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Metaphorical euphemisms in death-discourse among the Nzema

Abstract

This article seeks to deepen our understanding of the cognitive processes in death euphemisms in Nzema, a Kwa language of Ghana. The article highlights the metaphorical “mappings” across conceptual domains, where the concept of DEATH (target domain) is well understood in terms of more physical events such as JOURNEY, DEPARTURE, RETURN, INVITATION, CONTINUOUS SLEEP, LOSE A FIGHT, etc. (source domain). It is demonstrated that the Nzema conceptualise DEATH also as RETIREMENT, SUBTRACTION, BEREAVEMENT AS LIVING IN DARKNESS, BEING MISSING AT THE CROSSROADS, BURIAL AS HIDING/PRESERVING, BURYING AS SOWING A SEED, COFFIN AS HOUSE FOR AN INDIVIDUAL, CEMETERY/GRAVE AS BETTER PLACE, PLACE OF REST, and CORPSE AS A THING among others.

Keywords: Nzema culture, death discourse, euphemisms, conceptual metaphor

1. Introduction

Nzema is a Niger-Congo Kwa language spoken mainly in the south-west of the Western Region of Ghana. However, speakers of Nzema can be found also in some parts of Côte d'Ivoire (Annan 1980, Kwaw 2008). People who are the

speakers of the language are also referred to as “Nzema”. In Ghana, Nzema is studied from basic to the tertiary level of education. The Ghana Population and Housing Census conducted in 2021 puts the total number of Nzema at 342 090. The people are predominantly peasant farmers and fisherfolk who also relish in trading to supplement their livelihood. The Nzema value their cultural heritage, cherish and hold their traditional practices in high esteem. Traditional ceremonies such as puberty, marriage, naming and funeral rites are observed with dedication and passion. The Nzema thus have various cultural conceptions regarding the aforementioned practices, especially about funeral (death). In this article, our interest shall be on language use in context, focusing on the topic of language taboos and the social appropriateness of linguistic expression in discussing DEATH and its associated concepts from the Nzema socio-cultural perspective.

As in many other cultures, death is seen as a fear-based taboo in the Nzema society. Thus, the people try to employ indirect expressions to speak fairly about it. They feel reluctant to speak freely about death due to the perceived shocks and discomfort it might cause when listeners hear the bare mention of death without linguistics hedges and safeguards. In view of this, the Nzema dwell on euphemistic utterances to mitigate the unpleasant feelings associated with DEATH, BEREAVEMENT, COFFIN, BURIAL and GHOST. Adopting the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (henceforth CMT) with further insights from Cultural Conceptualisations (hereafter CC), the article looks at how the Nzema use metaphor-based euphemisms to engage in conversations regarding death. It aims to bring to light the culturally established metaphoric-euphemisms used in “death language” among the Nzema to make such discourse convenient for public hearing.

Due to its “embeddedness” in everyday cultural experiences, the “language of death” has gained some scholarship in the literature. Across languages and cultures, studies on metaphorical conceptualisations of DEATH and DYING have been extensively undertaken. For example, Fernández (2006) and Solheim (2014) explored euphemistic-metaphors in Victorian obituaries and British and American obituaries respectively. These studies showed that there was a tendency to present sentimental obituaries in which the taboo of DEATH can be accounted for by various conceptual metaphors, most of which viewed death as a desirable event under the influence of Christian beliefs. Adepoju (2016) also investigated metaphors of DEATH in Nigerian newspaper obituaries. In a corpus-based contrastive study, Kuczok (2016) discussed metaphorical conceptualisations of DEATH and DYING in American English and Polish. Ongonda (2018) also did a cognitive analysis of metaphorical euphemisms in Kenyan obituaries; whereas Musah and Atibiri (2019) looked at metaphors of DEATH in Kusaal, a Mabia (Gur)

language of Ghana. In a comparative analysis, Owiredu (2020) examined metaphors and euphemisms of DEATH in Akan and Hebrew. These works noted that DEATH is commonly conceptualised as JOURNEY (DEPARTURE/ARRIVAL/RETURN), REST, SLEEP, LOSS, REWARD, and TRANSITION – observations which the findings of this study also corroborate. The previous works also have some resemblance with the current study in terms of theoretical applications, and provide an immense assistance to our analysis. This study further presents discussions on the conceptualisations of the following: BEREAVEMENT, BURIAL, COFFIN, CORPSE, CEMETERY and GHOST, which the previous studies remained silent about.

After a general introduction in Section 1, the rest of the article is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the sources, procedures and methods of data elicitation and how data were categorised for analysis, Section 3 gives an overview of euphemisms, Section 4 provides some orientation on the theoretical underpinning of the study, whereas Section 5 presents and discusses the data. The final Section 6 concludes the study. A reader can find an Appendix with linguistic data excerpts attached below the references section.

2. Methodology and data collection techniques

The study employed a qualitative ethnographic research design. The data collection period was from July 2020 to August 2021. The researchers used participant and non-participant observations to gather data at various ethnographic situations related to DEATH (e.g. during funeral rites). These were the periods where communication concerning DEATH and its associated concepts: BEREAVEMENT, CORPSE, COFFIN, BURIAL, CEMETERY and GHOST abounded. In terms of political jurisdiction and demarcation, the people of Nzema constitute the Èlɛmbeɛ District, Dwɔmɔɔ Municipal and Nzema East Municipal (Èvaloɛ) in the western part of Ghana. Therefore, in order to avoid biases, and to obtain more reliable and authentic data for analysis, the researchers visited two communities in each Municipal/District¹. This was done to ascertain uniformity in how the Nzema as a cultural group may have the same conceptual metaphors of DEATH and its related concepts. So, at various funerals settings in such Nzema communities, the researchers sought

¹ The communities visited were Asasetele and Awiebo (in the Èlɛmbeɛ District), Mgbɔteba and Kabenlasuazo (in the Dwɔmɔɔ Municipality) and Bolfo and Yediyesele (in the Nzema East Municipality). These days, funeral performances are almost rampant in many communities; however, the researchers visited these particular communities purposively because of proximity and the fact that they were motorable areas. This approach is a defeatist one.

consents as matter of ethics, and tape-recorded the funeral proceedings. This endeavour was crucial because, in those contexts, speakers resorted to indirect expressions to avoid explicit mentioning of *ewule*² 'death', *ε/εka* 'coffin', *aziezo* 'cemetery/grave', *nwomele* 'ghost' – concepts that threaten and cause embarrassments and displeasure to listeners. From spontaneous natural speech context, where interlocutors reported and shared their experiences on matters of death, the researchers further extracted some data for the study³. Additional data were generated during focused group discussions⁴. These metaphor-based euphemisms of death were expressed using the local language (Nzema); however, the researchers have provided the English translation of each excerpt (see appendix) to enhance the flow of the discussion. The analysis of the metaphorical euphemisms was done using content analysis approach in which there was reference⁵ to the excerpts found at the appendix.

3. Euphemisms as an avoidance technique

As a taboo avoidance technique, a euphemism is an indispensable communicative device which permeates many discussions across languages. Numerous writers have thus proffered various definitions of euphemisms. Rawson (1981) sees euphemism as a mild, agreeable, or a roundabout utterance that is used in place of coarse and offensive expressions. Allan and Burridge (1991) also perceive a euphemism as a courteous means through which a harsh, inappropriate, obscene, or offensive word is replaced by a more decent one. Cameron (1995) concisely describes euphemisms as “verbal hygiene”. This shows that interlocutors can dwell on euphemisms to “sanitise” and “polish” their discourse; by way of neutralising an assumed unpleasant. In the words of Agyekum (2013: 190): “euphemisms are verbal art forms which the speaker uses to embellish his speech in an attempt to show his communicative competence and linguistic politeness within the socio-cultural norms of communication”. He reports further that, in dealing with verbal taboos, euphemisms and metaphors are significant

² The Nzema language is transcribed according to the rules of standard orthography which comprises Latin alphabet with additional letters *ɔ* and *ε* to represent vowel phonemes.

³ Examples that were obtained from “spontaneous natural discourse” contexts are labelled as SND.

⁴ These examples are labelled as FGD, meaning “from focused group discussion”.

⁵ In order to ease the referencing of the data found in appendix, we have used Exct to mean ‘excerpt’ and Sp to mean ‘speaker’. Therefore, e.g. “(from Exct1, Sp1)” means that particular example is found in excerpt 1., said by speaker 1. etc.

substitutes of verbal taboos themselves. We can thus infer that euphemistic utterances do not only “purify” the discourse, but also embellish and measure one’s level of communicative competence in discourse.

To Annan (2017), euphemisms are meant to guide a speaker to make a “fair speech”. By this, the speaker escapes from direct pronouncement of a tabooed word. Al-Khasawneh (2018) avers that people often use euphemistic expressions to avoid offensive topics, to make them more implicit and considerate. Adepoju (2019) corroborates Al-Khasawneh’s position by contending that euphemisms usually serve as a way to alter human perception of certain inconvenient truth and tendency to avoid speaking directly about notions that are considered sensitive. Almost every language and culture has a stock of euphemisms to refer to specific areas of life. The people of Nzema consciously make use of such euphemisms. In discussing matters of sexuality, the Nzema try to refrain from profanity and use refined expressions like *bɛva bɛ nwo* ‘they have taken each other’ (meaning they had sex), *yɛ ɛzɔlɛ nu yɛ ɛnlomboɛ* ‘he carries a heavy load in-between his thighs’ (meaning his penis is big), *ɔnnea ɛleka ko* ‘she does not look at one place’ (meaning she is a prostitute) and *yɛ etu ɛngu nane* ‘his gun cannot kill an animal’ (meaning he is impotent) (see Yakub 2020: 14). It is ascertained that euphemisms are used cross-culturally to handle vulgar issues and concepts that pose sudden shocks, threats and embarrassments. Matters concerning dangerous/deadly diseases, pregnancy, nakedness, drunkenness and suicide, among others, have several euphemisms employed to tone down their effects (Agyekum 2010, Annan 2017). Tomekyin and Nyame (2019: 81), therefore, report as follows:

[...] death is also another area which evokes fear and nervousness. Usually, the language that is used to talk about death is created by virtue of euphemistic metaphors, metonyms and circumlocutions. Expressions with implicature are also widely used to refer to death in the most pleasant and decent way [...]

The above means that euphemisms enable speakers to “refine” and reconstruct certain expressions that are deemed obscene or ugly; by making them more pleasant and beautiful. Euphemisms function as face-saving mechanisms to both the speaker and the hearer (Wardhaugh 2006). Overall, euphemisms are implicit and strategic expressions which serve as a means to swerve impoliteness. Euphemisms are “clean” expressions deployed in discourses in order to desist from direct reference to taboo expressions. Table 1. shows some euphemistic concepts and expressions in Nzema language and culture.

TABLE 1. Some euphemistic concepts in Nzema⁶

Tabooed concepts	Euphemistic expressions	English translations
A. DEFECATION Tabooed word <i>ebinli</i>	a. <i>Meko baka zo</i> b. <i>Mesɔho me gyake</i>	a. 'I am visiting the tree.' b. 'I am escorting my legs.'
B. URINATION Tabooed word <i>miene</i>	a. <i>Meko meahɔgua nzule</i> b. <i>Megua aze</i>	a. 'I am going to pour water.' b. 'I am pouring water down.'
C. DEATH Tabooed word <i>ewule</i>	a. <i>ɔnde aze</i> b. <i>ɔ ti ebɔ aze</i> c. <i>Yehɔ namule nu</i>	a. 'He is not seated anymore.' b. 'His head has hit the floor.' c. 'He has gone to the village.' ⁷
D. THEFT Tabooed word <i>awule</i>	a. <i>ɔ sa wale/ ɔ sa le tendenle</i> b. <i>ɔ sa engɔ ɔ nwo</i>	a. 'His hands are long.' b. 'His hands do not touch his body.'
E. WITCHCRAFT Tabooed word <i>ayene</i>	a. <i>ɔnle ɔ sa</i>	a. 'He does not possess hands.'
F. WANDERING Tabooed word <i>akpɔsa</i>	a. <i>Yeli twea gyake</i>	a. 'He has eaten a dog's legs.'
G. OLD AGE Tabooed word <i>kyselera</i>	a. <i>ɔ nye evi</i> b. <i>Yeli ngyenle ekyii</i> c. <i>Yenwu maanle nu</i>	a. 'His eyes are grown.' b. 'He has tasted some salt.' c. 'He has lived for some time.'

Adapted from Yakub (2020: 4) and modified.

4. Theoretical framework

The article mainly employs the CMT by Lakoff and Jonhson (1980), with additional insights from the CC framework by Sharifian (2011). In what follows, we provide overviews of the theoretical frameworks adopted to underpin the analysis of data.

4.1. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

Besides its literary significance as a poetic device and a figure of speech, metaphor in most contemporary studies is seen as "cognitive mechanism", which concerns a cross-domain mapping within the conceptual system (Lakoff 1993: 208).

⁶ In table 1., the words which are not to be said plainly (seen in the first column) are in italics. These are conveniently expressed using their euphemistic forms as presented in the second column.

⁷ The Nzema use this expression to refer to the demise of a king/chief.

Lakoff further notes that metaphor is not just a matter of language, but of thought and reason. Strengthening this claim, Steen (2011: 28) asserts that:

Metaphor has turned out to be a conceptual mechanism, a “figure of thought”, by which specific and operational knowledge about more concrete phenomena and experience is projected onto a wide range of more abstract ones.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 5) aver that “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another”. Conceptual metaphors typically make use of more abstract concepts as target and a more concrete/physical concepts as source, through which we are able to understand unfamiliar concepts better (Kövecses 2002, Semino 2008). In the view of Semino (2008: 5), conceptual metaphors are systematic sets of correspondence, or “mappings” across conceptual domains, whereby a “target” domain is partly structured in terms of a different “source” domain. Consider, for example, TIME IS MONEY. In this, money (which is the source) could be projected onto time (which is the target); hence, MONEY → TIME. Here, in this schema, our basic knowledge of MONEY (as a commodity that one can spend, invest or lose) could be transferred metaphorically to understand the connection it has with TIME (as something that can also be spent) (see Adepoju 2016: 71). Let us consider another conceptual metaphor, such as TO DIE IS TO SLEEP. Here, Fernández (2006: 107) explains that:

There is a projection from a source domain (SLEEP) onto a target domain (DIE) and the associations that constitute this metaphor map our perception about sleep onto our perception about death. It is in this correspondence between the source and the target domains where cognitive conceptualisation fulfils its euphemistic function. The source domain is therefore used to understand, to structure and in some cases, mitigate the target domain.

In this article, our analysis seeks to draw similar metaphoric conceptualisations of DEATH as concealed in the Nzema data, for readers to best appreciate the discussion.

4.2. Cultural Conceptualisations (CC)

Cultural Conceptualisations (CC) framework is responsible for exploring the relationship between language, culture and conceptualisations (Sharifian 2011). Sharifian (2011) proposed and advanced the concept of cultural linguistics from a multidisciplinary perspective, using the term Cultural Conceptualizations;

which, as he notes, enables members of a cultural group to think in one mind (see also Sharifian 2003). Sharifian (2014) contends that cultural linguistics is responsible for exploring features of language that have cultural basis. It employs three analytical tools, such as *cultural schema*, *cultural category* and *cultural-conceptual metaphor*; in which we are interested in this study. He argues that many items/concepts of human languages lend themselves best to cognitive schemas that are abstracted from cultural experiences. This implies that users of a particular language establish their own cognitive-conceptions about a phenomenon; the Nzema also do perfectly the same as we will see in this study. Our discussion is done using CMT and CC, since these theories can fully help to describe and understand the Nzema's culturally constructed perception and conception of DEATH and its related issues.

5. Data and discussion

This section deals with presentation and discussion of the euphemistic utterances obtained. They abound in metaphorical (metonymic) relations which help to achieve the communicative effectiveness of the utterances. The analysis is grounded in the thoughts of CMT and CC to explicate the metaphoric correspondence that exists in the data. Our discussion begins with the Nzema conception of DEATH and metaphor-based euphemisms that are used to avoid direct mentioning of death.

5.1. The Nzema conception of death

The Nzema spiritual system and worldview allow them to have certain conceptualisations of the world, life, death, life hereafter, morality, creation, fate, and others. DEATH, which is generally associated with DISPLEASURE, is noted for having some culture-specific conceptions, and the Nzema people are not exempted. As in many diverse Ghanaian cultures, the Nzema consider black as a symbolic colour of death. When one is bereaved, the person sticks to wearing black clothing for some time to signify his/her current situation (loss of a relative). The Nzema understand DEATH as a UNIVERSAL HUMAN EXPERIENCE. This is evidenced from some of their proverbial expressions presented in (1):

- (1) a. *Ewule kpolike sonla ko ε-n-vo.* (SND)
 death ladder person single EMPH-NEG-climb
 'One person does not climb the ladder of death.'
- b. *Ewule ε-n-ze fakye.* (FGD)
 death EMPH-NEG-know forgiveness
 'Death does not spare anyone.'

- c. *Saa ewule le a ngoane ε-n-lie.* (SND)
 COND death hold part life EMPH-NEG-take
 'When death possesses something, life cannot take it back.'

In example (1a), the Nzema try to communicate their view that no person can escape from the mishap of death. The mercilessness of death is also depicted in (1b) and (1c). In both cases, death is personified as having the capacity to deal with all people. Traditionally, the Nzema trust that wrong doers are paid off by death. Thus, the Nzema use these pithy statements to entreat fellow members to be righteous, since death is inevitable and will surely snatch everyone unformed. According to the Nzema traditional worldview, when someone dies unexpectedly, such as through road accident or by committing suicide, the Nzema usually suspect that an enemy might have a hand in the person's demise. When this happens, mourners, while weeping bitterly, commonly use the expression in (2):

- (2) *Saa ε-ko a mma-da.* (FGD)
 COND 2SG-GO PART NEG-sleep
 'If you go, do not sleep.'

By this utterance, the Nzema seek to challenge the deceased not to rest at all in the grave. They expect his/her spirit (ghost) to revenge by killing whoever might have caused the person's death. In some contexts, however, the Nzema rather hail death as a good master. For instance, when someone grows too old, or passes on after a long period of ailments, the common expressions used by mourners are those shown in (3):

- (3) a. *Ewule le nvasoε.* (FGD)
 death COP profit
 'Death is a blessing.'
- b. *Saa ε-ko a da koonwu.* (FGD)
 COND 2SG-GO PART sleep silent
 'If you go, sleep quietly.'

In example (3a), the Nzema consider death rather as a kind of blessing, which relieves the sick person from agony as he/she passes on, and also relieves the family members who might have spent their time and energy in ensuring the person's survival. In (3b), the spirit of the deceased is to rest peacefully in the grave. Some physiological effects and characteristics of death make the Nzema to reflect about DEATH as something associated with parts of the human body as exemplified in (4):

- (4) *Ye-ha ɔ nye ye-gua zo.* (FGD)
 1SG-keep.PERF 1SG eye.PL 1SG-close top
 'He has kept his eyes shut'.

The example in (4) partly portrays the Nzema worldview of the state of death as the involvement of eyes. We proceed to examine metaphorical conceptualisations of death in subsection 5.2.

5.2. Metaphoric conceptualisation of death

DEATH is a necessary end of humans; a concept that is feared in every society. The Nzema also associate DEATH with FEAR, and so they resort to certain convenient utterances to describe DEATH, comparing it with real-life events such as INVITATION, RETIREMENT, CONTINUOUS SLEEP and LOSING A FIGHT among others. Consider the following from the data.

5.2.1. DEATH is JOURNEY (INVITATION/ DEPARTURE)

The data showcased many instances of metaphor-based euphemistic expressions used to talk conveniently about death. The embodied conceptual structures of the language users enable them to perceive such metaphorical constructs as being related to some of the issues that pertain when one embarks on a physical journey (see also Musah & Atibiri 2020). These explain DEATH in terms of a JOURNEY with a spiritual destination. Some examples that show how the Nzema perceive DEATH as JOURNEY are presented in (5):

- (5) a. *Nyamenle ε-do esale ε-vεle ye.* (from Exct1, Sp2)
 god PERF-stretch hand PERF-call 3SG
 'God has invited him'⁸.
- b. *Adenle mɔɔ awie kɔ a ɔ-m-ba.* (from Exct 2, Sp 2)
 road COMP person go PART 2SG-NEG-come
 'A journey that one can never return'.
- c. *Ye-hɔ ye ekela nzi.* (from Exct7, Sp2)
 3SG-go.PERF 3SG spirit reverse
 'He/she has gone back to his/her spirit'.

⁸ The Nzema do not make distinction in terms of gender marking, and so the personal pronouns ɔ and ye as found in the data do not necessarily make any distinction between 'he' or 'she' and 'his' or 'her'.

- d. *Ye-du ye nɔhale adenle.* (from Exct5, Sp2)
 3SG-travel.PERF 3SG true road
 'He/she has made his/her faithful journey'.

The Nzema deem it uncomfortable to make explicit mention of *ewule* 'death', and so the above expressions are some of the linguistic mechanisms employed to substitute the taboo of death. The examples in (5a-d) indicate the Nzema conceptualisation of death as a journey, which involves the processes of "departing" and "returning". In (5a), for instance, DEATH is seen as INVITATION, since invitation can lead to departure (embarking on a journey). In this context, it is perceived that the person departs from this physical world to honour a call by his/her creator. The Nzema also refer to DEATH AS A JOURNEY from which the traveller never returns as shown in (5b). This type of departure is a unidirectional journey that is never retractable. In (5c), the deceased is said to have gone back to the spiritual world where he/she is believed to have come from. In (5d), DEATH is further likened to a faithful inescapable JOURNEY that is decreed and ordained by God.

5.2.2. DEATH is RETIREMENT

The Nzema also see DEATH as RETIREMENT, and the deceased is considered to have ended all his/her responsibilities in the physical world. Consider the examples in (6):

- (6) a. *Ye azele ye azo gyima ε-ra awieleε.* (from Exct4, Sp 2)
 3SG earth DEM top duty PERF-COME end
 'His/her responsibilities on this earth have ended'.
- b. *Ye-wie ye gyima muala di.* (from Exct4, Sp 2)
 3SG-finish.PERF 3SG work whole do
 'He/she has completed all his/her works'.

When one is on retirement from a particular occupation, all active services are expected to cease so that the person can relax comfortably at home. Metaphorically, in (6a) and (6b), DEATH is seen to be the END POINT of all the toils people go through, and so once someone passes on, the person finalises⁹ his/her duties on this earth.

⁹ During our focus group discussions, a respondent explained that, death, according to the Nzema, generally marks the end of all human activities, though the people believe that the deceased may do other things while in the grave.

5.2.3. DEATH is LOSING FIGHT

When someone passes on, the Nzema conceptualise the person's DEMISE as A LOST FIGHT. In this context, the phenomenon is seen as a battle; the person fights for life. When he/she loses the fight, death wins. The expressions in (7a-c) underscore this observation:

- (7) a. *Ye-ho ye-dɔ.* (from Exct7, Sp1)
 3SG-fight.PERF 3SG-fall.PERF
 'She has fought and fell on the ground'¹⁰ (she passed on during child delivery).
- b. *Nrenyiakpa ne ati ɛ-bɔ aze.* (from Exct5, Sp1)
 man DEF head PERF-hit floor
 'The man's head has hit the ground'.
- c. *Gyanemanza asa ɛ-dɔ ɔ nwo zo.* (from Exct6, Sp2)
Gyanemanza hand PERF-fall 3SG self top
 'Gyanemanza has conquered/ laid hands on him'.

One of the determinants of defeat during a fight perhaps is to "ground" or "floor" an opponent. The expressions in (7a) and (7b) do not basically inform us about the physical act of falling on the ground, but as metaphoric means of describing demises in the sense that 'death has overpowered life (a person)'. Both (7a) and (7b) indicate the metaphor, LIFE IS UP/DEATH IS DOWN. In (7c), DEATH is referred to as *GYANEMANZA*, which emanates from a myth around the Nzema conception of DEATH¹¹. Therefore, when a person passes on, the Nzema conceptualise the unfortunate incident as *Gyanemanza* having conquered or laid hands on the person.

5.2.4. DEATH is BEING MISSING

A missing item remains out of sight. Thus, one other way the Nzema conceptualise death is by comparing the situation with a lost item. Consider the expressions in (8):

- (8) a. *Ye-ha eleka bie.* (from Exct5, Sp2)
 3SG-remain.PERF place some
 'He/she has got missing somewhere'.

¹⁰ The expression in (7a) is used specifically to refer to maternal death; where a woman passes on in the course of child delivery.

¹¹ A myth concerning death among Nzema narrates that there is an invisible creature called *Gyanemanza* (*-manza* is in fact a proper feminine Nzema name) who is believed to have knocked down a recalcitrant man long time ago. As a consequence, the man never returned to life. Thus, the early Nzema people believed that *Gyanemanza* had "conquered" (killed) the man. This is why they referred to death as *Gyanemanza*.

- b. *É-to é nye a é-n-nwu ye ko.* (from Ext5, Sp3)
 2SG-cast 2SG eye PART 2SG-NEG-see 3SG again
 'One can never see him/her with naked eyes anymore'.

The interpretations derived from the expressions in (8a) and (8b) actually transcend the literal sense of someone or something being misplaced. In the context of death, the expressions actually imply everlasting absence, where one can never spot the departed soul any longer.

5.2.5. DEATH is SUBTRACTION

Another conceptual metaphoric notion of death that seems interesting not only among the Nzema, but may also be construed in other languages and cultures is the phenomenon of the deceased "being taken away" or "subtracted" from a multitude of living souls. Example (9) demonstrates the Nzema version of such figurative utterances.

- (9) *Ye-vi nu.* (from Exct7, Sp1)
 3SG-remove.PERF inside
 'He has left.'

Subtraction deals with reduction in size or quantity, as a part is taken out of a whole. In (9), therefore, the deceased is said to have been picked out of the societal populace (living beings).

5.2.6. DEATH is CONTINUOUS SLEEP

DEATH is seen as an EVERLASTING SLEEP. Example 10 underscores this conception:

- (10) *Ɔ-la-le a ye-a-n-dwazo.* (from Exct3, Sp1)
 3SG-sleep-PST PART 3SG-EMPH-NEG-wake
 'She slept and never woke'.

Some basic properties of sleeping, such as shutting the eyes and being absolutely unconscious, pertain to the state of death. The fact that a person cannot respond to stimuli while he/she is asleep, though the heart will continue to function, is another reason for perceiving DEATH as SLEEP. However, one may be said to be dead when the person goes through these experiences continuously without returning to life (breathe).

5.2.7. DEATH is LYING ON THE LEFT HAND

In most African cultures, including the people of Nzema, the left hand is deemed somewhat inferior to the right hand, perhaps as a result of its peculiar function such as using it to clean the anus after defecation. In fact, no “cultured” Nzema person (whether an adult or a child) is expected to give or take an item from another person using the left hand. This notion of “inferiority” or “something unwanted” that is associated with the left hand¹² can further be conceptualised in relation to death. Consider the expression in (11):

- (11) *Ye-la ye bɛne zo.* (from Exct6, Sp1)
 3SG-lie.PERF 3SG left.hand top
 ‘He has laid (slept) on his left hand’.

In example (11), the semantic and pragmatic imports go beyond the physical act of lying sideways on one’s left hand. In this context, therefore, the Nzema conceptualise the current state and status of the deceased and try to imply that the person has become useless or inferior, since the deceased body is of no value and importance. Agyekum (2010: 160) reported that in the old days the deceased were laid in bed with their (left) side on the bed. This position gave rise to the Akan euphemism *wada ne benkum* so ‘he/she has slept on the left hand’ to indirectly refer to death.

5.2.8. DEATH is FACING A WALL

Turning to face the wall shows that one cannot see what others may do behind. This notion is comparable with the situation of death as seen in (12):

- (12) *Ye-hakyi ɔ nye ye-zi bane.* (from Exct2, Sp1)
 3SG-turn.PERF 3SG eye.PL 3SG-look wall
 ‘He has turned to face the wall’.

In (12), DEATH is perceived as FACING THE WALL. In the basic (physical) event, when one faces a wall (building), the person turns to rather make his/her back visible to others. The person cannot see whatever transpires behind him/her. When one passes on, the person leaves every worldly thing behind, and so nothing concerns the dead person anymore. All the sorrows that mourners may experience are not recognised by the deceased. Also, this wall can be per-

¹² This is however not to say that the left hand is virtually of no significance to the Nzema. Obviously, the left hand supports the right in doing many things in human life, especially that hygienic function it performs.

ceived as an obstacle (a blockage) in the journey of life. When one faces such an obstacle, the person is unable to move further (go on living).

5.2.9. DEATH is CUTTING LIFE

The verb *pε* ‘to cut’ in Nzema, which basically denotes an event of separation and material disintegration, can provide various contextual interpretations by way of meaning extensions (Yakub 2019: 10). Among such extensions are to shorten the length/height of an object or to result in discontinuity of ongoing phenomenon, such as *pε awolε* ‘to cut childbearing’ (meaning to cease procreation). We find that these notions can be applied to the conceptualisation of death as provided here:

- (13) *Ye ngoane zo ε-pε.* (FGD)
 3SG life top PERF-CUT
 ‘His/her life has been cut’.

The cognitive metaphoric projection in example (13) indicates that the lifespan of the deceased is discontinued. His life is shortened, “cut”, while all activities in the world rather continue to move on.

5.2.10. DEATH is FELLING A TREE

In the context of death-discourse among the Nzema, the process of felling a tree can also be likened to death as example (14) indicates:

- (14) *Baka kpole ε-bu.* (from Exct1, Sp4)
 tree huge PERF-fall
 ‘A big tree has fallen/uprooted’.

Example (14) also shows LIFE IS UP/DEATH IS DOWN metaphor. Crucially, the metaphoric corresponding is derived from the functional aspect of a tree, which can make mankind and animals comfortable by providing shelter and food among other benefits, just as a responsible parent provides the needs of his/her ward(s). A “big” tree that is said to have fallen/uprooted, in this context, implies that a reputable (responsible) individual has passed on¹³.

¹³ Among the Nzema, this euphemistic expression is usually used to describe the demise of very responsible parents, breadwinners, chiefs and all prominent people who matter most in the society or a particular family/clan.

5.3. Metaphoric conceptualisation of bereavement

In reporting the experience of bereavement, the Nzema try to avoid a “non-palatable” utterance, such as *me awie ewu* ‘my beloved one is dead’. Bereavement is a period of time in which a person experiences their grief and mourning. As a cultural group, therefore, the speakers have established metaphor-based euphemisms to make reference to bereavement. Among the Nzema, a bereaved person is likened to someone whose eyes are affected, for example, a certain substance falling onto his/her eyes which causes displeasure and affects proper vision. The Nzema also liken a bereaved person to someone living in an environment or a room that is completely dark, or one who is missing at the crossroads. We discuss these conceptions as the data proved as follows.

5.3.1. BEREAVEMENT is SOMETHING FALLING INTO ONE’S EYE

The eye is very sensitive and is one of the vital sensory organs of a person. When any ‘foreign’ or unusual particle drops into one’s eye, the person obviously feels uncomfortable. The Nzema thus have metaphorical euphemism to talk about bereavement, linking it to an unwanted particle that falls into one’s eye as provided in example (15):

- (15) *Debie ε-dɔ bε nye zo.* (from Exct2, Sp2)
 something PERF-fall 3PL eye top
 ‘Something has fallen onto their eyes (They are bereaved).’

In (15), the phenomenon of bereavement, where people experience grief, is described as any substance or particle that falls into one’s eyes. When an unwanted substance falls into one’s eyes, the victim becomes uncomfortable and hardly gets rid of that substance alone without external assistance. Likewise, the phenomenon of bereavement; once you are bereaved, you need external encouragement and consolation in order to recover fully from the grief.

5.3.2. BEREAVEMENT is LIVING IN DARKNESS

The death of a beloved one also causes family members to be stranded and frustrated, just as when one lives in darkness where he/she cannot simply locate an item that might even be closer. Consider example (16) in this case of Nzema socio-cultural conception:

- (16) *Wɔ-maa awozinli ε-va ye.* (from Exct3, Sp2)
 2SG-make.PERF darkness PERF-take 3PL
 ‘Your demise has caused us to be in total darkness’.

When someone is bereaved, people may need to direct and support him/her in undertaking certain personal duties. These include activities concerning the burial and funeral ceremonies since the bereaved is seen as ‘living in darkness’ and may not be able to perform some duties perfectly without guidance. While in the grieving process, there is a feeling of disorientation, as may happen when a person lives in darkness.

5.3.3. BEREAVEMENT is MISSING DIRECTION

BEREAVEMENT is also conceptualised as MISSING A DIRECTION at a particular crossroads as indicated in the following expression:

- (17) *Wɔ-maa ye-minli nwoɔnda.* (from Exct1, Sp4)
 2SG-make.PERF 3PL-miss crossroad.PL
 ‘Your demise has caused us to get lost at the crossroads’.

Example (17) has some parallel conceptualisations with (15) and (16) discussed above. In (17), it is seen that the lost of a beloved one can cause the living (family members) to be “disoriented” – a sense of not seeing, not knowing, as a result of grief. While the bereaved is grieving, the support from sympathisers becomes extremely valuable. This is rightly likened to being missing at the crossroads, where one would need somebody else to give the right direction.

5.4. Metaphoric conceptualisation of burial

The data further proved the Nzema cultural perceptions about the act of burial, and as a way to ensure “sanitised” death discourse. They conceptualise BURIAL as CONCEALMENT, PRESERVATION and SOWING A SEED. These are discussed in the following subsections.

5.4.1. BURYING is CONCEALING/PRESERVING

The process of burial is seen as concealing (hiding) an item and/or preserving it, which may be retrievable in the future, any time the hider needs it. This conception seems to feature essentially in the examples in (18):

- (18) a. *Ye-fa ye ye-a-hɔ-wula eleka kpale.* (from Exct1, Sp1)
 3PL-take 3SG 3PL-EMPH-go-hide place good
 ‘We are going to hide it (the body)’.
- b. *Kekala be-hɔ-vu me diema ne be-vea.* (from Exct1, Sp3)
 now 3PL-go.PERF-dig 1SG sibling DEF 3PL-hide.PERF
 ‘As they have gone to hide my brother’s body, all is finished now’.

- c. *YE-fa ye ye-ko-sie.* (from Exct4, Sp1)
 3PL-take 3SG 3PL-go-keep
 'We have to go and preserve/keep it (the body)'.

All the expressions in (18a-c) deal with the basic concept of keeping something safely, perhaps for future use. In the case of burial, the Nzema trust that the soul of the deceased would be raised one day, based on two conceptions: one is their belief in reincarnation and another is their belief in resurrection for "Godly judgement"¹⁴. Though the primary notion concerns concealment, such that the dead-body becomes out of sight, the Nzema also liken BURIAL to "PRESERVATION", as can be seen typically in (18c). The body is considered as something that is preserved for a good reason (future purpose). Through these convenient expressions, the Nzema can console the bereaved by reassuring them that their loved ones are not merely buried to undergo decomposition, but are kept temporarily for future resurrection.

5.4.2. BURYING is SOWING/PLANTING A SEED

The activity of seed sowing can also correspond to burial as illustrated in the example below:

- (19) *BE-ho-lua me diema ne.* (from Exct4, Sp2)
 3PL-go-sow.PERF 1SG sibling DEF
 'They have gone to sow it (my brother)'.

The example in (19), not only serves as a means of being polite in the context of death discourse, but also foregrounds our conceptual experiences and metaphoric structures. Planting a seed involves thrusting it into the soil and covering it. After some time, the seed is expected to germinate and appear above the ground. This is likened to the phenomenon of burial where the corpse is also covered under earth and it is believed to be able to reincarnate or reappear before God.

5.5. Metaphoric conceptualisation of cemetery/grave

An explicit pronouncement of *aziezo* 'cemetery/grave' among the Nzema also tends to pose some threat because it is noted that the place is a habitat for "ghosts" – souls that are expected to dwell in the spiritual underworld. The Nzema

¹⁴ This conception emanates from religious beliefs among the Nzema (both Christian and Islamic perspectives).

have culturally constructed metaphorical euphemisms to cater for any overt mention of such a scary place. These are discussed per the data as follows.

5.5.1. CEMETERY/GRAVE is PLACE OF REST

Rest is considered as a period of relaxing after a rigorous period of activity. The deceased, having “retired” from all herculean tasks, is finally sent to a suitable place of rest. Here, in order to refrain from any direct mention of *aziezo* ‘cemetery/ grave’ the Nzema rather resort to the expression as exemplified in (20):

- (20) *BE-va ye be-hɔ ɛnwomenleliele eleka.* (FGD)
 3PL-take.PERF 3SG 3PL-go.PST relaxation place
 ‘They have taken it (the body) to the place of rest’.

In (20), the cemetery is likened to a convenient place of rest, which is strictly quiet, no disturbances at all. There are no musical jams, no ceremonial functions, and children also do not cry at the cemetery whatsoever to distract attention. Therefore, over there, the Nzema believe that the deceased enjoys ample and peaceful relaxation.

5.5.2. CEMETERY/GRAVE is BETTER PLACE/PLACE OF TRUTH

Beyond the concept of having a peaceful mindset in the grave as examined in (20) above, the Nzema also see GRAVE as BETTER PLACE and as PLACE OF TRUTH to the deceased. The expressions in 21 affirm these cultural conceptualisations:

- (21) a. *YE-fa ye ye-a-hɔ-wula eleka kpale ye-a-ra.* (see Exct1, Sp1)
 3PL-take 3SG 3PL-EMPH-go-hide place good 3PL-EMPH-return
 ‘We are going to hide it (the body) at a better place’.
- b. *Bɛmaa ye-va ye ye-hɔ nɔhale eleka.* (see Exct4, Sp1)
 let 3PL-take.PERF 3SG 3PL-go true place
 ‘Let us take it (the body) to the place of truth’.

In (21a) and (21b), we can realise the sense of joyful life associated with living in the cemetery/grave. This seems to have some basis from the perspectives of Christian and Islamic doctoring, as both religions trust that the grave is the initial point where the deceased begins good, joyful and true everlasting existence with God in Heaven¹⁵. Describing GRAVE AS PLACE OF TRUTH as in (21b) can also imply that the deceased lives at the cemetery/grave alone, with no other people who may be hypocrites or betrayers.

¹⁵ This is not to say that the Nzema do not believe and practise an African traditional religion; rather, majority of the people these days practice Islam and Christianity.

5.6. Metaphoric conceptualisation of coffin

The Nzema traditionally refer to coffin as *funli eɛka* 'corpse box'. In death related discourse, however, they seek to swerve this direct referent by resorting to figurative terms in order not to "revive" the fear, agony and discomfort that had already overwhelmed the bereaved family and other mourners. We focus on this cultural conception in the following discussion.

5.6.1. COFFIN is HOUSE/TREE OR WOOD

The coffin is likened to *sua* 'house' and *baka* 'tree/wood'. Let us take the expressions in (22):

- (22) a. *Bɛva ye sua ne bɛ-ra.* (from Exct2, Sp1)
 3PL-bring.PERF 3SG house DEF 3PL-COME.PERF
 'They have brought his (its) house'.
- b. *Bɛ-do ye baka nu.* (from Exct1, Sp1 & Exct4, Sp1)
 3PL-put.PERF 3SG wood/tree inside
 'They have put it (the body) into a wood'.

In (22a), the metaphoric mapping seems tangible in the sense that coffin is usually a four-sided rectangular figure, resembling the normal shape of a house. It is also conceptualised based on the fact that the body will be laid in the coffin (a house in this case), and that is where it will "sleep" forever, just as living beings sleep in their houses/rooms. In (22b), metonymy plays a crucial role in facilitating our conceptualisation. Here, coffin is referred to as a wood, since it is traditionally made out of a tree (although contemporary coffins are sometimes made of glass and other ornamental materials).

5.7. Metaphoric conceptualisation of corpse

When someone passes on, the Nzema believe that the person's spirit still lives in and around the household, especially when burial ceremony has not yet taken place. Thus, an explicit pronouncement of *funli* 'corpse' is tried to be prevented so that people do not directly recognise that they live with a fearful unusual spirit. Below is how the Nzema people perceive the corpse according to the data.

5.7.1. CORPSE is A THING

As may pertain to many other African cultures, Nzema speakers try to circumvent reference to *funli* 'corpse'. They see the deceased body as waste, something unwanted as indicated in (23):

- (23) *Kεkala γε-do δεε ne baka nu.* (from Exct1, Sp1)
 now 3PL-put.PERF thing DEF wood/tree inside
 'Now we have put the thing into a wood/tree'.

In (23), corpse is commonly conceptualised as *δεε ne* 'the thing'. In Nzema discourse, *δεε* 'thing' can refer to something positive or beautiful which a speaker consciously decides not to mention. It also connotes something that is filthy and/or unmentionable. More importantly, in this context, the dead is dehumanised. Thus, corpse is described as *δεε* because the person loses his/her precious life, value and reputation. He/she becomes useless, no longer beneficial to the living and so must be thrown away (buried).

5.8. Metaphoric conceptualisation of ghost

It is also noted that the disembodied souls of the deceased can trigger people to experience fear. The Nzema, therefore, refer to such souls as spirits, which seem to evoke less fear. Consider the discussion that follows:

5.8.1. GHOST is SPIRIT

Traditionally, the Nzema refer to the soul of a dead person as *nwomenle* 'ghost'. This soul is actually invisible and believed to be an inhabitant of the cemetery/grave, which already evokes some sort of fear. The speakers thus suitably call it *εkele* 'spirit' as in example (24):

- (24) *Egya ε-va wɔ εkele ε-zie boε.* (from Exct1, Sp4)
 father EMPH-take 2SG spirit EMPH-keep well
 'God should accept your spirit and keep it safely'.

In (24), we observe that the fearful *nwomenle* 'ghost' is not mentioned. Referent is rather made to *εkele* 'spirit' since both deal with the concept of invisibility. Though both *nwomenle* 'ghost' and *εkele* 'spirit' are abstract entities, the Nzema prefer the mentioning of 'spirit' to 'ghost'. This is because they attach fear to 'ghost' which is believed to exist as a result of death. Therefore, the most crucial reason for making reference to "spirit" is to ensure non-threatened communication.

6. Conclusion

In accordance with the assumptions of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Cultural Conceptualisation (CC), this article has examined the "language of death" among the Nzema. It was the aim of the article to appraise metaphorical euphemisms as an effective politeness strategy in communication. The article

highlighted how speakers of Nzema deploy such convenient words to nullify certain expressions that are deemed inconvenient in the context of death discourse.

The article revealed that the issue of end of life in the Nzema society has been a sensitive cultural concept that requires every competent speaker to carefully resort to appropriate linguistic choices. We have found out that DEATH and its related concepts, though not absolutely prohibited, are not supposed to be discussed straightforward without a means to cover up or reduce the discomfort and shock that they might evoke. It is evident that metaphors constitute a potent source of figurative reference to the tabooed subject, DEATH. The article demonstrates that the Nzema make use of many metaphor-oriented euphemisms to “strip off” the shock and pains associated with overt pronouncement of DEATH and its related concepts. It is shown, for instance, that the Nzema conceptualise DEATH as RETIREMENT, DEATH as SUBTRACTION, DEATH as TURNING TO FACE THE WALL, DEATH as ENDLESS SLEEP, DEATH as LYING ON ONE’S LEFT HAND.

We saw BEREAVEMENT as LIVING IN DARKNESS, BEREAVEMENT as BEING MISSING AT THE CROSSROADS and BEREAVEMENT as SOMETHING FALLING INTO ONE’S EYE. We also saw BURIAL as HIDING, BURIAL as PRESERVING and BURIAL as SOWING A SEED. COFFIN was conceptualised as HOUSE FOR AN INDIVIDUAL. The CEMETERY/GRAVE was seen as BETTER PLACE and PLACE OF REST. CORPSE is A THING among others.

As in many diverse communities, DEATH as a phenomenon and its related concepts are deemed sacred in the Nzema society, and so in any communicative encounter that involves these phenomena, the Nzema endeavour to circumvent their linguistic choices to avoid direct reference to such concepts. The Nzema try to provide some consolation or relief to the bereaved family. Therefore, it is observed that these metaphor-based euphemistic expressions are deployed largely during funeral rites in order not to reactivate mourners’ or bereaved families’ sorrows and discomforts.

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Appendix

The following excerpts represent the information recorded from funeral grounds and other social setting/events where people engaged in death related discourses in some communities in Nzemaland (Ghana).

Excerpt 1.

Ethnographic context: During Nyamenlewɔke's funeral

Date: 13.07.2020

Venue: At the community centre, Yɛdiyesele (Nzema East Municipal)

SPEAKER 1: *Benlea ye nzi eke bemaa ye na kekala yedo dee ne baka nu, yefa ye yehɔwula efeka kpale yɛara. Kale ne mɔɔ fa ye aho la ɛra debadɛba.* 'Now we **have put the thing (the body) into a wood/tree**, we are going **to hide it at a better place and be back**; the ambulance that is supposed to take the body has been here for a while'.

SPEAKER 2: *Yoo, behɔ na beara ɛ, akee bese ɔle aloa mbɔlee, ye edee edwu zo ɔti ye Nyamenle edo esale eweɛ ye.* 'Ok, go and be back, after all they say that it is inevitable, so his time has come and **God has invited him**'.

SPEAKER 3: *Kekala mɔɔ behɔvu me diema ne bevea la, debie biala ewie* 'now that **you have already gone to hide my brother's body**, everything has ended'.

SPEAKER 4: *Aaa! Sele kpale mɔɔ nea ɔ mra, wɔmaa yeminli nwɔnda; amgba noko wɔmaa baka kpole ɛbu ooo, na nienwu yeɛ nloma bala a? Egya eva wɔ ekela ezie boe.* 'Aaa! A caring father who always fends for his children, you have caused us **to be missing at the crossroads**; truly, **a big tree has fallen/uprooted**; where will the birds then perch? **God should accept your soul/spirit and keep it safely**'.

Excerpt 2.

Ethnographic context: During Papa Sagyei's funeral

Date: 07.08.2021

Venue: At the Victoria park, Axim (Nzema East Municipal)

SPEAKER 1: *Maanle evele boe, kekala nrenyia ne mɔɔ ehakyi ɔ nye ezi bane la amra ne mɔ eva ye sua ne era.* 'Attention, please! Now, the children of the man **who has turned to face the wall** have **brought his house** to the general public to see it'.

SPEAKER 2: *Adenle ehye mɔɔ awie ko a ɔmba ko la, awie biala bahɔ bie ɔti sa awie edee si zehae a bema ye muala yekpa yegua na yeboa abusua ne mɔɔ debie ɛdo be nye la* 'For this **journey that one can never return**, everybody will surely embark on it one day, so when it happens to someone, let us all do well to help **the family members who have gotten something fallen into their eyes**'.

Excerpt 3.

Ethnographic context: During Hayanata's one week celebration (prior to final funeral rite)

Date: 04.06.2021

Venue: At a family house, Yediyesele (Nzema East Municipal)

SPEAKER 1: *Ngya ahye mmɔ ahye oo, eza ye muala ye gyako. Ke mɔɔ ye muala yeze mɔɔ ezi la ke ye diema nee ye debie biala lala a yeandwoazo la, mera mebarabiza be ahye nwonlomɔ ye.* 'Ladies and gentlemen, greetings to everyone, and accept my condolences once again. As we all know that **our sister fell asleep and did not wake**, I have come this morning to greet and mourn with you people'.

SPEAKER 2: *YeYe wɔ mo somaa. Hayanata mɔ yemaa awozinli eva ye o. Kekala yennwu eleka mɔɔ yesie ye nwo a.* 'Okay, thank you very much for sympathising with us. As for Hayanata, she has caused us **to really live in darkness**; we do not even know what to do now'.

Excerpt 4.

Ethnographic context: During Manza's funeral

Date: 26.08.2020

Venue: At the community centre, Awiebo (Elembele District)

SEAKER 1: *Ye Nzema maamela nee maamule kile ke saa awie ati bɔ aze a ɔwɔ ke yenea yefa ye yekɔsie eleka kpale wɔ ye bɔvole ne asa nu. Kekala bedo ye baka nu bewie ɔti*

bemaa yeva ye yehɔ nɔhale eleka. 'As our tradition demands, **we have to keep/preserve any deceased body at a good place.** Now it (the body) **has been placed in the tree/wood, so let us take it to the place of truth**'.

SPEAKER: 2 *Amgba sonla amra bekye wɔ azele ye azo. Mɔɔ mgbavole ye mɔ wolole eke kelala la yemɔ a beholua me diema ye bera la. Kekala mɔ ye azele ye azo gyimalile muala era awielee; Ehee, yewie ye gyima muala di. Zɔhane ala yee awie ko biala ɔdaye ɔbaho a.* 'Mankind never came to stay longer in this world. **They have gone to plant it (my sister)** so soon. Now all **her responsibilities on this earth have ended**; indeed, **she has completed all her works.** Everybody will go the same way'.

Excerpt 5.

Ethnographic context: During Egya Kodwo's funeral

Date: 22.11.2020

Venue: At the community centre, Asasetele (Elemsale District)

SPEAKER 1: *Ye muala yewɔ sua ye azo yee ekenle yedele ke nrenyiakpa ati ebɔ aze a. Ene a beye ye ezene a, enee maa yeraye moale yee ase yerado be a.* 'We had all been here when we learnt that **the man's head has hit the ground**, today marks his final funeral rite, and that is why we are here today to provide some support'.

SPEAKER 2: *Ɔle zɔ, yedaye yewɔ azule nzi nehane yee yedele amaneɛ ne ke yeha eleka bie a. Ɔzile zehae la abovole dɔɔnwo rayele ye moale, edawɔ noko mo samaa. Kodwo mɔ yedu ye nɔhale adenle, yenwu ye edee nye zɔ, yeha yemɛ mɔɔ kekala yede aze la.* 'It is in order, as you have rightly said. We were also overseas when we heard that **he has got missing somewhere.** When it happened so, many people came to sympathise with us and supported in diverse ways. Thank you also for your concern. As for Kodwo **he has already made his faithful journey**, so it is left with those of us who are now alive'.

SPEAKER 3: *Ao! ɔti amgba ene sonla to ɔ nye a nrenwu nrenyia Kodwo ko, yera na yebaho noko amgba.* 'Ao! So **one can never see him with naked eyes anymore**, we came to this world and shall surely return'.

Excerpt 6.

Ethnographic context: During Egya Bile's funeral

Date: 16.10.2020

Venue: At the durbar park, Mgboteba (Dwɔmɔɔ Municipal)

SPEAKER 1: *Maanle evele boe o! Ye muala yedi dasele ke ahenle mɔɔ ela ye bene zo mɔɔ ɔti yeyia eke kekala la enee le awie mɔɔ sonle bole maa ye maanle ye a. Yeboa maanle ye wɔ ndenle ngakyile dɔɔnwo azo. Ehye ati yelesele ke awie biala ebɔ mɔdenle eradua ye ezukoa ɔmaa ɔye ahomeka.* 'Attention, please! As we are all aware, the man who **has now slept on the left hand**, and for which purpose we gathered here, has been very influential and supportive in this community in many ways. Therefore, we humbly entreat everybody

to come and donate towards his final funeral rite’.

SPEAKER 2: *Mɔɔ wɔha la le nɔhale bɔkɔɔ, nrenyiaƙpa ne enee le sonla mɔɔ anwo ka maanle kpole kpale a, ɔti saa ene Gyanemanza asa edɔ ɔ nwo zo a enee ɔhyia ke ye muala yekɛhakyɛ ye gyima kpale ne na yekɛmaa ye ezene ne keye kenlema.* ‘You are right, we bear witness that the man was a prominent person, so if **Gyanemanza has conquered him (laid hands on him)** this time, then it is necessary for us to recognise his good deeds and contribute to making his funeral a success’.

Excerpt 7.

Ethnographic context: During Ahube’s funeral

Date: 23.03.2021

Venue: At the community centre, Kabenlasuazo (Dwɔmɔɔ Municipal)

SPEAKER 1: *Zehae ezene ye nee ye ezene ko eyia nu. Keye siane ko mɔɔ eze la yee bevelele me ke me awozoa raale ko ɔdaye yeho yedɔ a. Eza ene kenle nsa yekade a enee ɔkile ke ye busuanli ko noko ɔdaye yevi nu. Ehye ati mebazele adenle na meahɔ, mengyakyi be aze.* ‘This very funeral coincides with one of the funeral rites I need to attend in my own family. About a month ago, I was informed that **one of my nieces fought and fell (lost a fight)**. I am also told that **one of our family members has left**. For this reason, I would like to seek permission and attend the next funeral’.

SPEAKER 2: *Yoo, adenle la nu. ɔhyia ke ekɛhɔnleɛ ε nzi nehane noko. Ene meke ye mɔɔ sonla ehakyi akɔle mɔɔ ete ke bese awie ehɔ ye ekela nzi a ɔngye biala bieko doa ye la.* ‘Okay, permission granted, you need also to go and see what is happening at your end. These days mankind has become a fowl, **one person returns to his/her soul** today and the next day another person follows suit’.