declared his intention: "*ngwenda ũnjiare nduĩke kĩhĩĩ gĩaku*" 'I would like you to 'procreate me' me so that I might become your male child'. Note that the *mũciarwa* uses the term *kĩhĩĩ* 'a male child' as a way of showing humility and endearment to his prospective father.

The ritual was carried out a day or two after arrival. The sons and the livestock of the *mũciarwa* were not allowed to spend the night in the homestead of the prospective father. This was signifying that the *mũciarwa* was still an outsider. The prospective father found a homestead in the neighborhood where they were hosted. On the appointed day, the sons of the *mũciarwa* drove their father's livestock to the homestead of the prospective father. He blessed them and allowed them into his homestead. Members of the *mbarĩ* and *mũhĩrĩga* of the 'procreating' father and officiating elders were in attendance. Then the following items were brought out before the elders to bless and dedicate them for the ritual: *ndarwa* 'cow's hide', *mũkuha* 'awl', *rwenji*

'razor', *ira* 'soft white-greyish stone powder', *maguta ma mbarĩki* 'castor oil', a *rworo* 'branding iron for livestock', a *rũhiũ rwa njora* 'double edged machete', and a *ngũũri* 'tweezers'.

A male goat was brought to the officiating elders who faced it towards each of the four mountains of *Ngai* 'God' that surround the Kikuyu country: *Kĩrĩ-nyaga* 'the mountain of brightness' (Mt. Kenya) on the north; *Kĩa-njahi* 'the mountain of the big rain' (Kilimambogo) on the East; *Kĩrĩ-birũirũ* 'the mountain of the clear sky' (Ngong Hills) on the South; and *Kĩa-nyandarwa* 'the mountain of hides' (Aberdare Ranges) on the West. While doing so the elders uttered words of worship to *Ngai* 'God', blessing the goat, and invoked blessings for the whole occasion.

The elders slaughtered the goat and prepared the meat for roasting. Then the eldest son of the 'procreating' father and the *mũciarwa* sat on the *ndarwa* spread at the center of the homestead. A *rũkwaro* 'strip of raw skin' was cut from the skin of the slaughtered animal and holes made at either end using the *mũkuha*. One hole was to be fitted on the middle finger of the *mũciarwa* and the other on the middle finger of the eldest son of the procreating father: a link that symbolically represented the umbilical cord (kinship link). This signified that the *mũciarwa* had entered into the same status as the son of his new father. Then the heads of the two men were shaved to signify the end of their status as nonkin. A *mũciarithania* 'midwife' moved to cut the *rũkwaro* joining the two men saying, "*Nĩndamũtuithania, kuuma ũmũthĩ nĩndamũciarithania mũtuĩke a nyina ũmwe na ithe ũmwe. Mũtikanaitane thakame. Ũmwe wanyu angĩgakua ũrĩa watigwo nĩakamũgaya*" 'I have separated you, I have made you to procreate one another, to become sons of the same mother and father, none of you should pour the blood of the other, if either of you dies, the one who is left will inherit the wealth of the other'. The proclamation that 'I have made you to procreate one another to become sons of the same mother and father'

denotes both co-filiation and sibling kinship ties between the two men. Henceforth, they were forbidden from doing harm to one another. Then their heads were anointed with *maguta ma mbarĩki* 'castor oil' as a way of blessing them.

After this their father smeared *ira* on their foreheads and palms, saying the same words as the *mũciarithania* in order to cleanse them from any *thahu* 'ritual uncleanness' they might have contracted through seeing or touching. He then turned to the *mũciarwa* saying, "*Nĩndagũciara ũtuĩke mwana wakwa. Ũngĩkoragwo nĩngaarĩhwo. Ũngĩkoragana nĩgaarĩha. Indo ciaku nĩ ciakwa na indo ciakwa nĩ ciaku*" 'I have procreated you to become my child. If anyone kills you he will pay me. If you kill anyone I will pay. Your wealth is mine and my wealth is yours.' This was a father's commitment to a son.

Then the 'procreating' father gave the *mũciarwa* several items: a *rworo* 'branding iron' for his livestock. It was understood that once procreated, the *mũciarwa* automatically became a member of the *mũhĩrĩga* of his new father and he had to start branding his livestock the way the *mũhĩrĩga* of his new father did. The second item was a *rũhiũ rwa njora* 'a double-edged machete' as a weapon for defense since sons were expected to defend their father's homestead and the third items was *ngũũri* 'tweezers' to signify that the *mũciarwa* was ready to live in that home until old age.[18]

Then the two men (son of the procreating father and the *mũciarwa*) stood up and headed to where the meat was being prepared by the elders. The elders took the roasted breast of the slaughtered animal and waved it towards each of the four mountains of *Ngai* worshiping repeatedly thus: '*Thathaiya Ngai thaai!* Worship God!' as a way of dedicating it to him so that he might bless it for the ritual at hand. Then it was served to the two men. The breast was a

---

[18] Old men in Kikuyu society used tweezers to pluck their beard as a pastime.

special cut usually offered to *Ngai* as a sacrifice and on special occasions like this one it was eaten only by the two men undergoing the ritual. The rest of the meat was eaten by all those in attendance to celebrate the new kin. Then the 'procreating' father repeated his earlier pronouncement to show that the he had taken the full responsibility of a father over his new son. The *mũciarwa*, and his family if he was married, ceased to belong to his original *nyũmba, mbarĩ* and *mũhĩrĩga,* and no one from his former *nyũmba, mbarĩ* and *mũhĩrĩga* could lay any claim on him. Once the ritual was completed, what it accomplished was a sealed matter.

Once the ceremony was over, the *mũciarwa* was treated like any other son in the new family. He got inheritance rights and had duties and responsibilities. If married, his wife and children became part of his new *mbarĩ* and *mũhĩrĩga* with rights to participate in all the ceremonies and rituals. If not married, his new father was required to get him a wife by helping him in the payment of bride price and negotiations. The coming in of the *mũciarwa* strengthened the *nyũmba* of his new father and as an adopted son he was special in the sense that he could perpetuate the lineage if a curse was pronounced. It was believed that he could not receive such curse because he was not of the natural descent of his new father.

The ritual of *adoption* of a child into one's family was similar to that of an adult discussed above in the essentials because what was critical was the creation of the kinship ties which brought the child into the *mũhĩrĩga* of the 'procreating' father. Secondly the ritual was carried out when the child had grown up to a level of understanding things in order allow for the understanding of the ritual. The only distinction was that the *mũciarwa* was a minor and could have been of either gender.

Foreigners who were adopted among the Kikuyu were mainly from the neighboring communities such as the Maasai and Athi. Kabetũ (1947, p. 74–75) gives a detailed account of

the ritual whose purpose was to establish a kinship relationship. The Kikuyu man who wished to 'procreate' the Maasai man brewed beer and slaughtered a bull and a male goat. He then gathered all the members of his *mbarĩ* and *mũhĩrĩga* plus other tribesmen and announced his intention to 'procreate' the Maasai man through the ritual since they had lived together for a long time.[19] The rest of the ceremony was more or less like that one of an adult Kikuyu man discussed above.

Once the Maasai man was 'procreated', he became like any other son of his new father, found acceptance into the Kikuyu society as one of them, and the Kikuyu society gained by increasing its numbers. When the time came for him to get married, his new father got him a bride from among the Kikuyu following the due process of the Kikuyu customs of marriage, especially in the issue of negotiations and bride price. He also normally lived according to the Kikuyu customs. But if he wished to follow the customs akin to the Maasai[20] as a married man, he was free to do so.

The ritual of 'mutual adoption', a term adopted by scholars (Leakey, 1977, Vol. 1) and Muriuki (1974) represents another type of adoption of foreigners. The first type occurred when some Kikuyu and Maasai families living in frontier areas exchanged sons as a sign of a treaty to maintain peace among the two communities. Each son had to go through a ritual of being accepted as a son in his new home. This second type of adoption was a prerequisite to the land buying process by a Kikuyu family from a Ndorobo/Athi Family.[21] Leakey (1977, Vol. I) gives a

---

[19] The Maasai boys abducted during raids, were the ones who were later adopted. The presence of other immigrants of Maasai origin in Kikuyu country was as a result of adversities facing them back at home such as epidemics that wiped out their livestock, civil wars, and famine (Muriuki 1974, p. 85).
[20] The Kikuyu society consisted of two ritual groups; *ũkabi* 'Maasai' and *Gĩkũyũ karĩng'a* '*Gĩkũyũ* proper.' The former practiced customs akin to the Maasai while the latter practiced Kikuyu customs (Karanja 1999, p. 31–32).
[21] Athi/Ndorobo was a relatively small community living south of Chania River which lived in the forest on hunting and gathering (Leakey 1952, p. 30)

detailed account of the ritual. When an individual Kikuyu family wished to buy land from a

Ndorobo, "they proposed ceremonies of 'mutual adoption' as a preliminary to the negotiations

which were to follow" (Leakey 1977, Vol. I, p. 90; see also Leakey, 1952, p. 4). This was after a

Ndorobo found a Kikuyu who was interested and was able to buy his land. Once the ritual of

mutual adoption was over, the parties involved treated each other as fellow tribesmen: "In other

words, the adoption ceremony provided a mutual safeguard and guarantee of good faith"

(Leakey, 1977, Vol. I, p. 91).

1.4.5 Adoption practice in Kikuyu culture

The ritual of adoption discussed above as a potential target (T_2) in the mental path of what

mbũri accesses, metonymically accesses the entire adoption practice in Kikuyu culture

constituting the third dominion (D_3 in Figure 1.7). The starting point is the profile evoked by

gũciarwo na mbũri—the process of creating a filial kinship relation between nonkin—a

substructure within the filial kinship domain. Filial relation is essentially the link between

parent(s) and a child that entails mutual obligations between the two parties. Within the filial

kinship domain the following subdomains figure prominently: Kikuyu philosophy of kinship,

mũhĩrĩga, Kikuyu folk theory of procreation, participants, factors necessitating adoption, and

types of 'adoption'. Note that most of the active domains (participants, *nyũmba, mbarĩ,*

mũhĩrĩga, and the Kikuyu philosophy of kinship) in the conceptual base of the procreation

profile of *ciar-* in its primary sense discussed above, figure as central domains in the conceptual

base of the profile of *gũciarwo na mbũri*. While this is the case, the discussion of the domains in

this subsection focuses on the practice of adoption in Kikuyu culture.

Since the profiled process was a way of creating filial kinship between nonkin, the

Kikuyu philosophy of kinship is activated as a central domain. According to this philosophy, the

Kikuyu refer to their relatives metonymically as *ndĩra ciitũ* 'our umbilical cords'—those who are connected to us by means of umbilical cords. According to this philosophy, for 'adoption' to take effect, filial kinship must be established between the *mũciarwa* 'the procreated' and *mũciari* 'the procreator'. During the ritual as described above*,* a *rũkwaro* was used to symbolically represent the umbilical cord, and by it the *mũciarwa* got connected to the family of the *mũciari*. After the ritual, the *mũciarwa* became a member of the 'procreating' family in every respect. From the pronouncements made during the ritual, co-filiations and siblingship were established. These kinship ties extended to the *nyũmba, mbarĩ,* and *mũhĩrĩga*, and ultimately to the whole society if the *mũciarwa* was a non-Kikuyu.

The *Mũhĩrĩga* domain is critical because the 'procreating' father could not adopt without the consent of its council for the following reasons: the council members helped survey the character of the potential *mũciarwa.* The *mũciarwa* became a member of the *mũhĩrĩga* of the *mũciari* which had obligations to fulfill on behalf its members. The *mũciarwa* got inheritance rights of portion of the land of the *mũciari,* and the land occupied by the members of the *mũhĩrĩga* belonged to the entire *mũhĩrĩga* by the virtue of the land first being the property of the *mbarĩ* founder (Cagnolo et al., 2006, p. 29). As a new member, the *mũciarwa* had to abide by norms of the *mũhĩrĩga*. In turn, the *mũhĩrĩga* gained by increasing its members and its wealth if the *mũciarwa* owned herds of livestock.

The Kikuyu folk theory of procreation is a central domain because the adoption process as conceptualized by the Kikuyu folk was accomplished by 'procreation' denoted by *gũciarwo* in the sense of creating a filial kinship relation between nonkin. Within the procreation domain, the profiled process activates two participants—*mũciari* 'procreator' and the *mũciarwa* 'the procreated'. The 'procreator' was always a head of a *mbarĩ*, he could have been a man with a

childless wife, or a wealthy man in a frontier area who wished to adopt one of his tenants as a result of a very cordial relationship, and in order to strengthen his *mbarĩ* and *mũhĩrĩga* (Leakey, 1977, Vol. 1, p. 106).

The *mũciarwa* could have been a child (stranded or abandoned in infancy), an adult Kikuyu man seeking fortune and future prospects in another *mbarĩ* and *mũhĩrĩga* after suffering a series of misfortunes (Leakey, 1977, Vol. I, p. 114), a reformed criminal formally disowned by his father, *mbarĩ*, and *mũhĩrĩga,* and seeking to start life afresh, a tenant living on the land of a wealthy *mbarĩ* head (Kenyatta, 1938, p. 22; Karanja 1999, p. 29), or a foreigner from a neighboring community (Muriuki 1974, p. 85).

There were varied factors that necessitated adoption in the Kikuyu society. Closely related to the factors, are the types of adoption highlighted in the description of the ritual of adoption. The motivating factors were varied in each type, but the overarching idea was the creation of a filial kinship link.

The adoption of children was based on a common saying that, *mwana ũtari mũreri aciaragwo na mbũri* 'a child without someone to bring it up is normally 'procreated' by means of a goat'. This was the case for orphans, stranded children, and abandoned infants. An infant was abandoned when a mother died while giving birth before the cord had been cut and the baby named. Her body was carried out with her baby into the bush and abandoned. In such a case the infant was taken in either for adoption or fosterage. The motive behind the act of rescuing the infant was to resolve the problem of childlessness or lack of a male child in a family.

Adoption of adult males was motivated by a cordial relationship between *mũciari* and *mũciarwa*, and the desire to strengthen one's *mbarĩ* and *mũhĩrĩga* in frontier areas. The Kikuyu folk moved to frontier areas due to "overpopulation, desire to found new *mbarĩ*, persistent

misfortunes, and family conflicts" (Karanja 1999, p. 1, 29). Some wealthy members who moved to frontier areas took with them *ahoi*[22] 'requesters (for cultivation rights)'. All along, a *mũhoi* (sg.) had no *rũrĩra* 'kinship tie' with the newly founded *mbarĩ*. It is the cordial relationship between a *mũhoi* and the hosting *mbarĩ* that led to adoption.

In addition, a son who had earlier been disowned by his father and *mũhĩrĩga* because of being a notorious criminal could seek to be adopted in another family if he later reformed. The ritual of disowning such a son was known as *gũikia mũndũ na kĩano* 'to hurl a person away with an arrow without an arrow-head'. According to Kabetũ (1947, p. 71–72), such a person had a chance of going back to his own father if he reformed.

A further case of adoption of an ethnic Kikuyu concerned men who were inferior socially and took the role of *ndungata* 'serf' in the homes of rich families. One became a serf due to extreme poverty or being orphaned and without close relatives. If he proved his worth he was adopted by his benefactor and elevated to the position of a son (Leakey 1977 Vol.II, p. 796–798).

The adoption of foreigners was due to varied situations that caused the presence of non-Kikuyu immigrants in Kikuyu-land such as raids, adversities facing neighboring communities such as epidemics, civil wars, and famine. Such immigrants were later adopted (Muriuki 1974, p. 85) because as long as they were regarded foreigners, they could not participate in the ceremonies and rituals of their hosts. Mutual adoption discussed above was either motivated by a desire to have a peace treaty in the frontier areas when a Kikuyu and a Maasai family exchanged sons, or was a preliminary to a land-buying deal between a Ndorobo and a Kikuyu so that parties involved can deal fairly with each other.

---

[22] Kenyatta (1938, p. 22) describes a *mũhoi* (sing.) as a man "who acquires cultivation rights on the *ng'ũndũ* 'land' of another man or family unit, on a friendly basis without any payment for the use of the land."

1.5 Conclusion

This article demonstrates the use of a Cognitive Grammar approach in the analysis of the Kikuyu conceptualization of adoption. A claim of Cognitive Grammar exploited in this paper is that, the meaning of an expression resides in the conceptualization it evokes. Using this approach, it is possible to unpack the evoked conceptualization starting with the characterization of the grammatical construction instantiated by an expression. That characterization counts as the linguistic meaning of an expression and contributes in part to the total semantic value of an expression. Without any clear boundary the analysis focuses on the conventional conceptual content evoked by the expression in the conceptual universe of the interlocutors (in speaking and listening capacities) informed by their language and culture. The evoked conceptual content is in related domains and is incorporated in the emergence of the meaning of the expression.

References

Cagnolo, C., Wambũgũ H., Ngarariga J. M., & Kariũki, P. M. (2006). *The Agĩkũyũ, their customs, traditions, and folklore*. Nairobi: Wisdom Graphics Place.

Division of Christianeducation of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States. (1952). *The holy Bible: Revised Standard Version containing the Old and New Testaments.* New York: Thomas Nelson & sons.

Hopper, P. J. & Thomson, S. A. (1984). The discourse basis for lexical categories in universal grammar. *Language* 60.4, 703–752.

International Bible Society. (1996). *The holy Bible: New International version*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Kabetũ, M. N. (1947). *Kĩrĩra kĩa Agĩkũyũ: Kuuma mũndũ amonyokio o nginya rĩrĩa akahinga riitho aarĩkia kwĩgaya.* Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.

Karanja, J. K. (1999). *Founding an African faith: Kikuyu Anglican Christianity, 1900-1945*. Nairobi: Uzima Press.

Kenyatta, J. (1938). *Facing Mount Kenya: The traditional life of the Gikuyu*. London: Secker & Warburg.

Kintsch, W. (2000). The control of knowledge activation in discourse comprehension. In

Perrig and Grob, 125–133.

Langacker, R. W. (1987). *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar: Theoretical prerequisites* (Vol. 1). Stanford: Stanford university press.

Langacker, R. W. (2008). *Cognitive Grammar: A basic introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Langacker, R. W. (2013). *Essential of Cognitive Grammar*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Leakey, L. S. B. (1952). *Mau Mau and the Kikuyu*. London: Methuen.
Leakey, L. S. B. (1977). *The southern Kikuyu before 1903 Vol. 1*. London: Academic press.

Leakey, L. S. B. (1977). *The southern Kikuyu before 1903 Vol. 2*. London: Academic press.

Mugane, J. M. (1997). *A paradigmatic grammar of Gĩkũyũ*. Stanford: CLSI Publications.

Muriuki, G. (1974). *A history of the Kikuyu 1500–1900.* Nairobi: Oxford University Press.

Nurse, D., & Philippson, G. (2003) (Eds.). *The Bantu languages*. London: Routledge.

Richardson, J. T. E. (1996). *Working memory and human cognition*. Vol. 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The Lockman Foundation. (1973). *New American Standard Bible*. Carol Stream: Creation House, Inc.

The Zondervan Corporation. (1984). *The holy Bible: King James Version containing the Old and New Testaments translated out of the original tongues*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publishers.

Tyndale Charitable Trust. (1996). *New Living Translation*. Wheaton: Tyndale House

Wafula, L. M. (2005). *Nominalization structure of Kikuyu*. Nairobi: Africa International University (MA Translations thesis.)