

## UNITY AND COOPERATION AS PORTRAYED IN NZEMA PROVERBS

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper seeks to examine an important aspect of the numerous themes under which Nzema proverbs may be classified. It is a descriptive study on unity, togetherness, and cooperation as portrayed in Nzema proverbs. The paper establishes the fact that most Nzema proverbs encourage the positive attitude of being united and working in collaboration to achieve success in all human endeavors. It again identifies and discusses some inherent literary features and devices such as metaphor, personification, repetition, exaggeration, parallelism and sound effect such as alliteration. Interestingly, the paper further explores and examines some proverbs in the language that counter the core of the study. In other words, these proverbs tend to be contrary to the fact that people need to unite, come together, work collectively and tolerate others' view and opinion for the betterment of life. Findings also proved Yankah's (1989) assertion right, that, proverbs are essentially useful when employed within the appropriate context of communication. It also confirms the claim made by Hallen (2000) that, the use of proverb is 'context-dependent'. Data for the study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. A semi-structured interview was used to elicit information on Nzema proverbs from four respondents while some Nzema literature texts were consulted as a secondary source.*

**KEYWORDS:** Proverbs, Communication, Unity, Cooperation, Togetherness, Collectiveness

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### INTRODUCTION

Unity, cooperation, togetherness, collectiveness, and collaboration are seen to be interrelated concepts. This present study thus aims at exploring the above-interrelated discipline as a socio-cultural moral requirement portrayed in Nzema proverbs. Considered as one of the oral genres of literature, the subject of the proverb has been explored in various dimensions especially in the African context. Studies such as Finnegan (1970), Dzobo (1973), Luwesti (1984), Yankah (1989), Obeng (1994), Fasiku (2006), Yankah (2012) and others have diversely discussed this verbal art form in question. In the view of Finnegan (1970:390), proverbs are described as "a body of short statements built up over the years, which reflect the thought and insight of a people". This implies that, proverbs are concise and that everything about the life of a people such as their religious beliefs, wisdom, social morality and immorality among others are all embedded in their proverbs. Proverbs may be the storehouse of the wisdom of the society (Yankah, 1989; Okpewho, 1992) cited in Amegashie & Asilevi (2010). In his work, "The Proverb in the Context of Akan Rhetoric", Yankah (1989) observes that the proverb plays a major role among the people of Akan during the interaction. Obeng (1994) buttresses Yankah's claim by adding that, proverbs can serve as a device for mitigating conflicts among people. This means the society draws on

proverbs when they hold both informal and formal conversations such as legal disputes and meetings of elderly people.

Touching on Yoruba proverbs, Olatunji (1984) and Okpewho (1992) describe proverbs as social control strategies among the Yoruba and Asaba (Igbo) of Nigeria. As Luwesti (1984) observes, proverbs reflect the wisdom and accumulated knowledge of the speaker. They (proverbs) are regarded as the verbal place of the adult (Luwesti, *ibid*). African culture is rich in proverbs and so anyone born and bred in a village is a 'living carrier of proverbs' (Asare, 1997: ix (cited in Ababila 2010)). In his contribution, Opoku (1997) also posits that proverbs are interwoven in local languages and that, in Akan society, every member who grows up in the village is a carrier of proverbs. It is thus obvious from the above that Asare and Opoku share a similar view, reminding us not to always expect the use of proverbs to be the preserve of the elderly as claimed by Luwesti (1984).

Informing us on the etiquettes of using proverbs, Okpewho (1992) mentions in agreement with Luwesti (*ibid*) that, elderly people would be in a better position to use proverbs since their age and experience would enable them to interpret the implications, wisdom and moral truths of the proverbs better. He further argues that the younger people can use proverbs freely among themselves but must always introduce proverbs before elders by saying 'as you, our elders have said' This means both the old and young can incorporate proverbs in a discourse depending on context, but on the part of the younger person is somewhat regulated.

Investigating the structure, style, and use of the Dagaaba proverb, Dorzie (2013:115) sees the proverb as "an intellectually coined language that carries some aesthetic and utilitarian values, used in a matured manner, upon an intelligent reflection to express a deeper meaning about a general truth on an issue."

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Etymological History of the Nzema Proverb**

The people of Nzema refer to Proverbs as 'mrele' with its singular counterpart as 'erele'. Originally, 'erele' (which means a proverb) among the people of Nzema was believed to have metamorphosed from 'arele' (which means palm tree or palm fruit). History has it that, the early men of Nzema found numerous usefulness of the palm tree as for instance obtaining wine from the fresh trees, preparing their soup out of the fruits, making brooms out of the leaves, making palm kernel oil from the nuts and getting an edible type of mushroom from the decomposing trees among others.

The early men thus attributed the countless moral lessons, wisdom, truth, advice and other significance that could be deduced from some of their wise sayings to that of the palm tree. Therefore, 'arele' (palm tree) gradually, metaphorically resulted in 'erele' (proverb) since they both shared a similar feature of possessing several benefits<sup>1</sup>. This is not to say that 'arele' (palm tree) does not still exist in the language. It pertains in the language presently as palm tree or fruit. In my view, however, the initial vowel /a/ has alternated with /e/ to mean a proverb.

### **Location and Linguistic Features of the Nzema**

Nzema is the language of the people called Nzema. Geographically, Nzema people occupy the South Western part of the Western Region of Ghana, West Africa. Nzema extends from Ahanta to the Ghana-Ivory Coast border (Annan, 1994). It forms an integral part of the Niger-Congo Kwa languages family. Nzema is somewhat similar to Akan as for

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<sup>1</sup> During a personal interaction with Egya Kabenla from Awiebo in the Ellembele District in the Western Region of Ghana on 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2017. The consultant was then 74 years.

instance; *di-di* ‘eat’, *da-da* ‘sleep’, *fa-fa* ‘take’, *bela-bra* ‘come’, *kɔ-kɔ* ‘go’ etc.

Furthermore, the syntax exhibits the basic SVO pattern as indicated below;

- Nrenyia ne ε - bo ɔ ye

Man DEF EMPH- beat 3SG.SUB wife.

‘The man has beaten his wife.’

- Kusu ne kye kila

Cat DEF catch.HAB mouse.

‘The cat catches a mouse’

The basic syllable structure is V, CV, N (see Annan, 1980)

## MOTIVATION

The study of proverbs has been undertaken by several renowned scholars including Finnegan (1970), Dzobo (1973;1997), Owomoyela (1981), Olatunji (1984), Yankah (1989;2012), Okpehwo (1992), Obeng (1994), Asare (1997), Fasiku (2006), Dorzie (2013), Ehineni (2016) and Bisilki & Nkamigbo (2017) among others. In the perspective of Nzema, scholarly works on an in-depth study of proverbs have received relatively little attention, though we recognize the early efforts by Kwesi & Quarm (1998) who together made a collection of some Nzema proverbs with their meaning. Kwesi’s (2007) ‘Nzema Mrelebule’ (Nzema Proverbs) was also published by the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. However, as has been hinted earlier, works on Nzema proverbs in the light of analyzing their syntactic characteristics, stylistics, thematic classification, literary devices, and imagery still remain crucial areas that are understudied. This paper is thus essentially motivated to attempt a study of some Nzema proverbs that portray unity, togetherness, and cooperation as one of the potential themes which need to be investigated so that findings and conclusions could contribute to filling a gap in the existing body of literature, cross-linguistically and in Nzema particularly.

## Theoretical Framework

In his famous work, ‘The Proverb in the Context of Akan Rhetoric’, Yankah (1989) proposed and advanced the Theory of Proverb Praxis, stating that the use of proverbs is based on necessary context and situation of communication. He points out that, discussing the proverb and identifying its meaning without appropriate context is tantamount to rejecting and undermining the functionality of the proverb as a crucial element of discourse. Admitting Yankah’s assertion, Hallen (2000:141) also observes that the use of proverbs is situational and context-dependent to an essential degree. In this wise, the model we adopt for the study of Nzema proverbs in this work conforms to Yankah’s (1989) framework and that of Hallen (2000). The model is appropriate for the present study because, like many other cultures, Nzema proverbs are best introduced in conversations based on context. They (proverbs) manifest mainly during occasions and functions such as marriage ceremonies, funerals, durbars and arbitration among others (see Ababila 2010:68).

## Features of the Nzema Proverb

Like in many other cultures, Nzema traditional proverbs are short sayings containing the wisdom and philosophy of the people. The general truth and deeper meaning of the Nzema proverb are always not overt. It requires the listener’s

effort to reflect before deducing what the speaker intends to communicate. Olatunji (1984) for instance observes that proverbs are the horses of speech. He means that proverbs are used to discover the truth when it is hidden and that information is channeled through the proverb to reach its destination (to the audience). Regarding the Akan traditional judicial rhetoric, Yankah (2012) describes the significance of employing the proverb as inevitable. As Ehineni (2016:73) rightly observes, the speaker deploys the proverb as a ‘messenger’ to inform his/her audience. He adds that “the voice of the proverb is the voice of the speaker”. In other words, the speaker uses the proverb as a tool for disseminating his/her ideas (Ehineni, *ibid*).

Touching on the significant functionality of Yorùbá proverbs, Olatunji (1984:170) argues that, proverbs serve as “social charters to praise what the society considers to be virtues and condemn bad practices”. In a parallel sense, Dzobo (1997) studies Ewe proverbs and mentions that, proverbs contain the general principles used to straighten and direct both personal and societal deeds.

In Nzema cultural interaction, the proverb is considered a way of educating, straightening and transforming the younger people (children), often when an elderly person intends to provide the child with necessary guidance. The Nzema proverb below, for example, attests to the observation above;

‘Kila kakula didi nwoma nloa’

Mouse little feed.HAB skin POSTP.

Literally, (A little mouse feeds around the skin of an animal).

This proverb can be used to advise a child to always talk about matters which are meant for children to discuss. When an animal is slaughtered and the skin is removed, it becomes dry and hardened, making it very difficult for a little mouse to chew. The child can thus be informed through this wise saying not to interfere with issues concerning the adult. He (the child) must not intrude into matters beyond his control.

Another proverb in Nzema which entreats all categories of people to exercise patience is as follows; ‘ε nee akòle da a ε - m - pe’.

2SG CONJ hen/cock sleep PART 2SG-NEG-rush.

Literally, (You need not rush if you sleep with a hen/cock).

The fowl is noted for entering its coop very early in the evening. Hence, it can easily be captured for whatever purpose at that moment. We are therefore reminded through this proverb to cultivate the habit of waiting for something to gradually be in readiness at our disposal before we utilize it. The proverb advises everyone not to rush in life.

According to Dorzie (2013:118), Dagaaba proverbs appear in various structural forms. He identifies direct statement as in, ‘*N boɔŋ yi n naao*’ (my goat gave birth to my cow). Dorzie again indicates a simple negative proposition in the structure of the Dagaaba proverb as this; ‘*Baba tona domboli boyi*’ (the fool is not sent the second time).

Commenting on the syntactic features of the Yorùbá proverb, Ehineni (2016:82) also points out compound structures which make use of coordinating conjunction such as *ká* (and). He provided this among others for an example in the language; ‘*A kù lóyún sínú ká fi bí erú*’ (We do not get pregnant and give birth to a slave).

Similarly, in Nzema proverbs, simple declarative statements exist. Such proverbial utterances are presented in the form of informing the audience about a general truth as for instance; 1. ‘*Nɔhale le ayile*’ (telling the truth is a medication).

- ‘*Ezukoa le ɔ ti anwo belemgbunli*’ (money is a king on its own).
- ‘*Mogya ye enlomboe tela nzule*’ (blood is thicker than water).

Compound sentences with the use of coordinators as ‘*nee*’ (and), ‘*na*’ (but) also occur in Nzema proverbs as a few are illustrated below;

- ‘*Kakula ze nriandi na ɔnze fea*’ (the child can run but does not know where to hide).
- ‘*Ebutua nee ebinli enli mgba*’ (the anus and the feces are never separated).
- ‘*Fele wie suboe nu na te azule nu ɔ*’ (the fish can get finished in the soup but not in a river).

## METHODOLOGY

The study is a descriptive one, with data obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Contacts were made with two chiefs who provided me with some proverbs commonly used in Nzema culture. I again consulted two respondents who were spokespersons to the Paramount Chiefs of Axim Traditional Council (both lower and upper divisions) in the Western Region of Ghana. This step was taken because the researcher believed that the spokespersons had often been in contact with the chiefs at various durbars and arbitrations and so might have accumulated a reasonable number of Nzema proverbs in their cognitive domain. Therefore, taking insights from the above, it appears obviously that the sampling technique was purposive.

Adding to the primary source, a secondary data was obtained by consulting a collection of Nzema proverbs compiled by Kwesi & Quarm (1998). Literature texts in Nzema, both novel and play such as Kwesi (1996), Blay (1997), Kwaw (2012) and Soboh-Blay (2013) were equally read to select some proverbs which were relevant to the study.

## DATA DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### Introduction

In this, I intend to consider the main purpose of the paper which relates to an analysis of Nzema proverbs that depict unity and cooperation in any human society. This I intend doing by selecting appropriate proverbs that would fit our discussion from the lots which were gathered. The format would include exploring and providing the context or situation where these proverbs would be significantly and intelligibly incorporated in discourse among the people of Nzema. Proverbs are noted for covering a wider scope of human endeavor with numerous thematic classifications including patience, loyalty, love sympathy, transparency, greed, enmity, envy, wickedness, selfishness, authority, and governance among others. Since the paper is limited in scope and cannot deal with all these possible themes mentioned above, our interest would be on those Nzema proverbs which seek to direct and encourage the usefulness of being united and doing things collectively in any given socio-cultural setup. The analysis shall further include some counter proverbs which might be on the other side of the coin. In other words, we intend to identify and address some proverbs that attempt to be in contrast with unity, togetherness, and cooperation for our audience to best appreciate the discussion. Where appropriate, we shall identify and discuss some literary features since proverbs are imbued with devices like metaphor, simile, personification, contrast, allegory, and anecdote and so on (Ababila, 2010). Finally, the analysis would be captured under

proverbs concerning human/human body parts and those concerning nonhuman.

## **PROVERBS CONCERNING HUMAN / HUMAN BODY PARTS**

### **Proverb (1)**

‘Etile ko le namule’.

Head one STAT.be cottage.

Literally, (one head is cottage).

### **Context of Use**

This proverb would be most useful in times of advising someone not to solely make a decision. When a person tries to rely on his/her experience alone to undertake a task without consulting other experts, the proverb above would be much appropriate to be quoted as a reminder to the person for him/her to seek the consent of a more knowledgeable person in that regard.

### **Analysis Significance of Proverb (1)**

The proverb encourages people to put heads together, work in collaboration and make a collective and informed decision to achieve useful outcomes. Metaphorically, as seen in the proverb, a single head is compared to the state of living in a countryside or cottage where social amenities and other relevant resources for a joyful living condition are virtually not available. Hence, if one person does something or takes a decision alone, the tendency of lacking accuracy and tangibility would be higher, unlike the case where other people would be given the opportunity to contribute.

### **Proverb (2)**

‘Saa menli dɔɔnwo zo Nyamenle a bɛ kɔme ɛ-m - bu’.

COND people many carry God FOC 3PL neck PART-NEG-break.

Literally, (If many people carry God, they do not become tired).

### **Context of Use**

If a duty is meant to be performed by a group of people and the expected participants leave it upon one person, the proverb above can be expressed in the course of informing those participants who have remained idle to rather assist in executing the task.

### **Analysis Significance of Proverb (2)**

This wise saying reminds us that, a task that may be tedious and herculean for one person can easily be performed by many through collaborative effort. It encourages people to unite with the spirit of shared responsibility and refrain from sitting behind to look up to one person to do something which demands a helping hand. The proverb is imbued with hyperbole/ exaggeration as a literary device in the sense that cannot really carry God. Put in another way, it is impossible to carry the whole universe on one’s head.

### **Proverb (3)**

‘esale fema bia bene yeɛ bene bia fema’

Hand right bath.HAB left CONJ left HAB-bath right

Literally, (Right-hand baths left and left baths right)

### Context of Use

In an attempt to advise people to be supportive and help one another by means of unity and cooperation, an elderly person would be likely to employ the above pithy wise saying in the discourse. It will again become useful in the context of reprimanding someone who does not seem to recognize a kind gesture towards him/her so as to do likewise unto others.

### Analysis / Significance of Proverb (3)

Across cultures, people expect help and assistance to be mutually reciprocal. In other words, one would always want to be treated fairly as s/he might have done unto others. The proverb, therefore, teaches the moral behavior of uniting and teaming up with others to do things hand-in-hand. It again informs one to come to the aid of a friend or relative in his/her endeavors so that same could be done to him/her.

An interesting sound effect that appears in the string of the above proverb is alliteration. We find this in the close repetition of the consonant /b/ as in *bene bia* (left baths) and *bia bene* (baths left) in the proverb. Again, considering the structure, we observe the manifestation of parallelism as a literary feature as in the glossing of the proverb as follows: 'The right baths left and the left baths right'. This phenomenon is what Agyekum (2013:91) referred to as 'cross parallelism'

### Proverb (4)

'Saa menli nwiɔ sua ehane a menli nwiɔ a kpɔla a'

COND people two set trap FOC people two PART visit PART

Literally (If two people set a trap, the two must visit it together)

### Context of Use

The above proverb would be appropriately used in the context of advising someone who may seem not to unite, cooperate and work with a partner anymore. Moreover, if two or more people begin a project, this proverb can be expressed to encourage each of them to remain cooperated until they finally succeed.

### Analysis Significance of Proverb (4)

Among the numerous moral lessons, this proverb essentially teaches that, if people collectively initiate an assignment, either one person or across should not disregard the unity that initially existed between them and try to pursue the success of the task in the absence of the other participants. In any case, all who began the project must come together to see to either the success or failure of their effort. An inherent literary device in the proverb has to do with repetition. This is evidenced in the proverb as we see *menli nwiɔ....a menli nwiɔ .....*

### Proverbs Concerning Non-Human Entities Proverb (5)

'Saa baka ko die anwoma dedee a ɔ - bu'.

COND tree one HAB-receive air continuous PART 3SG - fall.HAB

Literally, (If a single tree continuously serves as windbreak, it falls/uproots)

### Context of Use

This didactic statement would be applicable in a situation where one is being advised not to exempt him/herself from a task that must be collectively performed. It would also be suitable in advising a person who seems to be undertaking a difficult task alone, not wanting other people to cooperate in doing the work so that the credit and praises go to that person only.

### Analysis Significance of Proverb (5)

Relating to our socio-cultural occurrences, the proverb directs us to recognize any duty that requires unity and collaborative effort and attend to it accordingly, therefore reminding us not to allow one person to exhaust his/her energy on a job. It further teaches that, with the availability of the human resource, an individual should not be overburdened; else, that person may eventually join the ancestors out of stress and unbearable fatigue.

Personification as a literary device is inherently interwoven in the proverbial statement in (5) above. The tree is being personified as if it possesses the human ability to receive and enjoy the wind blow or air, especially when a fan is propelling.

### Proverb (6)

‘Baka ko ε-n - gakyi ehoayele’.

Tree one PART-NEG-become forest.

Literally, (A single tree does not make a forest)

### Context of Use

An appropriate communicative context of employing this concise and didactic statement is when a person is being advised to cooperate with his/her colleagues and co-workers in order to achieve abundant success. Another alarming situation that can demand the invitation of this proverb in a discourse, especially in Nzema cultural set up is when advising a female (adult) who continuously abort pregnancies. They will dwell on this proverb to remind her to reproduce since it is her children who would together with other relatives of the extended family constitute a larger clan.

### Analysis / Significance of Proverb (6)

The proverb clearly enlightens us that a single entity (person) would find it very difficult to accomplish a task which is obviously meant to be supported by a multitude of people. We understand the fact that a forest does not constitute a single tree, rather it takes several kinds of trees, naturally uniting to make their own environment more attractive. This implies that, as humans, we need to make our endeavors more flourishing by means of uniting and doing things collectively, thereby disapproving isolation and separation.

### Proverb (7)

‘Nyiene soso be nwo na be - ape azule’.

Ant-PL hold.HAB 3PL self CONJ 3PL-cross river.



Literally, (The ants hold one another before they cross a river)

### Context of Use

When somebody tries to distance and isolate him/her self from a collaborative exercise, the proverb above would be vital for advising and bringing the person on board. Especially when someone remains unconcerned about family matters (mostly when the family is in crises), this proverb would be beneficial in such a context for advising the one to unite and cooperate with other members of the family, so as to collectively address the situation.

### Analysis Significance of Proverb (7)

In any human society, people cherish unity/togetherness as a key factor in doing almost every possible thing. This claim is what has instituted a common statement across cultures that “unity is strength”. Universally, the above proverb portrays the necessities of being united by means of encouraging people to entertain the habit of cooperating and contributing their quota in an endeavor so that they can together arrive at a final destination which everybody would embrace. We all understand by nature that, the ants are very tiny creatures but the proverb makes us admit that they are able to get to the other bank of a river through the power and efficacy of unity and cooperation. Therefore, obviously as humans, we can achieve success in every aspect of life if we cultivate the habit of uniting and hold it in high esteem.

Critically assessing the proverb, we find that the ants are personified as if they have hands as humans to be able to hold one another before crossing a river. They (ants) are again described as though they possess human legs to walk through the running river.

### Proverb (8)

‘Ngyenle ngome ε-n - de alee’.

Salt alone PART-NEG-make food.

Literally (Salt alone cannot make food/soup delicious).

### Context of Use

This short, wise and educative statement would be applicable when advising people to get involved in any good activity. It would equally be useful to inform someone to pave way for other people to join hands in executing a task.

### Analysis / Significance of Proverb (8)

Soup is made up of many ingredients including pepper, onion, tomatoes, fish just to mention a few. It is thus no doubt that these ingredients combine to ensure the palatability and deliciousness of the soup. Let us not also ignore the fact that, the presence of salt in the soup is indispensable in achieving its deliciousness. This notwithstanding, we need also to recognize that the remaining ingredients are required to unite, cooperate and in a way interact in the soup to ensure its maximal taste. Taking insights from the proverb above and relating to our socio-cultural life, we are taught to unite, work together and even reason collectively since one person may not succeed in accomplishing a task that requires the help of many.

A similar proverb which conveys an equivalent lesson as noted above is found among the Yorùbá of Nigeria as follows:

Àjèjé owó kan kò gbégbá dé orí.

Literally, ( A single hand does not carry a whole calabash to the head) (see Ehineni, 2016:81).

Analogous to that of Nzema proverb discussed in (8) above, this Yorùbá proverb also essentially portrays that, unity and cooperation among members make it possible for work to be done with ease.

### Proverb (9)

‘Penepene a bẹ - fa bẹ - kye akólẹ a’

Surround FOC 3PL-use 3PL-catch hen/cock PART.

Literally, (It takes several people to surround for a fowl to be caught).

### Context of Use

This proverb would be introduced when informing people to help others in performing duties which may be beyond the control of an individual.

### Analysis / Significance of Prover (9)

An individual trying to catch a hen/cock is often not easy. The fowl can even escape by flying over the person’s head. On the other hand, when many people surround and so more hands are involved, they can easily get hold of the fowl. This proverbial statement thus teaches that people need to be socially gregarious, unite, cooperate, collaborate and do many things with supporting hands.

The ‘Konkomba’ people of some part of the Northern Region of Ghana also have a proverb which moral implications are comparable to the Nzema version addressed in (9). It states that; ‘Kijambik kibaa aan ηma pii litakpal’.

Finger one NEG can pick pebble/stone.

Literally, (One finger cannot pick a pebble) (see Bisilki & Nkamigbo, 2017:128).

Obviously, the possibility of picking an item with a finger is doubtful unless two or more of the other fingers are mutually inclusive. Thus this proverb really buttresses the portrayal of the benefits of joining many hands in an exercise as illustrated in the Nzema version above.

### Some Counter Proverbs on Unity, Togetherness, and Cooperation

In this, I intend to discuss some Nzema proverbs which counter the necessities of living in a society where unity and cooperation abounds. The implications and lessons gained from such proverbs are contrary to those proverbs which depict the significance of togetherness among a group of people.

### Proverb (1)

‘Saa agye ebola to edwene a bẹ - n- zulo zo’.

COND tooth rot sing song FOC 3PL- NEG-respond POSTP

Literally, (If a person with a decayed tooth raises a song, people refuse to join in the chorus).

### Context of Use

When people reject a person's contribution, especially during a formal discussion, the one whose suggestions have been rejected can employ this proverb in that context to mean that he/she has been considered inferior and so his/her cooperation is not necessary

### Analysis Implications of Proverb (1)

The implications of this proverb try to undermine the advocacy of being united, cooperative and tolerating others' view and opinion. It rather portrays discrimination and teaches that people should not do things together with others who may live with certain abnormalities, either through natural or artificial means. The proverb also informs people not to entertain and cooperate with persons whose social status may not be as standard as may be compared to others.

### Proverb (2)

'Koahweabane a - nloa ɛn - dwu sua kunlu'.

Poor person POSS-mouth NEG-reach house POSTP.

Literally (A poor man's voice is not heard in the midst of prominent people).

### Context of Use

This proverb can be said by a person to indicate that he/she has been deprived of sharing his/her grievances.

### Analysis Implications of Proverb (2)

In certain circumstances, people would not want to unite, cooperate and welcome the view of the less privileged people even when they have crucial contributions and suggestions to offer. As portrayed in the proverb above, it appears clearly that, in a society, discrimination and for that matter separation exists at a remarkable degree which serves as the root of depriving people of cooperating and working together with others.

### Proverb (3)

'Nyameke a - ra ɛn - ze Nyɔnra a - ra'.

PSN POSS-son NEG-know PSN POSS-son.

Literally (Nyameke's son does not care about Nyɔnra's son).

### Context of Use

If a person needs assistance from a relative (particularly from a member of the extended family) but does not get it, he/she can make the proverbial statement in (3), thinking that he/she has been rejected and isolated from the family because they came out from different mothers. Another context that would make the use of the above proverb relevant is when a person mercilessly deals with another person from a non-identical background such as religious difference, political difference or difference in ethnicity. In such a situation, the victim can cite this proverb to indicate the cause of treating him/her unfairly.

### Analysis Implications of Proverb (3)

Contrary to unity and cooperation, this proverb signals that, once someone does not share a close relationship with another person, they need not create any bond of unity and togetherness. Per the proverb, since ‘Nyameke’ and ‘Nyɔnra’ are separate mothers, hardly would their sons unite, cooperate and offer support to each other. Such is a clear reflection of some of the occurrences in most cultures and societies.

### Proverb (4)

‘Ngyiyilira se, me kosoe wo me ti anu’.

Ant say.HAB 1SG intention STAT.be 1SG head POSTP.

Literally, (The ant says, my intentions are in my mind).

### Context of Use

This proverb would be useful to be quoted by someone who does not want to unearth what he/she intends doing. In other words, it would be appropriate in the context where a person tries to claim that he/she is not in readiness to declare and share his/her experiences with other people.

### Analysis / Implications of Proverb (4)

When people are not ready to make their decisions known to others, they harbour them in their minds. And if someone persistently refuses to share an experience with other people, it could simply mean the person is not prepared to make a step towards cooperation and togetherness. The proverb thus informs us that, unity among people can be paralyzed and dissolved by means of someone trying to remain isolated and always reserving his/her comments and plans.

Figuratively, the ant is personified if it is able to speak as humans. This is manifested in the Nzema proverb as, ‘Ngyiyilira se.....’ (the ant says,.....). Okpewho (1992) cited in Dorzie (2013:119) describes such proverbs where words are put in the mouths of fictional entities as ‘wellerism’.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper has provided an analysis of the Nzema proverb in a special perspective of investigating those proverbs which depict the relevance of unity, cooperation, and togetherness as a universally recognized behavioral trait which is required of every member of a community to ensure the development of any socio-cultural setup. The paper reveals to a greater extend that, most Nzema proverbs advise, direct and encourage people to live in harmony, unity, cooperation and do many other things in collaboration, although some proverbs that counter the above findings were identified to render the discussion more interesting. It critically takes into consideration the convenient and appropriate contextual situations for the use of such proverbs. The paper further exposes that, such Nzema proverbs are woven around human and human body parts including nonhuman organisms/entities. It also uncovers some dominant literary devices that are inherently imbued with such proverbs as for instance metaphor, personification, hyperbole, repetition, alliteration, and parallelism.

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