LONG LIVE THE DEAD!

Changing Funeral Celebrations in Asante, Ghana

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Ahsant
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In October 1995, after two years of studying anthropology, I travelled to Ghana to do volunteer work. It was my first visit to Africa and I did not know much about the continent. I remember the excitement I felt when I saw, from the aeroplane, people walking on a sea of red earth amidst green shrubs and fields, and brightly painted buildings. Small roads that did not follow a structured pattern, but had resulted from years of practical use by people taking the most convenient way from A to B. Yet I saw Ghana without the sounds, the scents, the feel, and the humid warmth that have become so familiar now. I also remember the crowd of black faces outside the airport in nocturnal Accra and wondering how to find among them the one face waiting for me and my friend. Those first impressions were the beginning of a love for a country and its people, that have since then greatly influenced my studies and my life and will continue to do so.

My sincere thanks go to the following people in Ghana. Joana Gyau adopted me as her daughter during my first stay in Tiede, an Asante village just south of Kumasi. She gave me the warmth of a family and guided me in the practices of Asante culture. It was in Tiede that I got struck by the importance of funerals in Asante social life and culture. When I returned to Ghana in July 1996 for seven months of fieldwork, I chose to stay in my mother’s hometown, Bekwai. In Bekwai, I thank my grandmother, Nana Akosua Agbromma, from whom I got my Asante name. I did not stay with her, but her compound house was my home. In our daily conversations she has been my main teacher of Twi and of Asante norms and values. I miss her fufu with ‘abana naa’ (grandmother’s soup, palm nut soup with bush meat and dried fish). Without Nana Yaa Mansah, my second grandmother and hoyerehenee (‘queen’ of the yam traders), I enjoyed the fun of selling yams in the market. Almost every Saturday I attended funerals with her. She taught me how to dress, how to walk, how to greet, but most of all how to dance. It is to these three women that I dedicate this book. Mesumu nka daa moije ama me. Njame ngyira mo (I have no words to express what you have done for me. May God bless you). Nana Asiedu Okofo, ‘Ankomuhene and acting president of Bekwai Traditional Area at the time, always welcomed me in his house to share his knowledge and wisdom with me. Further I want to thank Mark Gyau, Maame Akyeampong, Atta Asare-Bediako, Adwoa Auguri, ‘Teacher’ Kwame, and Papa Kwasi, Wifa Anna, Adoma, Maame
A few days later funeral posters announcing Annie Aggie's funeral appear in town. Her full-coloured portrait picture stands out between the usual black-and-white pictures of other deceased persons and raises expectations about the ensuing funeral. Several tailor shops in town are busy tailoring the blue-and-white thanksgiving cloth into fancy dresses.

LAVING-IN-STATE

The burial and the funeral of Agnes Ansholm take place on Saturday November 14th. When my other grandmother Yaa Manah (Nana's half-sister by the same father) and I arrive at the family house at six in the morning, it is already crowded. We greet the snapiyannas, the elders, who are seated in the front row, and then go round to greet the rest. Some people wear a black T-shirt with Agnes' picture printed on it. Agnes is laid in state in one of the rooms and the signs 'in' and 'out' regulate the flow of people. The viewing room has been beautifully decorated with lace, plastic plants and flowers and colourful mwenn cloth. In a big shiny, golden bed Agnes is lying in state like a bride. She wears a white wedding dress, white lace gloves, lots of golden jewellery and beads, a wig and heavy make-up. Earlier this morning the family has congregated around the body to pour libation and pray to the ancestors. Now the Roman and the Anglican priests and a group of churchwomen come in. We stand around the bed while the priest blesses the body and say the Lord's Prayer and ten Hail Marys. The women start singing church songs from the hymnbooks they have brought. Everything is recorded by one of the hired video men, while his assistant lets his bright lamp shine on Agnes' body. Now wailing starts. Women walk around the dead body, lamenting on this terrible loss, addressing the deceased, and throwing their arms up into the air in despair.

Meanwhile at the courtyard a DJ lets highlife hit and gospel songs blast from huge loudspeakers. The music is interrupted by the presentation of the adepawre, the 'burial things'. Blue-and-white cloth, bottles of Dutch schnapps, white baskets with money tied in one corner and a ring tied in the other corner, are being presented in silver trays and announced to the public through the microphone. But more than the things itself, also the givers are being praised. Agnes will take the things with her on her way to the world of the ancestors, so that she can buy some water during the journey and share some of the presents with those who have taken the road and who are expecting something from their living relatives. All things are collected in a big bag by the family, who will symbolically put a few items into the coffin and share the rest among themselves.

The master of ceremonies announces the arrival of the coffin and seven men, one of whom is Agnes' son, carry a shiny gold-painted coffin with golden decorations and put it in the courtyard. Universal admiration. They say it is imported from Europe. Behind a carriage Agnes is laid into the coffin. A man takes a sip of schnapps into his mouth and sprays it over Agnes' face three times. A piece of blue-and-white cloth is torn into strips, some of which are put into the coffin and some tied around the wrists of family members, as a sign of bereavement. Then they close the coffin.

BURYING

Yaa Manah takes me to her house for breakfast, otherwise we will faint during mass, she says. When we come out on the street, we notice the crowd outside the family house. There are many women in fancy dresses, wearing high heels and fashionable head ties. There can be no doubt they are from Accra. They have paired their beautiful carps right in front of the house. Big signs have been placed all over town to direct visitors to the house, the church, and the funeral grounds. On the way to church some women distribute small, coloured portraits of Agnes to be pinned on your cloth and coloured printed funeral programmes with the 'highlights' of the funeral, the programme of the burial mass, the biography of Agnes and the tributes by brothers and sisters, children and friends that will be read out in church, and some pictures. People rush to get one of the glossy booklets.

After the burial mass in the Roman Catholic Church, more or less a standard mass, followed by tributes in both Twi and English, we walk in procession to the cemetery, singing. The coffin is transported in an army vehicle; Agnes' brother is a captain in the army. The atmosphere is peaceful, solemn, almost holy. How different from the chaotic, bothered, even a little violent way to the cemetery of Yaa Manah's 29 year old nephew two days before. When he was buried people were drunk, made all kinds of noise, started fighting and went out of their senses with grief. Now there is nothing of this. Agnes' funeral passes orderly.

At the cemetery a woman urges me to take a picture of the empty grave, which is covered and whitewashed, one more status symbol. When the coffin arrives and is lowered into the grave, people cry quietly, usually different from the wailing this morning. After some prayers the priest blesses the grave and drops the first scoop of earth into it. Then he presents the wreaths and puts them onto the coffin. 'From mother', 'from father', 'from husband', we read on the printed notes attached to them.

FUNDAL RITES

The funeral celebration takes place that afternoon at the police headquarters' grounds in the town centre. I go there with Joanna and Nana. Nana doesn't like going round the whole square to shake hands with everybody, but Joanna, her daughter, says this happens to be awkward, custom, and moreover, it is important to greet so that everybody notices your presence. So we go round and greet and during this many meetings take place, especially between Joanna, who comes from Bekwai but doesn't live here any longer, and old friends and acquaintances. The members of Agnes' family are easily recognizable by the plain red mourning cloth they are all wearing. The funeral is very well attended. All queen-mothers of Bekwai have come.
Funerals in Ghana

In West Africa, particularly in Ghana, the funeral is a significant cultural event, often celebrated with great ceremony. The funeral of Asante, the Ashanti people, is renowned for its elaborate processions and rituals. The deceased is often honored with a large group of people, and good dancing. In the morning, plans of the funeral are discussed, often with music being played. The coffin is transported through the streets, and the family and friends mourn, often with traditional songs and dances. The funeral is a time for the community to come together and offer their respects to the deceased. The family often dons traditional attire, and the coffin is decorated with flowers and other items. The funeral is concluded with a final procession, and the family then heads back to the home to continue mourning. The funeral is a time of great importance in Ghanaian culture, and is often remembered by the family for years to come.
A funeral is considered a sacred and solemn occasion in many cultures, and it plays a significant role in the family's emotional and spiritual healing process. The funeral ceremony is a way to honor the deceased and provide a sense of closure to the loved ones left behind. In some cultures, the funeral process can be quite elaborate and involve various traditions and rituals.

In the context of the document provided, the focus is on funerals as a cultural practice. The text discusses the importance of funerals in maintaining social cohesion and identity, and how they can be a source of comfort and support for the grieving family. The document also highlights the role of the funeral in reinforcing cultural norms and values, and how it can help to preserve the memory of the deceased.

The text mentions the significance of funerals in different societies and how they are perceived within various cultural contexts. It also touches on the emotional impact of funerals on the family and the community, and how they can provide a sense of closure and healing.

Overall, the document portrays funerals as a crucial aspect of cultural and familial life, and how they are a means of expressing grief, honoring the deceased, and maintaining social bonds.

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[Note: The text is a snapshot of a larger document, and the full context is not provided.]
Anthropology and the study of death

The large amount of data, effort, and money that people spend on various forms of death in the United States is based on a series of assumptions about the nature of death and the appropriate ways to handle it. Many studies of death and dying focus on the cultural context of death, which is often referred to as the "psychological" or "sociological" study of death. This focus is based on the assumption that death is a complex social phenomenon that is shaped by cultural, economic, and political factors. However, it is important to recognize that death is a biological process that is influenced by a variety of factors, including genetics, environment, and lifestyle. It is also important to recognize that death is a personal experience that is shaped by individual beliefs and values.

Not surprisingly, the death of a loved one is a deeply personal experience that is shaped by a variety of factors, including the relationships that were formed during the person's lifetime. The loss of a loved one can be a profound and life-changing experience, and it can have a significant impact on the emotional well-being of the person who is grieving. It is important to recognize that grief is a natural and necessary part of the healing process, and it is important to allow people to express their emotions in a way that is healthy and productive.

Many cultures have developed rituals and practices to help people deal with the loss of a loved one. These rituals can include funeral services, memorial services, and ceremonial practices that are specific to the culture. It is important to recognize that these rituals are not simply "rites of passage," but are also important for the emotional and psychological well-being of the people who participate in them. It is also important to recognize that these rituals can be a source of comfort and support for people who are grieving.

In conclusion, the study of death is a complex and multidisciplinary field that involves a wide range of approaches and perspectives. It is important to recognize that death is a natural part of the human experience, and that it is important to develop ways to help people cope with the loss of a loved one.

References


A DYNAMIC APPROACH OF DIATY

In this rich body of literature and analysis, existing ways of thinking about and engaging in processes of development remain explored and expanded, with fresh perspectives and approaches to understanding the complex interplay between economic, social, and political forces. The process of development is not a linear one, but rather a dynamic, fluid, and often unpredictable journey shaped by a multitude of factors. This approach emphasizes the need for flexibility, adaptation, and continuous learning in the face of change.

The concept of development is often seen as the process of increasing economic growth, improveing social conditions, and enhancing political stability. However, the traditional views of development have been criticized for their narrow focus on economic growth and the neglect of social and environmental concerns. The dynamic approach of diaty challenges these traditional views by highlighting the need for a more holistic understanding of development that takes into account the cultural, social, and environmental contexts in which it occurs.

This approach recognizes that development is not a static or fixed state, but rather a process that is constantly evolving. It recognizes the role of existing structures and processes in shaping development outcomes, as well as the importance of understanding the power dynamics at play. By embracing this dynamic perspective, policymakers and practitioners can better design interventions that are more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people they serve, and that are more likely to achieve sustainable and equitable outcomes.

In conclusion, a dynamic approach of diaty provides a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of development, one that recognizes the complexity and interconnectivity of the factors that shape it. It offers a framework for thinking about development that is more aligned with the realities of the world we live in, and one that is better equipped to guide us towards a more just and sustainable future.
This simplistic and Western-centred assumption, however, does not lead us very far in understanding how people in the grass roots transform funeral practices to express new imaginations and create new meanings that come with the process that brings the contemporary world so close together and may be called globalisation. Rather, it is in the interaction between the local and the global that new cultural forms and meanings arise. Ananse death is shaped with the materials that have come with Asante people's encounter with modernity. Even the most 'traditional' village funeral is informed by a long history of globalisation (cf. Piot 1999), which includes consumption, commoditisation, mass media, and Christianity. I understand globalisation as people's increasing involvement in global economic, political, cultural, and religious streams of world-wide circulating products, practices, and ideas. Globalisation does not automatically lead to cultural homogenisation or 'Americanisation', but it is through the localisation of global cultural streams, that new cultural forms arise and old ones transform. As a matter of fact, local traditions are very often denied time in the same way as non-Western societies have been placed outside history (Wolf 1982). But what is experienced is not one point in time, but has evolved over a long period of time. Local practices of consumption, the use of media, or the purchase of services, as I will show, both come from outside and are at the same time deeply rooted in culturally specific, but constantly evolving patterns of social organisation, exchange, and belief.

To provide insights into how Asante in present-day Ghana shape and give meaning to their funeral celebrations I propose that the relation between the form of the funeral—of objects, actions, or texts—and its meaning is never given, but is created by people, interacting and grounded in time and space. The socio-political and the ritual-religious aspects of this interactive process are inseparably connected. Hence, I take a view of death as a field of interaction, providing the ritual context 'for the meaningful elaboration of ideology and diversity (Liu) the revaluation of social values and relations that could not take place in life' (Harries 1982: 265).

I see the ritual-religious significance of Ananse funerals not in the first place in religious doctrines or religiously prescribed rites, but in the work of religion as a free space for the dialogue between sacred and profane, between imagination and worldly reality. This entails a move from a concept of ritual as 'tightly structured performance of prescribed actions accorded sacred or religious meaning' (Keesing 1982: 343) to a much broader concept of ritual. Drawing upon Turner's concept of liminality and anti-structure, I suggest that death and the practices surrounding it offer people a ritual time-space, marked as distinct from everyday routine with its every-day limits, to reflect upon the status quo and to play with desires and imaginations. This space of death is a powerful site for creating memory, creating history and tradition, and reimagining meaning, a 'heaven' for staging images. These may be images induced by ideals and desires that are not practicable in daily reality, like those of wealth and beauty, of close unity and communal support, or of modern life styles. But during funeral times are also possible that are not acceptable in normal life, like excessive drinking, conspicuous display of wealth, public writing, or rolling on the ground. The dramatic event of death creates a liminal space for staging visions of life that may contrast sharply with the reality of life outside this ritual space. As a funeral never follows a fully fixed scenario of prescribed actions, the images to be created may always be contested and conflict implies strategies. Strategies that people follow in pursuing their interests. This is the socio-political dimension of death and funerals. Studying strategies, then, asks for an actor-centred approach in which the product—the final form of the Ananse funeral—appears central, but the process—how people get to that form. It is not the rules that tell us how funerals are celebrated, but the strategies. Instead of trying to understand how context makes people act, we have to focus on how people interact to make what eventually becomes their culture. Rules, then, are significant only as part of strategies: how supposed rules, or 'customs', are manipulated and used to legitimate certain practices. The interests people have in festivals are various. Different parties are involved—individuals, groups of people, institutions—and all have their place and history in society. The extended family, customarily the 'owners' of a funeral, the nuclear family, churches, community groups, and states all have their images to stage and vie for the appropriation of the management of death. The end of an individual's life incites competing ways of remembering, of claiming identity, and of mourning meaning. Gaining control over (part of) the performance of a funeral is at the same time a way of legitimising social, political, moral or religious authority. At various levels, then, the ends people seek to achieve in funerals have to do with social relations, power, social prestige and social pressure, cordiality and competition.

In short, I will approach Ananse funerals not as an institution present in society to be studied and described, but as a field of interaction in which tensions arise, discussions and negotiations take place and imaginaries are turned into images. Whose imaginations these are and by what means this happens is a question of power, this 'politics of imagination' is at work in a series of communicative funeral events, situated in a field of tensions between different 'parties' in society. Behind the images of community and solidarity presented at funerals, conflicts, different interests, and power games are played out. The analysis of these events (and of documents, as materialisations of such events) will tell the story, or ethnohistory, of the Ananse funeral.

Ethnographic context: Asante-Delwai

The place where the people flirting in my story live and the events described took place is called Delwai. Asante-Delwai. It is a middle-sized town some 35 kilometres, but one-hour drive due to the bad road condition, south of Kumasi, the Asante capital and second largest city of Ghana. It is the capital of the Asante-West district and county, according to very rough estimates by some administrative officials.
CHAPTER 1

Person and Death: Future Remembrance

It was one of the first times I visited a laying-in-state ceremony. A commercial funeral undertaker had decorated the "display room", which had already been freshly painted in bright blue and pink. The ceiling and the walls were hung with laces, coloured plastic flowers were all over and a big golden bed with china ornaments and small electric lights was standing in the middle. The body of Nana herself was wrapped in a beautiful piece of satin cloth and abundantly decorated with gold chains, precious beads and rings. This display of the body was a display of grandness, glamour and luxury.

Women were walking around the bed, vehemently wailing and weeping, 'Nana awa nua, Nana awa nua, yaa nii am e ku'. Our grandmother has died, our grandmother has died, our eyes are red (i.e. we are in serious trouble). They throw their arms up in the air in despair, their eyes were literally red, tears were flowing across their cheeks. A video man was recording all this from close by. In front of the camera the wailing got even more dramatic. Still somewhat reluctantly I asked the niece of the deceased for permission to take a picture of the dead body. 'Yes, of course, but wait till my sisters and I are ready', she told me. A few minutes later she gave me the sign to follow her and her sisters to the bed. They started wailing heartrendingly and immediately their tears were flowing down. I stood there, with my camera in my hand, a little uneasy and not really knowing what to do. 'Twa me', snap her, the woman sitting beside the corpse whisking away the flies urged me to take the picture of the body and the weeping women. So I did and immediately she produced that unmistakable and exceptionally Ghanaian sound of appreciation, 'Nyame'.

I never again asked for permission to photograph dead bodies or crying people. I didn't even get the chance to. As soon as people saw me as a foreigner, they asked me 'Adwoa, where is your camera? Come and snap me one', pulled me to where the deceased was lying in state and posed beside the dead body.

Conflicting conceptions of death

To understand Akan mortuary practices we have to pay attention to people’s ideas about death and dying. However, one coherent, unambiguous, commonly shared
view, 'the native point of view', does not exist. There are several native points of view (native only in the sense that they are held by local people, not that they are local in origin), which conflict and intermingle according to how people use them. People of no means have a singular view on what death is and on what happens after death. These ideas vary from person to person and from situation to situation and are full of inconsistencies and obscurities. To simplify the answer, I shall distinguish three discourses with regard to death: first, traditional beliefs about ancestors, Asantehene (the land of the dead), and reincarnation; second, the Christian doctrine of heaven and hell and judgment day, as preached in churches; public buses, and popular Christian literature focused on the Bible; and third, the view of death as expressed in highlife songs and on some printed mourning cloths. Death is the absolute end of all life.

**Traditional Akan cosmology and the concept of death**

In many descriptions of Akan traditional religion (e.g. Ramsey 1977; Sarpong 1974; Ampomah 1974), an image is presented of a static, unchanging core of beliefs. However, also traditional ideology does not exist, and it has probably never existed, as a fixed pattern of values and ideas. In this section I shall discuss those traditional Akan beliefs of personhood, death and dying, that are relevant for current funerary practices. In so doing, I shall draw upon what people in Ghana have told me and upon the writings of Ramsey (1977), Sarpong (1974), Ampomah (1974), and Biddle (1983).

In Akan cosmology it is thought that a person is composed of three elements: blood, a spirit, and a soul, coming from three different sources. Asante (Biddle) blood is acquired maternally from the mother. It is through one's blood that one is related to all living and dead members of one's (matriarchal) family. One's soul (nsum) descends from the father at the moment of conception through his sperm. The sumsum gives a child his personality. The tne (soul) one receives from God at birth, as a 'goodby gift' is a small particle of God making the person a human being and giving him/her a destiny (life). Biddle (1983) elaborates on this cosmological dichotomy and shows how it parallels the three physical elements of the universe: earth, water, and sky; the three categories of spiritual beings Asante (mother earth), spirits and lesser gods, and the ancestors and the supreme being Kwame Oyedepo (God); and the three visible colours red, white, and black (see Table 1). The colours red, white, and black occur in many ceremonies. All these three colours are, as I will show later, used in funeral celebrations to identify situations, to separate categories of behaviour, and to mark stages in recognizing changes in status (ibid.: 88).

After death, the three elements that make up a person have different destinies. Sarpong (1974: 32) states that when a person dies his body goes into the ground 'to be the food of ant', his blood returns to God, from whom it first came, and his soul continues to live much the same way as the integral person has lived on earth. Vollbrecht (1979: 170), however, states that after death, the one leaves the body and, now known as dam, drifts the steep mountain of death to asante to join the ancestors in a life very similar to life on earth. Apparently, no agreement exists on whether it is the soul or the blood that is going to live on after death. Clear is that after death, the body is no longer that of a human being, because that which makes a person a human being (both sumsum and tne) has left the body. A corpse is treated to by the impious commercial pastoral effigies as (it) rather than the personal prefix t (for the).

**Table 1: The Akan tridentic concept of the universe and the person**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universe</th>
<th>Spiritual Being</th>
<th>Force</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land, earth</td>
<td>Red (blood)</td>
<td>Asante Yaa (Mother Earth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>(nsum)</td>
<td>(soul)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky, air, fire</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Ancestors (sumsum or sumsum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>(mo)</td>
<td>(mo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(mo)</td>
<td>(mo)</td>
<td>(mother)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>(nsum)</td>
<td>(soul)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soul</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>God</td>
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Central in traditional Akan religion is the belief in ancestors (sumsum or sumsum), and in the existence of asante, the land of the dead. When a person dies his nsumsum or his tne goes to his ancestors, that is, the dead members of his family or lineage (asante). The concept of ancestors is closely connected to the concept of family and blood relationship, as it is in the first place kinship ties that continue after death. Ancestors are more often referred to and addressed in (the) plural (sumsum), as the community of family ancestors, than individually. This is also expressed in the funeral rites collected and analysed by Nkrumah (1935). In rites that refer to ancestors, kinship affiliation of the deceased with his ancestors and lineage or clan history are mentioned to bind the group together and to give the deceased a place in the ancestral community. When particular ancestors are named, it is because of their contribution to the corporate life of the group. By mentioning
Agno, descendant of a descendant of the house of Agno, who is the son of Agno. Agno married, and his children are:

1. Agno, who is the father of Atona.
2. Atona, who is the father of Ana. 

Atona, descendant of Agno, was a chief of a small island. Atona married and had two children:

1. Atona, who became a chief of a larger island.
2. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Atona.

Ana married and had three children:

1. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.
2. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
3. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.

Ana married and had four children:

1. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.
2. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
3. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
4. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.

Ana married and had five children:

1. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.
2. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
3. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
4. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
5. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.

Ana married and had six children:

1. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.
2. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
3. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
4. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
5. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
6. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.

Ana married and had seven children:

1. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.
2. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
3. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
4. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
5. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
6. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
7. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.

Ana married and had eight children:

1. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.
2. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
3. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
4. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
5. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
6. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
7. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
8. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.

Ana married and had nine children:

1. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.
2. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
3. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
4. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
5. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
6. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
7. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
8. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
9. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.

Ana married and had ten children:

1. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.
2. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
3. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
4. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
5. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
6. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
7. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
8. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
9. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
10. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.

Ana married and had eleven children:

1. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.
2. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
3. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
4. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
5. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
6. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
7. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
8. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
9. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
10. Ana, who became a chief of the same island as Ana.
11. Ana, who became a chief of a different island.
CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS ABOUT DEATH

Christianity offers people comfort in the face of the inevitability of life’s end. Although the view of death prepared in the fear of the immortality of life, the Christian perspective is that life is not to be extinguished by the death of the body, but rather to be continued in the afterlife. The concept of an afterlife is integral to Christian belief, and it is often depicted as a place of eternal happiness and peace. For many Christians, the idea of death is seen as a transition to a better place, where the soul is reunited with God. This belief provides comfort to those who are grieving the loss of a loved one, as it offers hope that death is not the end of life, but rather a step towards a greater spiritual existence.

The idea of death and its aftermath is a central theme in Christian teaching, and it is often discussed in terms of the afterlife. According to Christian belief, when a person dies, their soul is separated from their body and travels to the afterlife. The afterlife is often depicted as a place of eternal happiness and peace, where the soul is reunited with God and is no longer subject to the pain and suffering of the physical world.

Christianity also offers comfort to those who are grieving the loss of a loved one, as it offers hope that death is not the end of life, but rather a step towards a greater spiritual existence. This belief provides comfort to those who are grieving the loss of a loved one, as it offers hope that death is not the end of life, but rather a step towards a greater spiritual existence.

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heaven, if only one is a good Christian, gives people something to hold on to, a kind of security. At the same time churchmen fill them with fear: the prospect of going to hell if you are not found to have been a good Christian on Judgement Day. By promising heaven to churchgoers and threatening non-churchgoing people with hell, church leaders try to bind people to the church.

A leader by the Bible Society of Ghana, entitiled "Oura abyiri no nehuowu" (there is life after death), teaches people about the nature of death and the hereafter. It consists of headings in the form of short, unambiguous statements about death and life after death, followed and founded by bible texts. Together the statements form a clear summary:

Oura abyiri no nehuowu.
Obara ni ko o shibiri adumone wonku oloba benu.
Obara benu pe, na ko abyi sudofo ni asem.
Amanayi ba a nbe: wono a wateku wo Kristu nni.
Oura abyi wonku mai pe na ko ma a wateku benu unku wonku.
Obara rendu, aseyi mu ko ni mono aseyi aseyi kobo.
Se ngepo brennu abyi dako neho no gine egbe a sere di s.
Yen won a dawo ma ya iwaab awo mi ne.
Yen, ko iwaab awo mi ne.
Se abo iwaab kristu, na ma wata no bido mu ko loye sse olo abiyiri ame ase.
K aerobic odadi oloba ni ko in a watako no ko bido olo abiyiri ame ase.
Oloba benu pe, na ko abyi sudofo ni asem.

There is life after death.
Nobody can escape death; everybody will die.
Everybody will die some and thereafter they will be judged.
The sort of the Lord who is coming; those who have died in Christ.
After death there are only two places for us: hell or heaven.
Nobody will have the power to choose the place of the dead.
Whether a person will have eternal life after death depends on whether he believes or does not believe that Jesus died for our reconciliation.
Jesus, he is the resurrection and the life.
If somebody pass Christ aside and dies in sin, it means that his bond (nath) was broken.
God is broken.
There is no other way for a person to be justified in favour of God than to believe, through Jesus one will have life.
The message is clear: death is inevitable and irresistible, but after death one will have eternal life in Jesus. But take care: only if you believe in Jesus you will go to heaven; if not, God will send you to hell.

The threat of going to hell if you are not a good Christian is reinforced by the way the bible is translated into Twi. In the Twi bible (Ahaamum) the English word 'hell' is translated as abwum hibum (the devil's homeland) or as aumaduma. No soilo moyo ne aumaduma soro oga yawa no mu. Yei ne oseenuro ne Ajaami (2014): Then death and Haide were threw into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death (Revelation 20:14). Na mmu n'aa o kono abwum hibum no, na koo ainaayonum ne, na koo swaowaa han nii ne abwum hibum (Luka 16:23). In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abrahim far away, with Lazarus by his side (Luka 16:23). The association of aumaduma with hell and the devil label traditional religion, in which aumaduma is a central, but certainly not a negative concept, as it is in English. In this way the translated bible warns people that holding on to traditional religious beliefs will make you go to hell.

From a street vendor in Kumasi I bought the Christian booklet Life After Death, written by the American evangelist Gordon Landis. This kind of Christian literature is very popular in Ghana. It is sold on every street corner and circulating widely among Christians. This particular booklet tells of visions of heavens and hell by a certain Marjella Davis who left her body for nine days and then returned, an eyewitness of life after death so to say. Her story is a solemn warning to all who tread unheeded, the paths that lead to death and who follow after the false pleasures of the sensual world; lest they leave the body they may be drawn by the law of evil attraction and are plummeted into hades, the nether world, the land of lost hope' (Lindsay 1997: 19).

Marrietta's journey into the realms of darkness begins as follows:

'Suddenly all the brightness departed as she descended into the regions of darkness. In great fear she found herself plummeting down into a deep abyss. There were sulphurous flames, and then in the semi-darkness she saw floating about her "grim-specters enveloped in the faces of unashamed passions." [...] There were bursts of laughter, utterances of mockery, of wry ridicule, polished sarcasm, obscene allusions and terrible curses. There was no water to "allevy fierce and intolerable thirst." The fountains and rivulets that appeared were only mirages. Fountains that appeared on the trees burned the hand that placed it. The very atmosphere carried the elements of wretchedness and disappointment' (Lindsay 1997: 24-25).

Pamphlets like this one circulate all over the world as part of a global Christian popular culture and grant people a view of the dark hereafter. The existence of hell is envisaged not only textually in Christian pamphlets, but also visually in popular paintings sold on the streets. It is agreed upon by many anthropologists today that products of popular culture can offer us an insight into the fears and desires of the masses in modern times. 'Many popular art expressions in Ghana are characterised by a strong Christian morality. The paintings by 'Almymity God' Kwame Akoto, a popular painter in Kumasi, are a striking example'. His fantastic representations
of hell depict a dark, barren-like environment inhabited by monstrous creatures sucking, eating, and torturing human beings. Paintings like these make terrifyingly visible what otherwise remains invisible. Allegory, which allegorically was delivered by Jesus Christ from eighteen years of servitude to an agent of the Devil, explains: ‘My paintings are a warning to everybody that Satan is everywhere; and it is only Jesus who can save us.’

Another image visualising heaven and hell described by Birgit Meyer (1999c). This picture, entitled ‘the bride and the narrow path,’ was highly popular in Pietist circles and was brought to Ghana in the eighteenth century by German Pietist missionaries as a lithograph. New, various modern versions of this image are on sale in Ghana, mostly full-coloured posters. The image shows two possible paths of life: a broad one characterised by worldly temptations and bodily pleasures, leading to hell, and a narrow one characterised by the absence of all this, by soberness and poverty, eventually leading to eternal life in heaven. ‘Then, on Judgement Day, the damned would be sent to hell and the saved to heaven. The picture represents this in a very unambiguous way, thereby producing a certainty which the Bible itself could not provide’ (Meyer 1999c: 13).

Images and pamphlets like the ones described simplify the complexity of the Christian doctrine to provide people with a clear framework for their ideas about the hereafter. This kind of security is attractive for many and may explain why the idea of Judgement Day, heaven and hell has gained such a strong foothold. They also show us that this view of death is very much alive.

The main differences between the Christian and the traditional concept of death concern the ties between the dead and the living. The traditional belief is reincarnation, in the influence of the dead on life on earth, and in the influence of the behaviour of the living on the destination and well-being of the departed souls. All points to the close bonds between the living and the dead across the boundary of death. In the Christian doctrine, however, the dead are not believed to have any direct influence on earth, neither to return to earth. Also, one’s destiny after death, heaven or hell, is totally independent of any behaviour of family members; it is only one’s own belief and righteousness that counts. The living and the dead are separated; one can only hope for reunion with loved ones in heaven.

It is these differences that form the topic of many discussions. On local radio stations one can often listen to religious discussion programmes dedicated to these themes. I heard a discussion on a Kumasi station about life after death. A panel of wise people, poets, and priests in the studio reacted so listeners who called in with questions, opinions, or personal experiences. Especially the question as to whether or not reincarnation is possible evoked much disagreement. The message of the radio panel was that reincarnation is not possible, and they tried to prove this by referring to the Bible. Most callers did not seem to agree with this idea and recounted their personal experiences with children being a reincarnation of someone they had known before. This was often proved by a certain body mark of the deceased person, which manifested on a new-born baby. But not only do convictions vary from person to person. Also people’s personal interpretations are often contradictory. Joanua told me, when we were talking about the radio discussion: ‘I know a woman in Beenu who was born with such a mark, showing that she was truly reincarnated, but me myself, I don’t believe in reincarnation.’ There appears to be a big difference between general abstract beliefs and concrete, personal experiences.

Both traditional religious beliefs and Christianity offer people solace in the face of death. The conviction that after death one will live on in another world, whether envisaged as ‘amensia or heaven, or return on earth, helps people overcome the painful experience of the death of a loved one and cope with the prospect of one’s own death. Where one listens to the texts of highlife songs, however, a totally different view of death appears. ‘HIGHLIFE VIEWS OF DEATH’

Highlife is a form of popular culture that encompasses music, songs, dance, and theatre. It started at the very beginning of the 20th century with the music of the dance-orchestras on the Ghanaian coast, who combined indigenous rhythms, the music of the British army and the rhythms that Ghanaian soldiers brought back from the Caribbean into a new African musical style.’ From a somewhat elite cultural good, highlife developed into a popular ‘movement’ that penetrates all corners of society, a ‘vital part of contemporary Ghanaian lifestyle’ (Brempom 1986: 213). Highlife songs are usually sung in Twi. They comment on contemporary Ghanaian society and on the problems that many people have to cope with in their daily lives. The songs have the fascinating capacity to say it all straightforward, to say what can’t be said. Van der Geest has collected, transcribed, and translated about a hundred highlife songs, many of which are about death. In the following song by Alex Konadu, the definitive character of death is explicitly mentioned:

Onpia w o tua, na soso— Alex Konadu

Ongiya w o tua, na soso.
Mi d a ne a ma ne a mania no mbaana,
ri na mege ne di.

Ongiya w o tua, na soso.
Me mma ne a mmu-nya no baaana,
na na mege ne di.

Yera bi na ma ye, yehia.
Aame bi breten yen, yepi eu.

If someone dies, he is dead.

When a man dies, it is the end.
When a man dies, it is the end.
When a man dies, it is the end.
When a man dies, it is the end.
If we say the deceased is coming to send us讲究ing, we lie.
Or when we say the deceased will write to us, it is a big lie.
In this song the possibility of any contact with the dead or of a return from death is explicitly denied. Death is the absolute end of all life on earth (aumada ni mi), so the living can never know what afterlife is like. Other songs too stress separation and emphasize that after death there is nothing, only misery, sorrow, and despair. No song expresses the idea that death is not the end, that the deceased will stay on with us as an ancestor or will come back to life as another person. The idea that there is no return from death is omnipresent (Van der Geest 1980:66). No insole is derived from any idea of living on in another world or of returning on earth. Death is dead.

The same message can be read on some painted aumada (funeral) cloth. One way to say it is: "aumada yeku - death hurts - aumada we shall not go; naa aumada yeku - death hurts - aumada we shall not go, or eet yeku aumada - after death is (only) grief. Another one however reads eet yeku we buku ho, man has a place to go."

Funerals are an important market for highlife music. Musicians make songs especially for funerals, sometimes for a specific individual or about their own experiences, sometimes more general. Highlife musicians are financially dependent on the success of their songs. This means they have to appeal to popular taste and express popular feelings. Highlife songs about death are indeed very popular. At every funeral highlife tunes are played loudly and people sing along and dance and wait to the tunes of the songs. Because they are so popular, Van der Geest takes the idea expressed in the texts as being more in accordance with the real beliefs and feelings people have than with the official Akan ideology. 'Highlife songs will present a truer picture of popular beliefs about death than do myths, traditional songs, and modern poetry' (1980:47, emphasis mine).

The opposition between cosmological ideas as described by 'people who know tradition' and the views as expressed by highlife singers points to the ever present discrepancy between official ideology and reality. But I think the picture is more complex than a two-tiered division between the 'official' view voiced by traditionalists and scholars and expressed in traditional funeral dirges, but in which 'the people' do not believe, and the 'true beliefs' existing at the grassroots would suggest. Different discourses that exist next to each other and sometimes intertwine, offer people different solutions. Different situations require different beliefs or discourses. The fact that in highlife one sings of the definitive character of death does not exclude in other situations people do feel the presence of ancestors. One can deeply mourn the external loss of a loved one in the earthly, personal sphere, but at the same time believe in a more general concept of ancestorship (cf. Yaakubu 1984). As Nketa points out, this paradox is also expressed within the body of traditional funeral lament. 'The pathos of mortality and the vanity of some of these beliefs are expressed in some dirges and songs' (Nketa 1995:6-7). When I talked with Joana about highlife songs about death (and in particular the song Awaana di, from presented in chapter two), she stressed a continuity of highlife with traditional dirges rather than an opposition. 'These songs are so popular, because they really touch you, they refer to true feelings. They are just like traditional funeral songs', she said. Indeed, the texts of some dirges provided to me by a friend in Bolama bear very close resemblance to some of the highlife texts on the mother's death Van der Geest presents. I give one of them: the others are similar.

Meda aaweeshe ma oo
Meda aaweeshe ma oo
Maaee wu li, puapa wu li, efie li oh
Maaee wu li, puapa wu li, efie li oh
Maaee wu li, puapa wu li, efie li oh
Maaee wu li, puapa wu li, efie li oh
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ACCOMPLISHMENT BY PEOPLE

One of the things that sticks out most is the way in which we use written language. Typical idioms and phrases often mention the whole lives of people, unless the narrator is a close friend, relative, or colleague of the deceased. In this case, we tell stories that show the deceased's full life and the human in them. Such stories are a form of self-expression and are often used to deflect attention from the deceased's actual life. Such stories are a form of self-expression and are often used to deflect attention from the deceased's actual life.

There are also stories about people's deaths that are told by their friends, relatives, and colleagues. These stories often focus on the person's character, abilities, and achievements. They also often reveal the person's values, beliefs, and attitudes.

In some cultures, the stories are told to the deceased's family members. In others, they are told to a public audience. In either case, the stories are often used to express grief and other emotions.

Popular traditions of storytelling and singing often involve the use of songs and stories that recount the experiences of the deceased. These traditions often provide insights into the lives of the deceased and their families. They also often provide a way of remembering the deceased and preserving their memory.

In many cultures, the stories are often told in a way that is deeply personal and intimate. They are often shared with close friends and family members.

The social person: living and dying as a career

The idea of a person living and dying as a career is a central theme in many cultures. In some cultures, a person's life is seen as a series of careers, each one bringing a different set of challenges and opportunities. In other cultures, a person's life is seen as a single career, with the person moving through different stages, each one bringing a different set of challenges and opportunities.

In many cultures, a person's career is seen as a way of achieving individual success and contributing to the family's welfare. In other cultures, a person's career is seen as a way of achieving social status and contributing to the community's welfare.

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The person who saw the body was elderly, and they were accompanied by their family. The face was swollen and disfigured, and the body was clothed in traditional clothing. The family members stood around the body, crying and mourning. They recounted that the deceased had lived a long and healthy life, and they were surprised by the suddenness of the death. They described the deceased as a kind and gentle person, who had always taken care of them. The family members were joined by friends and neighbors, who also came to say their final goodbyes. The funeral was held the next day, and many people attended to pay their respects. The family members were supported by their community, who came together to offer words of comfort and support. The deceased was laid to rest with the hope that they would find peace in the afterlife.
The room was very dimly lit, with the soft light from the lamp casting distinct shadows on the floor and the walls. The walls were adorned with various pieces of art, including paintings and photographs. The walls were also lined with bookshelves, filled with books of various sizes and colors. The room was filled with a sense of tranquility and serenity.

As I walked around the room, I noticed a painting on the wall that seemed to capture the essence of the room. The painting depicted a serene landscape, with a river flowing gently through the mountains. The colors were soft and muted, creating a calming effect.

I then turned my attention to a photograph that hung on the wall. It was of a family, all dressed in their finest clothes. They were smiling and seemed to be enjoying each other's company. The photograph was framed in a simple, classic style, and it added a touch of elegance to the room.

I continued to walk around the room, taking in all the details. I noticed a small table in the corner, with a vase of fresh flowers on top. The flowers were vibrant and colorful, adding a pop of color to the room.

As I left the room, I couldn't help but notice how the lighting and decor created a soothing atmosphere. It was a room that invited you to relax and unwind.
After death a person is photographed or filmed for the last time, when he is lying in state. In taking such post-mortem pictures particular attention is paid to the decorations of the corpse, the bed, and the room. A photographer in Future Remembrance expresses it as follows:

"They [the relatives] will love to stand by the bodidee just to have a photograph to prove how the body was well decorated. This serves as a memory. We in our culture, we normally take pictures in the dead person, more than the live ones. So when someone dies, people try to put up their maximum. As for future remembrance."

Post-mortem pictures fix the image of the displayed corpse, the image of beauty, success, and good life projected on the body of the deceased. Family members keep the pictures and the videotapes as a memory, to look at once in a while or to show to visitors, and send them to relatives and friends abroad who were not able to attend the funeral.

The image of the person that produced transcendent boundaries of time and space. In contrast to a living person, the image of a person travels easily across great distances, circulates among many people and is present everywhere at the same time. Moreover, the image does not change with time as a living person does. The image of a person is a static, fixed image. Wendell comments on death and image that 'in dis-

The tear of death, the cultures of the world have always interpreted and framed it, displaced and inflamed it, and ultimately put up the image against the wounds that it left behind: the image that honors the dead and passes on the afterworld, the image as a substitute for what has been lost and at the same time as a sign of this loss.'

The person bewailed

The theatrical wailing and weeping of women around the bed in which the dead body is laid out strikes a Western visitor. The dramatic expression of emotion, the noise of screaming, and the uncontrolled body movements are, for many Westerners, not compatible with the solemn occasion of death. In Ghana, however, crying is vehemently, lamenting loudly, dancing wildly, drinking liberally, and behaving madly are proper ways of showing how much one is affected by the loss of a person (see also Chapter 3). But not only is this way of expressing one's feelings considered appropriate, public wailing is also socially expected, required ever. How surprised I was when during one of the first funerals I attended the woman sitting next to me stood up and said 'I'm going to cry, I'll be back immediately' (mawukona, mawukwa wamed). She went to the middle of the place and started weeping and lamenting as if she could never stop again. Then, after five minutes, she stopped as suddenly as she had started, returned to her place and said to me 'I have finished' (mawou). In the event I described at the beginning of this chapter, the women asked me to 'wait till we are ready' and when they were ready, they went to cry. As soon as I had taken the picture, they stopped and went to sit down again. Such incidents make clear that tears are not only personal; they are first and foremost social (cf. van der Geest 1990a). Tears are part of the cultural pattern of rules about funeral behaviour. They can be evoked when they are expected, produced when one needs them. Whenever I left home to attend a funeral, the people in my house would ask me 'where are you crying? They say I'm something one intends to do.

By pointing out that crying is socially expected and tears can be evoked, I am not saying that the emotions people express are not real, or that their tears are not genuine. People do have feelings of deep grief, of course. The point is that, as van der Geest (1990b) remarks, just as the tears indicate how to express one's grief, they also indicate how to conceal one's real feelings. At Dutch burials the distinction between those who sob and those who don't feel any grief becomes blurred. The cultural norms at Ghanaian funerals make that one never knows who is really affected by the death and who is not. Apart from this, people often make use of the mournful atmosphere and the sight of a dead body to cry for other deceased loved ones. Okee way we na pese yin su, 'at the funeral of another person we express our mother', Ananse say. People told me this after I had experienced it myself and
talked about it with others. At the funeral of George Baalsma, the 23 year old nephew of my grandmother Yaa Mansah, the thought of my friend Roes in the Netherlands, who had not so long before died in an accident as about the same age in my absence, and the crying crowd surrounding me, made my tears start flowing easily. I had never known George personally, I had never even met him, but at his funeral I cried. I cried for Roes, but also for George, for his brothers and sisters, for his friends, for his parents, and for Yaa Mansah. It was the first time I participated in weeping around the corpse and it was at that moment that I felt and understood that tears evoked can definitely be real.

Although many people stressed that it is important to express one's emotions and not keep them inside, it may be clear that crying at funerals is culturally appropriate behaviour as much as an expression of personal emotions. The fact that weeping in public is considered more appropriate, only underlines this cultural aspect. An outright denial of the need to express one's personal grief is the taboo of parents to cry when they have lost a child. As I described above, when a child dies, the parents, however deeply grieved, are not allowed to weep even one tear in public. When they are crying, people urge them to stop, because the 'spirits will come and take another one.' One shouldn't mourn a dead child, but forget the death as soon as possible and focus on the living children. I found it had to understand that in a society where expression of grief is so prominent and so much valued, the deepest feeling of all is the grief of a child, one amongst the others over-all image of the celebration, objects of wealth and beauty, all contribute to the person remembered. A written biography of the deceased person, a practice I shall pay attention to in Chapter 3, is more what Nora calls history, a reconstruction of what is no longer, a representation of the past, an analysis.

I have proposed to see the passage from life to death as a transition from being a living person in the community to being remembered as a person by the community. A rite of passage must make this transition possible, a rite which consists of the kinds of practices, attributes, and images I have described that create the future remembrance of the deceased person. But this is a particular kind of memory. It is not so much the person as a person that is remembered, but the person as an image. Siegel makes this point very clear. He argues that 'Javanese funeral photography operates against memory: it is the person as an image, and not the person connected with memories of him that survives' (1986: 160). Although I do not want to contradict this statement, looked at it from the Ghanaian perspective, the aim of photography is exactly the opposite. People make idealised images of themselves in the hope that this image does stay connected to their person in the memory of their relatives. Still, the image created is a static, fixed image. 'Death brings with it a degree of respect and idealisation of the deceased that s/he was unlikely to have germinated by birth or achievements' (Ibid: 261).

While Siegel uses this fixation of an ideal image to explain the absence of grief in Javanese funerals, which clearly cannot be said of Auarie funerals, the same kind of
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