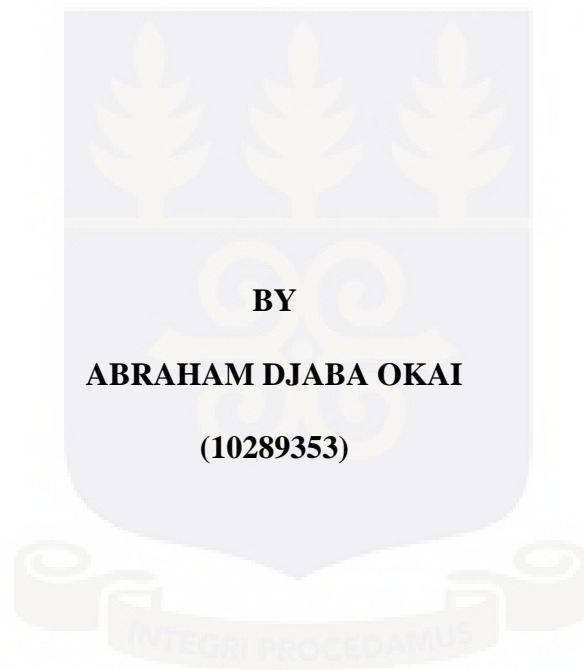


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**THE CONCEPTS OF LIFE AND DEATH: INTERPRETING JOHN 11:1-54 FROM
KROBO PERSPECTIVE**

**A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS,
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON**



**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF
M.PHIL DEGREE IN STUDY OF RELIGIONS**

JULY 2016

DECLARATION

This is to certify that this thesis is the result of research undertaken by Abraham Djaba Okai under the supervision of Rev. Fr. Dr. George Ossom-Batsa and Dr. Nicoletta Gatti towards the award of M.Phil Degree in Study of Religions in the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana (Legon).

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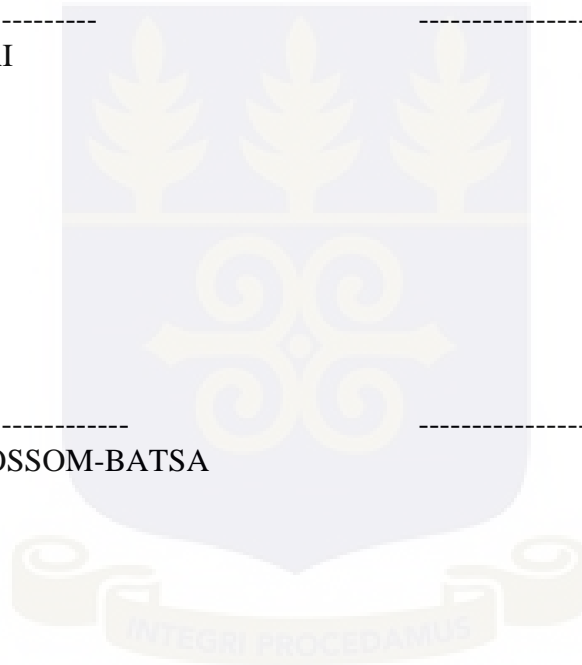
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ABSTRACT

For the Krobo, death is considered a calamity. They say, *gbenɔ yi mi wa* (death is wicked), so *ke i na amane tsoɔ i ko wo he la* (if I had seen ‘death tree,’ I would have set fire to it). Similar concepts about death can be found in some NT communities. An example was the Johannine community confronted with the problem of justifying death in the community of eternal life (11:37) and how the death of believers is to be understood and faced in this life. If Jesus is truly present, as he promised in his last discourse, and indwelling the disciples as a principle of eternal life, why should a believer die? Some of these difficulties were evident in the concerns of the family of Lazarus in sending for Jesus when Lazarus was sick; and in their disappointment at Jesus’ delay (11: 1, 19, 21, 32, 31, 33, 37). These concerns point to the problematic nature of death, and the need for a remedy to this universal malady. Against this background, the research seeks to understand the meaning of life and death in John 11:1-54 through a narrative analysis of the text. It further explores the relevance of the text for contemporary Krobo readership.

To achieve the goals of the research, the study employed Ossom-Batsa’s communicative perspective as a guiding framework namely: exegesis of the text, the exegesis of reality (culture), and finally, engagement of the text and culture. The narrative criticism was utilized to exegete the text, and the phenomenological approach for the cultural analysis: interviews, focused group discussions, and participant observation were explored with emphasis on respondents’ interest in and profound understanding of the subject.

The thesis argued that the concepts of life and death are very important phenomena for the Johannine and Krobo communities because they not only regulate how the community members live in this life, but also determine their destinations in the afterlife. The analysis established that the raising of Lazarus and resurrection of Jesus from the dead point to the fact that life and death in the Johannine community imply the presence or absence of Jesus Christ in the disciple. For the Krobo community, whilst *wami* (life) connotes anything which contributes to the holistic wellbeing of the human person, death (*gbenɔ*) is such an excruciating human experience that everything possible must be done to unravel its cause and steps taken to prevent its occurrence. For this reason, the research initiates a discussion between the text and the culture. The text proposes Jesus to the Krobo Christian as the solution to both life and death because Jesus Christ is the life giver, the conqueror of death, and the way to God.

The thesis recommends further studies to reflect on the translation of the Christian idea of ‘resurrection’ in the Krobo dialect and culture, and to explore the concepts of afterlife and reincarnation among the Dangme. From a pastoral point of view, the approach used by Jesus in John 11 should guide the contextualization of the Christian faith in the Krobo context. Just as Jesus gradually built Martha’s faith during their encounter (11: 17-27), so the faith of the Krobo Christian in Jesus must be helped to grow through series of expositions of biblical truth about life, death, and the afterlife.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to three very important women in my life: First, to the memory of my late grandmother, Martha Yobla Okai (Teikonye Yoblah). May her soul rest in perfect peace. Also to my mother, Comfort Nyemingɔɔ Okai, and my dear wife, Grace Abekai Okai.



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I enrolled into the M-Phil programme in one of the challenging periods in my existence as a human being; but thanks be to Almighty God by whose victorious right hand the challenges have been surmounted and I have come so far.

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TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
TABLE OF CONTENT	vi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTORY ISSUES.....	1
1.1 Background to the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem.....	5
1.3 Research questions.....	7
1.4 Literature review.....	7
1.4.1 Life and Death in the Gospel of John.....	7
1.4.2 Life and Death in the Krobo Culture.....	11
1.5 Methodology.....	15
1.5.1 Theoretical Framework.....	15
1.5.2 Exegesis of the Text: Narrative Criticism.....	16
1.5.3 Exegesis of Reality: Data Collection.....	18
1.6 Organization of Work.....	19
CHAPTER TWO: EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF JOHN 11:1-54.....	21
2.1 Introduction.....	21
2.2 Delimitation of the Text.....	22
2.3 Structure of John 11:1-54.....	23

2.4 Textual Analysis	26
2.4.1 The Message from Two Sisters (vv. 1-6).....	26
2.4.2 Bethany Via Judea (vv. 7-16)	30
2.4.3 Bethany at Last: An Encounter with Martha (vv. 17-27)	34
2.4.4 The Teacher Encounters Mary (vv. 28-37).....	41
2.4.5 The Turning Point (vv. 38-44)	44
2.4.6 The Plot to Kill Jesus (vv. 45-54)	47
2.5 Theological Reflection.....	51
CHAPTER THREE: CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS.....	54
3.1 Introduction.....	54
3.2 Concept of Life (<i>wami</i>).....	56
3.2.1 The Krobo Concept of Personhood.....	57
3.2.2 The Source and Commencement of Life	58
3.2.3 Some Basic Krobo Beliefs	61
3.2.4 Contracting and Removal of Evil(<i>Gu, Akpe</i> and <i>Olɔkpli</i>)	66
3.3 The Concept of Death and Funeral Rites	68
3.3.1 Myths of the Origin of Death.....	68
3.3.2 Classification of Deaths	69
3.3.3 Impromptu Death (<i>Kpatu Gbenɔ</i>)	70
3.3.4 Summary	72
3.3.5 Abominable Deaths (<i>Otɔfo Gbenɔ</i>).....	73

3.3.6 Natural Death	77
3.3.7 Funeral in Contemporary Times	79
3.3.8 Life after Death	94
3.3.9 Summary	95
3.4 Conclusion	96
CHAPTER FOUR: ENGAGEMENT:TEXT AND CULTURE.....	100
4.1 Introduction.....	100
4.2 Reading John 1:1-54 in a Krobo Context.....	100
4.2.1 Life is Sacred	103
4.2.2 Life is Communal.....	105
4.2.3 God the Source of Death.....	109
4.2.4 The Fear of the Afterlife	110
4.3 The Text Encounters Krobo Culture.....	111
4.3.1 Jesus the Way to God.....	112
4.3.2 Jesus the Conqueror of Death	113
4.3.3 Jesus the Life.....	114
4.4 Conclusion	115
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	118
5.1 Introduction.....	118
5.2 Summary	118
5.3 Conclusion	120

5.4 Recommendations	124
5.4.1 Academic	124
5.4.2 Pastoral.....	124
BIBLIOGRAPHY	127
APPENDIX I: Glossary of used Krobo Words.....	131
APPENDIX II: Pictures	132



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY ISSUES

1.1 Background of the Study

This project, “The Concepts of life and death: Interpreting John 11:1-54 from Krobo Perspective,” was borne out of the researcher’s personal experience as a native Krobo, coupled with observations and interactions with the Krobo Christian community during pastoral ministry among the people of Manya-Kpongonor between 2006 and 2008. Christianity itself arrived in Kroboland through the Basel Missionaries in the 1850s.¹ The Missionaries taught the indigenes that to be good Christians; there was the need to break ties with their cultural past. However, the Krobos as true Africans, found this new way of life rather difficult to accept. This led to the creation of Christian quarters called Salem for the new converts to escape the cultural entanglements.

The situation has since not changed. The Krobos continue to combine the Christian faith with Krobo traditional cultural practices. One example of such practices is *Dipo* (the puberty rite for young girls before they get pregnant). Reflecting further on the Krobo way of life could lead one to fashion their worldview around three concrete axiomatic pillars namely:

- a) Everybody Comes from Somewhere and is Going Somewhere
- b) Nothing Happens Without a Cause
- c) Nothing Done Without Religion/tradition

¹ E.M.L. Odjidja, *Mustard Seed: The Growth of the Church in Kroboland* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1973), 15-18.

a) Everybody Comes from Somewhere and is Going Somewhere

Traditionally, the Krobo believes everybody prior to birth lived in a spiritual world called *huanimjem*' (astral world) and after this life goes to *gbeje* (the world of the dead).² What happens in the world of the dead does not lend itself for verification because the dead do not come back to tell their story. Consequently, the idea of the afterlife appears ambiguous.

Whenever death occurs, the question the elders ask is whether the spirit of the deceased is heading to *Ani we* (place for the righteous) or *Bosowe* (place for the wicked). Various rituals are performed for the dead to enable them cross successfully over into this abode.

To the Krobo, therefore, all human beings are sojourners. This world is a transitory residence. In line with this belief, they refer to this world as *jeeenε mi* corrupted as *jemi* or simply *jem*' literally 'leave this place.' By the same notion, the land on which humans live in this *jeeenε mi* (world) is called "zugbä" a corruption of *o ma sigbä*.³ The *huanim'jem*' (astral world) is considered a complete world on its own where there is a family set-up. One has family and relatives (*huanim' weku*) as it exists here on earth.⁴ One's parents are *huanim' tε kε nyε*, and spouses are called *huanim'yo* or *huanim'huno* who could sometimes be jealous and mischievous to the partner in this world.⁵ Since each one is linked to a spiritual world, things that happen in the *jeeenε mi* (world) must have a spiritual basis. This leads to the next presupposition, 'Nothing happens without a cause.'

² *Gbeje* (The world of the dead) also referred to as *Maamletε we*, *amane we*, *tεε-joku we* among others.

³ Rev. D.D.N. Tetteh, interview granted the researcher, 10th April 2016 at Manya-Kpongonor. The researcher thinks further that the word *o ma si gba* if contracted should be *si gba* (leave, no matter what), but rather corrupted to *zugba*.

⁴ T.O. Caesar, *E Peε Mo Dangme No* (Accra: Moonlight Press, 2015), 12.

⁵ Streegstra, *Dipo and Politics*, 194.

b) Nothing Happens Without a Cause

For the Krobo, *nɔko be gu* (nothing happens by chance). Everything that happens physically has a spiritual cause. As a result, the Krobo lives in two worlds; the physical and the spiritual. When a tragedy occurs, the Krobo's dilemma is not so much the incident, but the cause. As Appiah-Kubi noted, "The greatest question is not the evil, but the source of the evil or the cause of the suffering. There are enough evil forces to explain tragedies and misfortunes of life which take the form of sickness, calamity, disaster, sorrow or death."⁶ To illustrate a point, when one is having unstable marriages or is unable to bear children, the first concern is not about the physical state of the person but about the spiritual cause.⁷

In the same way, the Krobo knows that *gbenɔ* (death) is inevitable.⁸ The problem of the Krobo is not death *per se*, but the cause of the death. Traditionally, upon the demise of a family member, in many cases, the oracles are consulted to find out the cause of the death so that the *nɔpulɔ* (the one with authority to oversee a burial, usually the lineage head) will know how to approach the funeral to avoid any unfortunate consequences, because nothing happens by chance and without religious connotation.⁹

c) Nothing Done Without Tradition/Religion

The cosmology of the traditional Krobo, like most Africans, appears predominantly religious. There is hardly a difference between the sacred and the secular, and almost everything which happens in life must have a reason. The Krobo sees the physical world linked with the spiritual world. This seems to suggest that there is an inseparable

⁶ Kofi Appiah-Kubi, "The Akan Concept of Human Personality," in *Traditional Religion in West Africa*, ed. E. A. Ade Adegbola (Ibadon: Sefer, 1998), 261.

⁷ When I was a young boy in the village staying with my late grandmother, Nana Teikonye Yobla, there was a particular man who for a long time had problems with every woman he married. I heard the old lady one day say that the man might have quarreled with his *huanim' yo* (spiritual wife). For the solution, he must pacify her; else he will never have a stable marriage.

⁸ *Gbenɔ* is death. There are other designations such as *amane*, *tɛɛjoku*, *maamletɛ* etc.

⁹ If the cause is connected to the divinities, or an ancestral punishment, some rituals must have to be performed to ward off the spirits, else the *nɔpulɔ* will die.

identification between the spiritual and the material worlds.¹⁰ Gyekye writes, “It would be correct to say that religion enters all aspects of African life, so fully-determining practically every aspect of life, including moral behavior, such that it could hardly be isolated.”¹¹ The Krobo is whole only when he/she is able to relate to this spiritual world through the deities, divinities and the ancestors who regulate his/her activities. The land belongs to them; they regulate the farming activity, the chief occupation of the Krobo. For the Krobo, work means farming; an activity regulated by the ancestors. It is to the ancestors that marriage belongs, and from them come children. The ancestors are believed to protect the living from malevolence, and help to live fulfilled lives, so that when through *gbenɔ* (death) they retire, they move on to be granted a place in *gbeje* (world of the dead). The ancestors are ever present in Krobo consciousness. Writing about the Akan, Gyekye made a similar statement when he noted that:

Their former humanity links them to their living descendants and constitutes them as part of the society of humans now living in the flesh. Even though the ancestors are dead, they are nonetheless, believed to be dwelling in the world of spirits from where they constantly communicate with the world of human beings. Having once trodden the path of the living, having had experiences presumed to be similar to those of their living descendants, having gained spiritual status presumably vested with that which humans do not possess, the ancestors are believed to be in the position to guide, help, and bestow honors on their mundane descendants.¹²

For this reason, the living makes use of various rituals to access the ancestors. Ossom-Batsa observes, “In Krobo cosmology, ritual communication expressed their understanding of what it means to live and to die, so they use rituals to secure the favor of the divinities to deliver them from evil and bring prosperity.”¹³ In their communication with the divinities, the living always prayed against *yobu* (malevolence) to be at a distance, and *kplɔkɔtɔ*

¹⁰ Chris Abotchie, *Structure of Ghanaian Traditional Societies* (Accra North: Hans Publications Ltd., 2008), 55.

¹¹ Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra: Sankofa Publications Company, 2003), 3.

¹² *Ibid*, 162.

¹³ G. Ossom-Batsa, “Ritual as Mechanism for Securing Life and Averting Evil Among the Krobo,” *ActaTheologica*1 (2008), 207.

(prosperity) to be ushered in. In this regard, the gods/ancestors act as ‘security agents’ of the community; citizen vigilante warding off any *yobu* (malevolence), because they have vested interest in what happens in human society.¹⁴ The idea that the ancestors are watching from afar compels the living to properly behave.

It could be suggested that the Krobo’s central focus of religion is to ward off *yobu* (evil) and usher in *kplɔkɔɔ* or *manyɛ* (blessings). He/she seems conscious of evil and how to prevent it in order to attract the benevolence of the ancestors.¹⁵ The greatest evil in Krobo thought is death.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

For the Krobo, death is considered a calamity. They say, *gbenɔyimi wa* (death is wicked). There is an *ogloojo* dirge (Krobo cultural orchestra used to celebrate funerals): *Ke i na amane tsoɔ, i ko wo he la* (If I had seen ‘death tree’ I would had set fire to it).

There were similar conceptions about death in some NT communities. One faith community entrapped in this dilemma was the Thessalonian church (1Thess 4:5-13; 5:1-11). The members of the community were entangled with the problem of the delayed Parousia; and feared that the pre-parousia faithful departed may suffer some disenfranchisement at the second coming of Jesus.¹⁶ Their perplexity was not because they did not believe in the resurrection of the saints, but they feared that their dead would not have the same advantages as the survivors when Jesus comes the second time. Paul allayed this anxiety by encouraging them to cope with grief at death because death is just a temporary interruption of fellowship which will be restored to eternal companionship at the Parousia.¹⁷

¹⁴ See W.G. William, *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith* (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1955), 108-9.

¹⁵ Abotchie, *Ghanaian Traditional Societies*, 116.

¹⁶ F.F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Word Biblical Commentary: (Dallas: Word Incorporated, 2002), 95-99.

¹⁷ Jon A Weatherly, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin: College Press Pub. Co., 1996), Libronix Digital Library System, 1 Thes 4:13.

In the same way, the Johannine community was confronted with the problem of death, but on a different scale. For them, it was how to justify death in the community of eternal life (11:37). They grappled with why the believer should die in the community of eternal life. Their greatest difficulty was: How the death of a believer is to be understood and faced in this life? If Jesus is truly present, as he promised in the last discourses, indwelling his disciples as a principle of eternal life, why should a believer die?¹⁸

Some of these difficulties were evident in the concerns of the family of Lazarus in sending for Jesus when Lazarus was sick; and in their disappointment at Jesus' delay. (11: 1, 19, 21, 32, 31, 33, 37). These concerns point to the problematic nature of death, and the need for a remedy to this universal malady.

A further element which testifies to the importance of the concept of life and death in the four gospels is the NT statistics. The term ζωή (life) appeared 135 times in the entire NT with 52 occurrences in the gospels and 36 times in John's gospel. In the same way the verb ζαω (to live) appeared 17 times in 24 verses in John's gospel and 2 times in chapter 11. Again, out of 120 times in the NT, θάνατος (death) surfaced 8 times in John's gospel. Furthermore, the verb ἀπόθνησκω (to die) appeared 28 times in 24 verses in the gospel of John and 9 times in chapter 11 alone.

Against this background, the research seeks to understand the meaning of life and death in John 11:1-54 through a narrative analysis of the text. It further explores the relevance of the text for contemporary Krobo readers.

¹⁸ Sandra M. Schneiders, "Death in the Community of Eternal Life: History, Theology and Spirituality in John 11," *Interpretation* 41, no. 1 (1987): 47-48.

1.3 Research Questions

This study is guided by one main research question and a sub-question. The main question is: What is the meaning of life and death in John 11:1-54? The sub-question is: What is the relevance of the text for the Krobo contemporary reader?

1.4 Literature Review

The literature review is organized into two sections. The first part examined the idea of life and death in the gospel of John whilst the second segment addressed the concepts of life and death in the Krobo culture.

1.4.1 Life and Death in the Gospel of John

Schnackenburg, in *The Gospel according to John* writes that the idea of life is indisputably the core of John's theology and gospel.¹⁹ He argues that John uses ψυχή for physical earthly life and ζωή for true divine life. Schnackenburg further affirms that the starting point of ζωή (true divine life) is Christ. This is the life of God, which Christ embodies in his person, reveals, and imparts in his word; it is the life he symbolically transfers in his signs. Like many scholars, he argues that this life is given to all who trust and believe in him. He explains that life in John implies liberation from the realm of death (5:24). It means the destruction of the barrier of death (8:51; 11:26), not in the hope for the future but here and now.²⁰ Ζωή (spiritual life) in his opinion is the answer to humanity's quest for meaning of existence and true salvation; ζωή (spiritual life) as John conceives of, is the light of men (1:4) which illuminates the otherwise doom-ridden way on earth with meaning.

Contrary to Schnackenburg, Ellis did not engage in analysis of the term ζωή (spiritual life) but conceives of life in the gospel of John as the manifestation of God through Jesus Christ.

¹⁹ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980), 352.

²⁰ Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 355.

He argues that life is the living element in the universe that reveals God to humanity. It is the life God bestowed on the universe by the incarnation. Like Schnakenburg, Ellis conceives eternal life not in terms of the future but as eschatological hope realized in the here and now.²¹ In the same way, Ellis shares with Schnakenburg the idea that God confers on Christ the authority to grant this life to others by faith and trust in him.

Similar to Schnakenburg, Schneiders argues that John consistently distinguishes between two types of lives, ζωή (spiritual life) and ψυχή (physical life), a distinction the evangelist never made with death. She stresses that Jesus' statement; "I am the resurrection and the life" connotes two-fold explanations. The believer who dies will live; the living believer will never die. She opines that in both cases, the life in question is eternal life (ζωή) which does not yield to θάνατος (death). Schnakenburg and Ellis agree with Schneiders that Jesus has not abolished final eschatology, but has given it a new dimension of depth, the experience of union with the risen Christ in this life which constitutes the possession, here and now, of eternal life.²²

Zimmermann begins his discussion of life in John 11 from Jesus' statement, "I am the resurrection and the life." He explains that the first phrase promises life to the faithful even if he or she dies; the second promises everlasting life to those who live in the faith. In his discussion, he contrasts what he calls "bodily death" with what he again refers to as "real, eternal life." The second clause he suggests means life given in faith, and indicates that this new life is indestructible.²³

²¹ David. J Elis, "John," in *The New International Bible Commentary*, ed., F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 1239.

²² Schneiders, "Eternal Life," 52.

²³ Ruben Zimmermann, "The Narrative Hermeneutic of John 11: Learning with Lazarus how to understand Life, Death and Resurrection," in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig R. Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 89.

He agrees with other scholars such as Schnakenburg, Ellis, and Schneiders that the life in question is not futuristic, but the here and now. Jesus promises life in full (10:11, 14); he saves life even at the peril of his own life, and ultimately identified himself with life (11:25; 14:6).²⁴ Like Schnakenburg and other scholars, Zimmermann shares the view that the life in question is obtainable only by close relationship with Christ.

Schneiders' article, "Death in the community of Eternal life," discusses the twin phenomena, life and death from another perspective. She established a connection between the resurrection of Lazarus (life), and the arrest of Jesus (death).²⁵ Jesus' death was the direct consequence of bringing Lazarus' back to life.

In her view, the story of Lazarus maintains a tension between the clarity of theology and the ambiguity of the human experience of death. It shows how a reader at any time or place can integrate the human experience of death into his/her faith in Jesus as resurrection and life.²⁶ Her main point is that the story addresses the problem of the community which is how the death of a believer is to be confronted.²⁷ Contrary to Zimmermann, who addresses the reactions of people towards death, Schneiders is concerned with the statements of the actors in the narrative and suggests that death is a problem to the community (11:21, 32, 37). She advocates that death could be conjectured as the absence of Jesus; hence, death is an anomaly in the presence of Jesus.²⁸

Contrary to Zimmermann and Guthrie, she suggests two causes of death, namely: ailment (11:4) and human volition (11:8), she argues that Jesus rejected both as the causes of death. She maintains that since both Lazarus and Jesus will rise again, what they were about to

²⁴ Zimmermann, "The Narrative Hermeneutic of John 11", 89.

²⁵ Schneiders, "Eternal Life," 45.

²⁶ Ibid, 46.

²⁷ Schneiders, "Eternal Life," 47.

²⁸ Ibid., 48.

undergo as a result of sickness and human malice is not death. For her, it is the will of God which controls death, so nature and human intention cannot be regarded as its ultimate causes. What they bring about in some sense is not death; and they cannot bring about death at all, because death operates only according to God's will and design.²⁹ She agrees with Rochais' assessment that the use of sleep as euphemism for death in the NT is not an attempt to consider death as an illusion, but to affirm that death is temporary; because finally it will be overcome by the resurrection of Jesus.³⁰

Zimmermann in his article "The Narrative Hermeneutic of John 11: Learning with Lazarus how to understand Life, Death, and Resurrection," pays greater attention to human reactions to death rather than meaning. Like Schneiders, Zimmermann argues that the bringing back to life of Lazarus is the direct consequence of Jesus' death.³¹ But contrary to Schneiders who suggests death in the community of life as the central theme of John 11, Zimmermann proposes death and the various human reactions as the central theme. Unlike Schnakenburg who deals with the analysis of life in terms of meaning, he engages in the statistical occurrence of the term *θανάτος* without analyzing the semantic meaning. Observing the reactions of the dead-man's sisters, the sympathizers, and the details of how the dead-man appeared from the grave, he concludes that the story was full of mourning and rituals of mourning.

Guthrie, in his *New Testament Theology*, contends that there are a few sayings in John's gospel relating to death.³² He, like Zimmermann, discusses the subject of death by considering the general attitude of people towards it; for example, the Jewish authorities (8:51), Jesus' disciples (11:4, 11) Jesus' own attitude (11:33-35; 12:27; 19:30), and that of Peter (21:15ff)

²⁹ Schneiders, "Eternal Life," 49.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Zimmermann, "Narrative Hermeneutics," 77.

³² Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*(Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 825.

among others.³³ Contrary to Schneiders who probes into the meaning of death, Guthrie, like Zimmermann is not concerned to explore the meaning. Consequently, he argues that the passages themselves tell us nothing about death, apart from the reactions of people. He pointed out that the term death is difficult to explain because neither Lazarus, nor any other persons raised from the dead by Jesus, nor Jesus himself shares any impression of their experience of death. He concluded that if death is a means to glorifying God (11:4; 21:19), then the triumphant cry, “It is finished” on the cross (19:30) transforms the horror of death into a complete mission. Death, for a disciple is not to be feared, if it is a means to achieve eternal life.

These scholarly works have influenced the present research in many ways, especially the work of Schneiders which discussed the distinction between life and death. Interacting with these works has aided the researcher to understand and discuss the subject from a broader perspective.

1.4.2 Life and Death in the Krobo Culture

Huber’s work *The Krobo: Traditional and Religious Life of a West Africa People* is a classical work on Krobo anthropology, and forms the basis of this project. Huber did an in-depth work and dedicates much effort to the study of the economic, socio-cultural, religio-political and other practices of the Krobo. He discusses in detail the Krobo beliefs about death, its origin and causes.³⁴ He compared life and death, and concluded that both are a transition from one world to the other. Death from Huber’s perspective is the separation from the earth and all associated with it, as well as an introduction into the astral world. He discusses the etymology of the term death and makes reference to several Krobo

³³ Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 825-826.

³⁴ Hugo Huber, *The Krobo: Traditional, Social and Religious Life a West African People* (Fribourg: University Press, 1993), 195.

proverbs and traditional songs. From the various mythological analyses of death, he concludes that it was as a result of man's negligence, personal pleasure, and self-centeredness that either death entered the world, or prevented the coming back to life of the deceased.³⁵ He argues that there is a strong connection between the noun *gbenɔ* (death), the verb *gbe* (to kill), *gbo* (to die), and the present continuous *gboe* (dying/he is sick); hence there is a relationship between sickness and death.³⁶

Steegstra's work, *Dipo and the Politics of culture in Ghana* quoted extensively from Huber. Like Huber, she puts death into two categories; but while Huber identifies them as normal and accidental, she classified them into good and bad. She defines a good death as one not caused by evil spirits through accident, neither in childbirth, nor suicide, but rather obtained from the ancestors.³⁷

Steegstra argues that the main purpose of the rituals performed during burial and funeral is to allow the deceased entry into *gbeje* (world of the dead) and become an ancestor. This assertion may be contested since it is believed that not all the dead become ancestors. However, her major contribution to the subject lies in the fact that she discusses the Christian notion of funerals, personhood, and mortuary rites which Huber did not discuss.³⁸

Ossom-Batsa in his "Ritual as Mechanism for Securing Life and averting evil among the Krobo," argues that ritual communication among the Krobo expresses their understanding of what it means to live, and to die.³⁹ Life among the Krobos implies fertility of the land. It means abundant rainfall, so that the crops of the subsequent season may thrive well; and the farmers have a good harvest.⁴⁰ Contrary to Huber and Steegstra, Ossom-Batsa considers life

³⁵ Huber, *The Krobo*, 192.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Steegstra, *Dipo*, 232.

³⁸ Steegstra, *Dipo*, 232-234.

³⁹ Ossom-Batsa, "Ritual as Mechanism," 143.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 145.

as expelling from the community any evil forces whose presence may prevent the well-being of humans, animals, and crops on which human life depends. He concludes that to live, for the Krobo, implies both material and spiritual welfare. Since attaining these on their own is impossible, they are in constant touch with the gods in whom lies the power to bless.⁴¹

Unlike Huber and Steegstra, Ossom-Batsa did not discuss death *per se*. However, it could be deduced that death, from his perspective implied infertility of the land, and human life.

Arlt's discussion of death was centered mainly on reports on the Krobo Mountain. Unlike Huber and Steegstra, he did not explain the term death, but reports on incidences of categories of deaths and burials on the *Klo-yo* (Krobo Mountain). Like Huber and Steegstra, he defines abominable death which he refers to as *gbenɔ yaya* (evil/bad death).⁴² Though he did not categorically classify death into types, it could be inferred from his write-up that there are two kinds of death, abominable and natural.

She agrees with Huber that funeral celebration is the highest social converging activity for the Krobo. While Huber, Steegstra, and to some extent, Ossom-Batsa approached the Krobo from anthropological perspective, Arlt's main contribution is a combination of anthropology with history of the church in Kroboland.

Tetty's work "The Basel Missionaries' Christian Education Approach in the Krobo Religio-Cultural Context" concentrates mainly on how the missionaries in their attempt to convert the Krobos, destroyed most of the Krobo culture in the name of Christian education. He agrees with Huber that the Krobos consider death as an inevitable transit.⁴³ For Tetty, the living are linked to the dead by the *nimeli* (ancestors) who constantly keep

⁴¹ Ossom-Batsa, "Ritual as Mechanism," 158.

⁴² Veit Arlt, *Christianity, Imperialism and Culture: The Expansion of the Krobo States in Ghana C. 1830-1930* (Druck: CopyQuick, 2005), 98.

⁴³ E.O Tetty, "The Basel Missionaries' Christian Education Approach in the Krobo Religio-Cultural Context," (Master's thesis, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2012), 69-69.

communicating with them through libations.⁴⁴ Tettey suggests that if the Krobo understands that every death has a cause, then the Christian notion that the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23) is present in the Krobo concepts of life and death.⁴⁵ His main contribution to understanding death is his proposal that *kpade* (the ghost) means *kpale ne o ba de* (come back and tell us) which according to him denotes the idea that the dead are still living.

Terkperthey in *Dangme Blebo Nɔ* discusses the concept of death. Though he did not examine the origin and meaning of death as Huber did, he linked death to *gbeje* (world of the dead) as the place of the dead. Like Huber and Steegstra, he discusses *huanim'* (the astral world) as the place in which the soul lives prior to birth. His emphasis is on the beliefs of the Dangmes about death. He explains that everybody who comes to this world must go through a specific means of departure called death. Following after Huber and Steegstra and others, he stressed the immortality of the soul. But like Tettey, Terkperthey argues that it is the soul which becomes *kpade* (ghost) after the demise of the body.⁴⁶

Like Steegstra, Huber's work is very important to the present work in two ways. First, his work influences the identification of some of the themes in the present research. The work also provides the research a background understanding of the concepts of life and death, and it is from this perspective that the concepts of life and death among Krobos are being investigated.⁴⁷ This is not to discount the works of other scholars interacted with.

There could be other scholars who have contributed to understanding the concepts of life and death among the Krobos. While admitting that these scholars have contributed knowledge to the topic, best to our knowledge, an academic study to engage John 11:1-54;

⁴⁴ These are the elders of the community.

⁴⁵ Tettey, "Krobo Religio-Cultural Context," 70.

⁴⁶ T.T. Terkperthey, *Dangme Blebo Nɔ* (Odumase-Krobo: Universal Printing Press, 2004), 15.

⁴⁷ Godson Ahorator, "Soteriological Beliefs and Ethical Values of the Tongu Mafi People." (Phd Thesis, University of Ghana, 2015), 9.

and the Krobo culture in relation to their understanding of the concepts of life and death is yet to be undertaken. It is therefore the intention of the research to contribute knowledge in the area.

1.5 Methodology

The research presents an exegetical study of John 11:1-54 and situates the call to action of the text in dialogue with the Krobo Christian and their socio-cultural milieu. Ossom-Batsa's communicative perspective is used as a guiding framework while the narrative and phenomenological approaches are used to exegete the biblical text and the Krobo culture.

1.5.1 Theoretical Framework

The communicative perspective proposed by Ossom-Batsa is used as the theoretical framework for the entire research. Ossom-Batsa suggests three main steps: exegesis of the text, exegesis of reality, and the engagement between the text and the culture.⁴⁸ In adhering to the biblical text, he argues that communicative perspective process accords the text due respect. The process requires paying proper attention to both linguistic and non-linguistic signals which the author has made available for the reader. In reading the text, the interpreter remains faithful to it, using the necessary exegetical tools available. Apart from the original language, other translations may be read for diversity of meaning, so that the organization, semantic and communicative force of the text is discovered.⁴⁹ The call to action is as a result of the understanding emanating from the text due to critical reading.⁵⁰

The second point is the exegesis of reality. Ossom-Batsa suggests that with the first step accomplished, the reader is challenged to read his life in the light of the text instead of

⁴⁸ George Ossom-Batsa. "Biblical Exegesis in the African Context: A Communicative Approach," in *Unpacking the Sense of the Sacred: A Reader in the Study of Religions*, eds. Abamfo Atiemo, Ben-Wille K. Golo and Lawrence K. Boakye (Oxfordshire: AyeibaClerke Publishing Limited, 2014), 128.

⁴⁹ Aloo Osotsi Mojola, "Bible Translation in African Christianity," AICMAR Bulletin 1 (2005), 13-14.

⁵⁰ Ossom-Batsa, "Biblical Exegesis," 129.

bending the text to suggest answers to one's socio-political and economical life situations. In the end, the reader's life is transformed leading to seeing beyond oneself.

Finally, there is an engagement between the text and the culture. At this point, a dialogue takes place between the word of God and the human community. It is at this point that the text shapes the culture and the culture shapes the text.

1.5.2 Exegesis of the Text: Narrative Criticism

This work utilizes the literary critical method in order to analyze the chosen text as the first step of the theoretical framework. Narrative criticism is one of the text-centered approaches which is interested in exploring the effect of the text on the reader. It seeks to investigate the text as a process of communication between the author and the reader.⁵¹

Powell pointed out that it focuses on stories in biblical literature, and attempts to read them with insights drawn from the secular field of modern literary criticism.⁵² He further argued that narrative critics believe paying attention to literary cues, enable them to determine the effect the text in question is expected to have on its implied readers. When this effect is determined, diversity of meanings is discovered with varied implications in a number of contexts.⁵³ Expanding this further, Tate asserts that narrative criticism does not only focus on the traditional narrative elements such as the plot, setting and characterization, but also the role of the reader. It assumes that the story does not exist autonomously within the text, but comes into being through the active interaction between the text and the reader.⁵⁴ The basic presupposition upon which the narrative critic thrives is that the text is not read in

⁵¹ Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to read the Bible Stories* (London: SCM Press, 1999), 7.

⁵² Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 239.

⁵³ Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 242.

⁵⁴ Randolph W. Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2008), 335.

isolation, but sequentially, and completely with all its parts being related to the work as a whole.⁵⁵

Marguerat and Bourquina argue that in narrative criticism, the narrator and the narratee are linked through the process of reading. The narrator assumes two unquestionable statuses; he/she is omniscient and trustworthy. He/she is in the position to know everything, and does not even have to account for the source of his knowledge. The narratee has to accept the narrative without questions, or passing value judgment as real within the world of the story.⁵⁶ For example, when at the command of Jesus Lazarus came out from the grave with the head and feet bound, one does not ask how he could walk out in such position.

Because of its simplicity, narrative criticism could bridge the gap between sophisticated scholarly analysis and interpretation of the lay members of the faith community, since they tell their daily life stories through narrations.⁵⁷ Again, it probably could satisfy the concerns in hermeneutical discourse for the need of a stronger connection between academic reflection and the preaching of the text from the pulpit. For, as Meylahn put it, “The task of hermeneutics is not completed until the text comes alive again.”⁵⁸ This ‘coming to life’ of the text depends to a large extent on the personal experience of the exegete/narrator which narrative criticism allows. Lategan notes: “Complete objective exegesis is impossible; real understanding requires the interpreter’s ingenuity; it requires hearing and understanding the text in one’s own context.”⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Powel, *Narrative Criticism*, 242.

⁵⁶ Marguerat and Bourquin, *Bible Stories*, 11.

⁵⁷ The typical Africans tell their popular Ananse stories sequentially by the narrative approach. The films, videos, sad and joyous moments are all retold through narrative principles.

⁵⁸ Meylahn, “Narrative-Critical Approach,” 179.

⁵⁹ B.C. Lategan, “Hermeneutics,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* ed. D.N. Freedman vol. 3. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 149-154.

Finally, the choice for narrative criticism is appropriate, because the pericope under consideration is a narrative. With the text remaining at the center, new realities and hopes could be identified through the voice of the narrator to determine the meaning.

1.5.3 Exegesis of Reality: Data Collection

To comprehend what the worldview of the Krobo on the concepts of life and death is, the second step of the theoretical framework is applied. To achieve this objective, this research utilizes the phenomenological approach. This is a method of data collection attributed to Edmund Husserl. It is a process where a phenomenon is known and investigated the way we experience it, rather than describing the nature of the reality. It is an effort to describe the actual state of affairs as disclosed by the phenomena of the world.⁶⁰ In this study, three research tools were explored, namely: interviews, participant observation and focused group discussions.⁶¹ The researcher spent five months, from October 2015 to March 2016, in various communities collecting data. In all, six focused group discussions were held; twenty-nine respondents made up of two chiefs, two linguists, two fetish priests, four elderly women who wash the dead, four pastors, two traditionalists, three retired Dangme scholars, and ten opinion leaders were interviewed. These personalities were specifically chosen for interaction because of their knowledge and close involvement in traditional issues which offered the researcher the opportunity to understand the Krobo culture. The researcher also participated in one naming ceremony, six funeral ceremonies, and the main Ngmayem' festival of the chiefs and people of Manya Klo. The data collection could not have been

⁶⁰ James L. Cox, *Expressing the Sacred: An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion* (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publication, 1982), 15.

⁶¹ See Oswell Rusinga and Richard Maposa, "Traditional religion and natural resources': A reflection on the significance of indigenous knowledge systems on the utilization of natural resources among the Ndaou People in South-Eastern Zimbabwe," *Journal of Ecology and the Natural Environment* 2, no. 9 (2010): 202-203.

complete without a visit to *Klo-yom*' (The Krobo Mountain), the ancestral home of the Krobos which the researcher did.

The strength in the application of this approach lies in its ability to differentiate the *noumena* from the *phenomena*.⁶² By so doing, first-hand information was gathered from the local people, particularly when juxtaposed with the participant observation method.⁶³

Rusinga and Maposa suggest that the participant observation approach shapes the research, because the field investigation is conducted *in situ*, that is, in local people's situatedness and culturedness. Secondly, interaction with the people is direct and yields first hand data; and lastly, an informed understanding is gained of the socio-cultural milieu, which enabled the researcher to draw concrete findings about the phenomena.⁶⁴ Effective application of this methodology also aided the researcher to delve deep into a gamut of belief systems and cultural practices of the people. It facilitated a face-to-face interaction with the local people in their natural existential habitats. The interviewing processes together with critical observation of what the people do when expressing their culture and religion *vis-à-vis* issues concerning life and death influenced the research positively.

1.6 Organization of Work

The work is structured into five chapters. Chapter one deals with the general introductory issues which include background to the study, statement of the problem, the research questions, literature review, methodology and organization of the chapters. The second chapter looks at the exegetical analysis of John 11:1-54, the delimitation of the text, structure of the text, analysis of the text, and theological synthesis. The third chapter titled Contextual Analysis is divided into two parts. Part one examines the Krobo concept of *wami* (life)

⁶² *Noumena* implies things as they are and *phenomena* things as we perceive them.

⁶³ Rusinga and Maposa, "Traditional Religion," 202.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 203.

through the Krobo understanding of personhood, commencement of life, belief systems, and removal of evil among others. The second part of the chapter deals with death, and its origin. It further examines the classification of death, a summary, and conclusion.

Chapter four discusses the engagement between the text and Krobo culture. It considers how the Krobo Christian interprets the story of Lazarus. It further studies how the story of Lazarus may transform and enrich the perception of the Krobo Christian concerning life and death. The last chapter summarizes the major findings, and outlines some conclusions. It finally makes recommendations for both further academic discourse and pastoral benefits.



CHAPTER TWO

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF JOHN 11:1-54

2.1 Introduction

Scholars mostly divide the Gospel of John into two main parts: The Book of Signs (2:1—12:50) and the Book of Glory (13:1—20: 31) with a Prologue (1:1-18) and an Epilogue (21:1-25).⁶⁵ The eleventh chapter, which is our primary text, is located in the book of Glory. Though debatable, some scholars argue that this chapter contains the seventh, last, and the greatest of Jesus' signs. The pericope principally contains two distinct, but related incidents: the raising of Lazarus and the conspiracy by the Sanhedrin to terminate Jesus' life. The latter (vv. 47-53) is derived from the former (vv. 45-54).⁶⁶

Following the methodology, the analysis commences with delimitation of the text, followed by the discussion of the structure, and then the exegetical analysis which is undertaken by employing the appropriate tools under narrative criticism. The analysis opens with the ailment of Lazarus and a crisis message from his sisters; and closes with the plot to kill Jesus at the Passover feast. Throughout the analysis, the research establishes a dialogical relationship between the reader and the text, and pays particular attention to how the text has an influence on the reader. The chapter ends with a theological synthesis.

⁶⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), The Anchor Bible (New York-London: Doubleday, 1996) CXXXVIII. See also Gary M. Burge, "John," in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), 847. See George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary vol. 36, eds. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Books Publishers, 1999), VII-VIII. See Amy Oates, "The Raising of Lazarus: Caravaggio and John 11," *Interpretation* 61, no. 4 (2007): 392.

⁶⁶ D. Moody Smith, "John," in *Harper's Bible Commentary*, ed., James L. Mays (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), 1063.

2.2 Delimitation of the Text

There are different hypothesis concerning the delimitation of John 11, and theologians differ in opinion. In this debate, there are scholars who propose a very long pericope, whilst others short ones. Burge, for example, proposes the longest pericope extending from 11:1—12:50, Brown in contrast had the shortest, concluding the story at 11:44. Whilst Moloney, Schnakenburg and others end the pericope at v. 54, Mitchell ends the pericope at v. 57.⁶⁷

However, a critical reading of the fourth gospel reveals that 11:1-54 is situated in between two great Jewish events, the Feast of Dedication (10:22) and the Passover Feast (11:55). In 10:22-39, Jesus was at the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem where ‘the Jews’ enquired and questioned his identity (v. 26).⁶⁸ In answering them, Jesus emphatically not only called God his Father, but equated himself with God (10:29, 30). This answer led to exasperation of ‘the Jews’ who earlier, during an ensuing debate, tried to seize and stone him, but he escaped their grasp (vv. 33, 34). He then left to Bethany on the other side of the Jordan where John used to baptize (v. 40, 1:28). This was his geographical location at the time of receiving the news of Lazarus’ ill-health. The immediate public event after raising Lazarus was the Passover (v. 55). Prior to the festival, ‘the Jews’ kept looking for him in the temple, and wondering if he was not coming to the feast at all (v. 56). This was in connection with the full report of the upcoming event mentioned in 11:2.

The setting in 11:1-54 is different from that of the preceding text; 10:22-42 (Scuffle at the Feast of Dedication), and the concluding text, 11:55-57 (Hunt for Jesus at the Passover Feast), in that the pericope relates to Lazarus’ ill-health, death, rising up from the dead, and the aftermath. The next incident was the hunt for Jesus. This is justified to be included in the

⁶⁷ John G. Mitchell, *Lets Revel in John’s Gospel* (Oregon: Glory Press, 2000), 205.

⁶⁸ In this article two categories of Jews are encountered. One group is hostile towards Jesus and the other receptive sympathizers encountered at the funeral of Lazarus. For the sake of identity, the hostile Jews will be placed in inverted commas.

literally unit for the fact that it was the immediate factor which triggered Jesus' arrest, suffering and eventual crucifixion. Against this background, the researcher follows the suggestions of scholars who consider 11:1-54 a literary unit.⁶⁹

2.3 Structure of John 11:1-54

Different structures are proposed by scholars for the pericope under study. Mitchell, for example, presents a structure dividing the pericope into seven parts based on the attitudes of the main characters in the narrative: Lazarus is sick (vv. 1-6); The attitude of Christ to death (vv. 7-16); The attitude of Martha to Christ (vv. 17-28); The attitude of Mary to Christ (vv. 29-36); Lazarus is raised from the dead (vv. 37-46); The opposition (vv. 47-53) and The Lord withdraws himself (vv. 54-57).⁷⁰

Moloney, on the other hand, using a narrative approach focuses on the characters involved in the drama, their response to Jesus, the passing of time, and the sequence of events suggested a six-shaped structure as follows: Introduction (vv. 1-6); Two decisions are made (vv. 7-16); Jesus' encounter with Martha (vv. 17-27); Jesus' encounter with Mary and the Jews (vv. 28-37); The Miracle (vv. 38-44), and finally the decision of the Jews (vv. 45-54).⁷¹

Gury M. Burge argues that originally, 10:40-42 was the conclusion of Jesus' public ministry in John's Gospel; and later, the gospel editors included chapters 11—12. He posits that the sequence of events i.e. movement to Perea, Bethany, Ephraim and back is difficult to reconcile with the Synoptics as is the motive for Jesus' arrest (11:45-53; 12:1-9).⁷² For him, the Evangelist chose 11—12 to symbolize Christ's mission and fate as the source of life.

Unlike Moloney and Mitchell whose distinctive structures have sub-headings, Burge's

⁶⁹ See Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 316 and Francis Moloney, *Signs and Shadows* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 154.

⁷⁰ Mitchell, *John*, 205-218.

⁷¹ Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 154-155.

⁷² Burge, "John," 833.

division of the chapter is without clear sub-headings; the following could however be deduced: Sum up of Jesus' career (vv. 1-57), Anointing at Bethany (12:1-8); The triumphal entry (vv. 9-19); Unexpected interest among some Greeks in Jerusalem (vv. 20-36); The meaning of Jesus' public ministry (vv. 37-43); and lastly, A call to believe (vv. 44-50).

Raymond Brown structured the pericope to end at 11:44.⁷³ Brown like Burge, Moloney and Mitchell provided a clear structure. He organized the chapter into five strands: Setting (vv. 1-6); Should Jesus go up to Judea (vv. 7-16)? Martha greets Jesus (vv. 17-27); Mary greets Jesus (vv. 28-33), and The raising of Lazarus (vv. 34-44).

For Schnackenburg, the structure of the chapter in its present form is clear and logical. It is a coherent narrative, though some smaller units and individual scenes are recognizable within it. The boundaries between the individual units are, however, uncertain, because they are closely connected by linking verses.⁷⁴ Based on the above observations, he proposed a seven-staged division as follows: The setting for the raising from the dead: The news of the illness of Lazarus of Bethany (vv. 1-5); The journey to Judea and Bethany: Jesus' association with the disciples (vv 6-16); In Bethany: Jesus' conversation with Martha (vv. 17-27); Also Jesus' meeting with Mary (vv. 28-32); The visit to the tomb and the opening of the tomb (vv. 33-41a); The raising of the dead Lazarus (vv. 41b-44); The council decision to have Jesus killed, and Jesus' return to Ephraim (vv. 45-54).

The present research adopts a structure motivated by narrative criteria, following the movements in the narrative such as change in time, change of place, and change of actors etc. One of such important narrative links is Ἐπειτα μετὰ τοῦτο (then after this v. 7) used by the author of the gospel to signal to the reader that there is a change in the narrative.

⁷³ Brown, *John*, 430-435.

⁷⁴ Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 317.

Martha and Mary initiated the dialogue in 11:1 when they sent a message to Jesus about their brother's ill-health. On hearing the message, Jesus intentionally stayed at that same place for two days. Ἐπειτα μετὰ τοῦτο (Then after this v. 7), introduces a new discourse with the disciples, ending at v. 16, where Thomas wanted to die with Lazarus or Jesus.

With the phrase ἐλθὼν οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς (when Jesus arrived, v. 17), a movement and change of geographical location are suggested. This initiates a different pericope, which runs through the encounter and discourse with Martha, ending with her confessing Jesus as the Messiah (v. 27). Καί τοῦτο εἰποῦσα ἀπήλθεν (And saying this, v. 28) ended the discourse.

Martha leaves the scene and Mary was introduced as a new actor. Mary opens the scene with falling at the feet of Jesus in despair with the exclamation that if he was there earlier, her brother would have lived, whilst the Jews around looked on. This episode ended with the concern raised by the Jews that if he could open the eyes of the blind, why could he not prevent Lazarus from dying? Ἰησοῦς οὖν πάλιν ἐμβριμώμενος (Jesus, moved with sorrow, v. 38) is a change of attitude signaling a new pericope with Jesus as the main subject. Vv. 38-44 were predominantly at the grave side, and the turning point in the lives of both Lazarus and Jesus, in that the resurrection led to the conspiracy. Jesus raised Lazarus and ordered the audience to set him free and let him go. The last scene (vv. 45-54) is ushered in by new actors πολλοὶ οὖν ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων (many of the Jews v. 45). It was this group which was divided in their opinion about the miracle, and reported the incident to the Jewish authorities. The aftermath was the holding of a council meeting which took the decision to kill Jesus. This decision had two direct consequences: he no longer walked alone (v. 54), and relocated to Ephraim. A new pericope therefore commences from 11: 55 with a scene at the Passover.⁷⁵

The proposed structure is therefore organized into six sections:

⁷⁵ Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 178.

1. The message from two sisters (vv. 1-6)
2. Bethany via Judea (vv. 7-16)
3. Bethany at last: An encounter with Martha (vv. 17-27)
4. The teacher encounters Mary (vv. 28-37)
5. The turning point (vv. 38-44)
6. The conspiracy against Jesus (vv. 45-54)

2.4 Textual Analysis

The aim of this section is to analyze the text following the proposed structure. As elaborated in the methodology, the narrative approach proposed by Marguerat and Bourquin is used. This will enable the researcher to observe how the author used narrative as a theological tool to unearth the meaning of the text.

2.4.1 The Message from two Sisters (vv. 1-6)

Ἦν δέ τις ἀσθενῶν, Λάζαρος ἀπὸ Βηθανίας, ἐκ τῆς κώμης Μαρίας καὶ Μάρθας τῆς ἀδελφῆς αὐτῆς. ² ἦν δὲ Μαριάμ ἡ ἀλείψασα τὸν κύριον μύρω καὶ ἐκμάξασα τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ ταῖς θριξίν αὐτῆς, ἧς ὁ ἀδελφὸς Λάζαρος ἠσθένει. ³ ἀπέστειλαν οὖν αἱ ἀδελφαὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγουσαι· κύριε, ἴδε ὃν φιλεῖς ἀσθενεῖ. ⁴ ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· αὕτη ἡ ἀσθένεια οὐκ ἔστιν πρὸς θάνατον ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα δοξασθῇ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ δι' αὐτῆς. ⁵ ἠγάπα δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν Μάρθαν καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτῆς καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον. ⁶ ὡς οὖν ἤκουσεν ὅτι ἀσθενεῖ, τότε μὲν ἔμεινεν ἐν ᾧ ἦν τόπῳ δύο ἡμέρας, ⁷ ἔπειτα μετὰ τοῦτο λέγει τοῖς

¹Now there was a man named Lazarus who was sick. He was from Bethany the village of Mary and her sister Martha.²It was Mary the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair whose brother Lazarus was sick.³So the sisters sent to Jesus saying, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”⁴On hearing this, Jesus said, “This sickness is not towards death, but for the sake of the glory of God, so that the Son of God will be glorified through it.⁵Even though Jesus loved Martha and the sister and Lazarus, ⁶ yet on hearing of the sickness, he remained at the place where he was for two more days.

The long account of the raising of Lazarus begins with the setting of the sickness of Lazarus, the pillar around which the whole narrative evolves.⁷⁶ This is followed by the presentation

⁷⁶ Lazarus, form of the Hebrew *Lazar*, is an abbreviation of Eleazar meaning “He whom God helps.” See Beasley-Murray, *John*, 183.

of the human actors namely: Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Mary and Martha sent to inform Jesus that his friend Lazarus was sick, but Jesus made no instant move. Instead, he suggested to his disciples to make a strange journey to Judea, having made the comment that the sickness will not lead to death, but for God's glory.

The phrase ἦν δέ τις ἀσθενῶν, Λάζαρος (now there was a man named Lazarus, v. 1) alerts the reader that the story is a narrative. Lazarus is identified by his home town -“Bethany beyond the Jordan,” east of Jericho.⁷⁷ As someone who was seriously ill, Lazarus is dependent on the help of his immediate family, Mary and Martha who were presented as those in charge of the situation.⁷⁸ It was not surprising that they sent a message on his behalf. The reader is invited to imagine what actually happened, whether he survived the sickness or not. Lazarus was here described as the brother of Mary and Martha, perhaps, because the two sisters were better known to Christ than him. Mary and Martha, therefore, gave their brother the needed identity, recognition, and popularity.

It is surprising that in v. 2, John mentions only Mary as the one whose brother was sick after mentioning both of them in the previous verse. Morris explains that Mary was probably the one the audience were familiar with.⁷⁹ The phrase, “The one who anointed Jesus,” according to Brown, is a clear parenthesis added by the editor and points to a scene which will occur later.⁸⁰ Even though the narrator did not mention this till 12:3, it was employed in

⁷⁷ This Bethany, lying on the east side of the Mount of Olives less than two miles from Jerusalem along the road toward Jericho, has not been mentioned in the Fourth Gospel before, and must be distinguished from the Bethany of 1:28 and that alluded to in 10:40–42. That is why John characterizes it as the village of Mary and her sister Martha. See D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester-Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), 405.

⁷⁸ Ernst Haenchen, *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 7–21*, transl. and ed. Robert W. Funk, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), Libronix Digital Library System, Jn 11:1.

⁷⁹ Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 478.

⁸⁰ Brown, *John*, 423. See also B.W. Johnson, *John: The New Testament Commentary*, vol. III (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems Inc., 1999), 423.

anticipation as a way of introducing her.⁸¹ With this in mind, John may be assuming that the original readers of his gospel already have some knowledge of Mary.⁸² But in Haenchen's opinion, it is the habit of the narrator of John to introduce actors who are known by some special deed in the community by referring to that deed when they first appear in the story. Mary is thus introduced in this way so that the reader will be informed about her.⁸³

Mary and Martha were able to communicate to Jesus directly, addressing him as Κύριε (Lord) while informing him about their brother's ill-health.⁸⁴ The message was simple, yet very important. "Lord, the one you love is sick." This message was a demonstration of trust in Jesus, an assertion of how precious life is, and of the need to do everything to preserve it.⁸⁵ Hendriksen noted three distinct characteristics about this message: it was urgent in character; open to Jesus' own action, and based on Jesus' own love.⁸⁶ Thus, the sisters acted cunningly; they knew Jesus would react to the message, but in a way and manner he chooses, because he has options, and applies the best under every circumstance. Deep in their hearts, they expected him to be there in person; hence, later they lamented over his absence. Thus, in conveying the information about Lazarus' illness to Jesus, the sisters showed remarkable restraint, being content simply to state the fact, without making a request (v. 3). This message is key to the narrative in that it led to Jesus mentioning to his disciples the set agenda for both the account of the resurrection of Lazarus, and for the second half of the gospel.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset and David Brown, *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), Libronix Digital Library System, Jn 11:2.

⁸² Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Critical Commentary*, Jn 11:2.

⁸³ Haenchen *John*. See examples on Nicodemus: 7:50, 19:39; Caiaphas: 11:49ff. and 18:14; Judas the betrayer: 6:71, 12:4, 13:2, 18:2, 3, 5; "the disciple whom Jesus loved": 13:23, 18:15ff., 19:26, 20:2, 3, 8, 21:20

⁸⁴ The title Κύριε is the usual way the two sisters addressed Jesus on many occasions in the narrative (vv. 21, 27, 32, 39).

⁸⁵ Beasley-Murray notes that, the description of Lazarus as "He whom you love" has led to the conjecture that he was "The Beloved Disciple" of this Gospel, but was quick to add that though an attractive presupposition yet hardly compelling speculation.

⁸⁶ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel according John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1953-2001), Libronix Digital Library System, Jn 11:3.

⁸⁷ Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 156.

On hearing this, Jesus said, “This sickness is not towards death, but for the glory of God, in order that the Son of God will be glorified through it” (v. 4). In one sense, Jesus gave the assurance that Lazarus' sickness would not be the end of the story, for he would be raised and the miracle would reveal Jesus' glory. In another sense, these events led inevitably to Jesus' death, and his being glorified by the Father.⁸⁸ Sicknesses may lead to death, but this particular one was for the sake of the glory of God, for Jesus will be glorified. Jesus did not mean that Lazarus would not die, but that death would not be the final outcome of this sickness. Lazarus would die, but he would be raised again from the dead.⁸⁹ The raising from the dead will give God the glory, and vindicate Jesus as the author of life.⁹⁰ Jesus here makes known two direct consequences of Lazarus ailment. Through it the glory of God will be manifested; and the Son of God will be glorified.⁹¹

The narrator now informs us of Jesus' love for the entire the family ἠγάπα δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν Μάρθαν καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτῆς καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον (Jesus loved Martha and the sister and Lazarus 5). In v. 3, we are told of Jesus' love for Lazarus. It is interesting that now Martha is named first and Mary is not named at all, but simply identified by her relationship to

⁸⁸ Stephen S. Kim, “The Significance of Jesus’ Raising Lazarus from the Dead in John 11,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168 (2011): 57.

⁸⁹ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), Libronix Digital Library System, Jn 11:4.

⁹⁰ Δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ. The noun δόξα (glory) is used by John in several ways. First, in general, it refers to the self-existent, unique splendor and power of God. This is the sense in v. 4. Second, the proper recognition of this δόξα by human beings may have the sense of “praise.” This is partially the sense in 7:18, where the healed blind man is commanded to “Give glory to God.” It is also the center of 11:40, where Jesus informs Martha that her act of faith would allow her to see δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ. Third, there is a type of δόξα that is granted by God. In particular this is the δόξα that God gives to his Son, Jesus. It is this δόξα that is being referred to in verse 4, that God’s Son may be glorified through it. It is also seen in 8:54, “My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.” God is the source of such glory, but God’s Son reveals this divine glory to humankind (see 1:14). This divine δόξα is particularly seen in the miracles of Jesus (2:11). A fourth type of δόξα is the praise given by people to other people for human accomplishments. This cannot compare with the δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ. Jesus rejects this type of δόξα when it is only on the human level and fails to take God into account. See Beauford H Bryant and Mark S Krause, *John*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin: College Press Pub. Co., 1998), Libronix Digital Library System, Jn 11:4. (See 5:41, 44 where the NIV translates δόξα as “praise”).

⁹¹ Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 156.

Martha. What could this mean? Morris opines that probably she is the elder.⁹² The separate mention of all the three individually is to stress Jesus' affection for each one of them. Thus he loved Martha; he loved Mary and loved Lazarus.⁹³ The function of v. 5 is to allay the fears of the reader that Jesus' inability to respond on time is not interpreted as indifference.⁹⁴ On hearing of the sickness in v. 6, sounds like a repetition, since the message was already relayed to him in v. 3. Then he remained at the place where he was for two days (v. 6). Staying on for two more days was to ensure that in human sense the situation was beyond remedy. John did not tell us exactly what engaged Jesus' attention for two more days. But certainly Jesus' failure to respond put stress on the faith of that family, and reminds the reader that his actions cannot be measured by human standards.⁹⁵ Ultimately, one of the goals of the delay was to strengthen the faith of the Bethany family, the disciples, as well as hasten the period for his ultimate glory.⁹⁶

2.4.2 Bethany via Judea (vv. 7-16)

Ἐπειτα μετὰ τοῦτο λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς· ἄγωμεν εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν πάλιν. ⁸ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταί· ῥαββί, νῦν ἐζήτουν σε λιθάσαι οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, καὶ πάλιν ὑπάγεις ἐκεῖ; ⁹ ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς· οὐχὶ δώδεκα ὥραι εἰσιν τῆς ἡμέρας; ἐάν τις περιπατῆ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, οὐ προσκόπτει, ὅτι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου τούτου βλέπει. ¹⁰ ἐάν τις περιπατῆ ἐν τῇ νυκτί, προσκόπτει, ὅτι τὸ φῶς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν αὐτῷ. ¹¹ Ταῦτα εἶπεν, καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο λέγει αὐτοῖς· Λάζαρος ὁ φίλος ἡμῶν κεκοίμηται· ἀλλὰ πορεύομαι ἵνα ἐξυπνίσω αὐτόν. ¹² εἶπαν οὖν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτῷ· κύριε, εἰ κεκοίμηται σωθήσεται. ¹³ εἰρήκει δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς περὶ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ, ἐκεῖνοι δὲ ἔδοξαν ὅτι περὶ τῆς κοιμήσεως τοῦ ὑπνου λέγει. ¹⁴ τότε οὖν εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς παρρησίᾳ· Λάζαρος ἀπέθανεν, ¹⁵ καὶ χαίρω δι' ὑμᾶς ἵνα πιστεῦσητε, ὅτι οὐκ ἦμην ἐκεῖ· ἀλλὰ ἄγωμεν πρὸς αὐτόν. ¹⁶ εἶπεν οὖν Θωμᾶς ὁ λεγόμενος Δίδυμος τοῖς συμμαθηταῖς· ἄγωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς ἵνα ἀποθάνωμεν μετ' αὐτοῦ.

⁷Then after this, he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."⁸But the disciples said unto him, "Rabbi, a while ago, the Jews wanted to stone you, and you are going there again?"

⁹² Morris, *John*, 479.

⁹³ Brown argues that the verb used here is ἠγάπα as contrasted with φιλεῖς (v. 3). But there seem to be no great difference because Jesus' love for Lazarus has already been affirmed in v. 3, and is not really needed here. See Brown, *John's Gospel*, 423.

⁹⁴ Ibid. See also B.W Johnson, *John: The New Testament Commentary*, vol. III (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems Inc., 1999), 172.

⁹⁵ Here, like the wedding at Cana (2:1-12), the royal officer whose son was sick at Capernaum (4:46-54), and his brothers when they requested him to leave Galilee and go to Judea to perform some miracles there too (7:2-14), he acted differently from human expectations.

⁹⁶ Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary*, Jn 11:6.

⁹But Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If someone walks in the day he will not stumble because he sees with the light of the world. ¹⁰But if he walks in the night, he stumbles because the light is not in him.” ¹¹After saying this, he said, “Our friend Lazarus is asleep; but I proceed to wake him.” ¹²Then the disciples said, “If he is asleep then he will wake up” ¹³But Jesus was speaking about his death, while they thought that he was speaking about natural sleep. ¹⁴Then Jesus told them unambiguously, “Lazarus is dead.” ¹⁵Even so I rejoice in my spirit that I was not there for your sake, that you may believe. “Let us go to him.”

The phrase ἔπειτα μετὰ τοῦτο (then after this v. 7) introduces a long dialogue between Jesus and his disciples which in content continues till v. 11. He summons them with the invitation: ἄγωμεν εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν πάλιν (“Let us go to Judea again”). The call on the disciples to embark on rather a different direction and mission to Judea without a word on Lazarus was surprising. It was after two days that he suggested this action. The reason, as Morris suggested, was probably, because Judea was the entrance into “unbelieving Jews who would crucify him.”⁹⁷ However the narrator assigns no reason for such a decision.

The disciples seem to assume he wanted to return to Jerusalem to continue his teaching ministry in the temple. They recognized this as a dangerous proposition. Probably, Judea was a frequent sight, and the disciples were very familiar with happenings there. In the mind of the disciples, it was a reenactment of hostilities, which was needless, and should be avoided. Moloney finds a close temporal and logical connection between the violence that resulted in Jerusalem at the feast of the Tabernacle, and his decision to go back to Judea by the double use of πάλιν (again) in vv. 7-8.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Morris, *John*, 480.

⁹⁸ Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 157. Recently at the festival of Dedication the Jews had tried to stone him. That was when they confronted him at Solomon’s Colonnade to demand his true designation. Jesus condemned their unbelief and asked them to interpret his designation by his miracles/signs and that he and his father are one (10:30). This infuriated the Jews and accused him of equating himself with God for which they tried to stone him (10:31). Before this, in 8: 59 they attempted stoning him. This was occasioned by the fact that Jesus called God his father, and that before Abraham was he is (9:56). These two incidences were of recent memory and fresh in the disciples mind to forget. Beckoning them for another journey to the same place was as shooting oneself in the thigh. In other words, walking into the waiting hands of one’s enemies. Such a journey therefore was not only imprudent but needless.

He was prompted through the question, “Rabbi, a while ago the Jews wanted to throw stone at you, and you are going there again (v. 8)?” This objection to Jesus’ proposal is a genuine concern. But if they called him Rabbi, then they should expect him to have mastery over what they see as danger. But how did Jesus respond to their anxiety?

Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day”? This confuses the reader. Instead of answering the question as to the reason for Judea again, Jesus was rather enigmatic and put to them a combined question and a statement (vv. 9-10). What then does Jesus mean? Readers could recall the discussion on sight and blindness during his presence in Jerusalem, and the images of light and darkness, day and night at the feast of the tabernacles (7:1—10:21). By his answer he indicates the critical nature of his journey to Judea. The use of these images do not only point back to Jewish feast, but also points forward to the clash between light and darkness. It also points forward to the clash between life and death which is about to take place at the tomb, belief and disbelief of the Jews, and between him, and the Sanhedrin which are all futuristic. He is the light that shines in the darkness (1:5).⁹⁹

These verses metaphorically insist that Jesus is safe as long as he performs his Father’s will. He wanted his disciples to feel the essence of his presence as the light of the world. In ancient Palestine, the roads were narrow-stone-strewn paths, and difficult to undertake. By day one does not stumble so much on the stones that lay in the path; for one sees by the sunlight of the world, but in the night walking was difficult.¹⁰⁰ Jesus’ presence with the disciples should cast away all fears and anxieties associated with his encounter with the hostile Jews.

Jesus switches the discussion from the light and darkness to the real situation of Lazarus. He gave them the updates about Lazarus’ state, Λάζαρος ὁ φίλος ἡμῶν κεκοίμηται· ἀλλὰ

⁹⁹ Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 158.

¹⁰⁰ Haenchen, *John*, Jn 11:10.

πορεύομαι ἵνα ἐξυπνίσω αὐτόν (“Our friend Lazarus is asleep; but I proceed to wake him.” v. 11). After a bit of deviation, Jesus now told the disciples his and their friend was asleep. However, the wording was ambiguous, leading to misunderstanding on the part of the disciples.¹⁰¹ The disciples took the statement literally to mean natural sleep. Perhaps Jesus used sleep as an euphemism for death so as to break the news of Lazarus death in stages. This might be to prepare their minds to avoid shock, but they misunderstood him.¹⁰²

Realizing the confusions in the minds of the disciples, he tells them unambiguously that Λάζαρος ἀπέθανεν (Lazarus is dead v. 14). This is to make the disciples come to terms with the reality. The uncertainty is now removed. Of what use then is their journey to Bethany now that Lazarus is dead? Jesus tells the disciples, “Lazarus is dead; and I rejoice I was not there (v. 15).” This will shock the disciples and readers. How would one rejoice at a friend’s death? But Jesus is aware of what he will do, and he has already said that the death of Lazarus is for God’s glory (v. 4). Now he says that his joy stems from the fact that his disciples will believe, or come to faith (vv. 42, 45 and 48).¹⁰³ Have they not believed in him having left all they have to follow him all this while? They have already believed in him, yet their faith was not strong. It means faith is progressive, and there are new depths to be plumbed as well as new heights to be scaled. The raising of Lazarus will be one event which will have such a deep effect on them and give their faith a new impetus.¹⁰⁴

To say, “I was not there” is to mean that if he were there, Lazarus would not have died. This was the same sentiments Martha and Mary would be sharing in no time. He now beckons

¹⁰¹ Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 326.

¹⁰² The disciples failed to grasp the second meaning of this verb ἀλλά πορεύομαι ἵνα ἐξυπνίσω αὐτόν (I proceed to wake him). To travel miles just to wake a person supposing to be resting or sleeping without any danger sounds naturally ridiculous because waking a person from ordinary sleep needs no special skills. See Brown, *John*, 423.

¹⁰³ Morris, *John*, 481.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. The usage of the aorist ἵνα πιστεύσητε (that you may believe), Moloney argues links Jesus’ hope with the possibility that the disciples might come to faith as a result of the impending event. See Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 159.

them to accompany him to where Lazarus was. It is difficult to imagine Thomas' motive by stating his readiness "To die with him" (v. 14). Though it might be a form of solidarity, it is clear that Thomas completely misunderstood Jesus.¹⁰⁵

2.4.3 Bethany at Last: An Encounter with Martha (vv. 17-27)

¹⁷ Ἐλθὼν οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εὗρεν αὐτὸν τέσσαρας ἡμέρας ἔχοντα ἐν τῷ μνημείῳ. ¹⁸ ἦν δὲ ἡ Βηθανία ἐγγὺς τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων ὡς ἀπὸ σταδίων δεκαπέντε. ¹⁹ πολλοὶ δὲ ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐληλύθεισαν πρὸς τὴν Μάρθαν καὶ Μαριάμ ἵνα παραμυθῶσιν αὐτὰς περὶ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ. ²⁰ ἡ οὖν Μάρθα ὡς ἤκουσεν ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἔρχεται ὑπήντησεν αὐτῷ· Μαριάμ δὲ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ ἐκαθέζετο. ²¹ εἶπεν οὖν ἡ Μάρθα πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν· κύριε, εἰ ἦς ᾧδε οὐκ ἂν ἀπέθανεν ὁ ἀδελφός μου· ²² [ἀλλὰ] καὶ νῦν οἶδα ὅτι ὅσα ἂν αἰτήσῃ τὸν θεὸν δώσει σοι ὁ θεός. ²³ λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἀναστήσεται ὁ ἀδελφός σου. ²⁴ λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ Μάρθα· οἶδα ὅτι ἀναστήσεται ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ. ²⁵ εἶπεν αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ· ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ κἂν ἀποθάνῃ ζήσεται, ²⁶ καὶ πᾶς ὁ ζῶν καὶ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ μὴ ἀποθάνῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. πιστεύεις τούτου; ²⁷ λέγει αὐτῷ· ναὶ κύριε, ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος.

¹⁷When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been four days in the sepulcher. ¹⁸But Bethany was near Jerusalem as it was about two miles.¹⁹So, many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about the death of their brother. ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, but Mary stayed in the house. ²¹Then Martha spoke to Jesus, "Lord, if you were here my brother would not have died. ²²But even now, I know that whatever you ask God, he will give you." ²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴Martha said to him, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, even if he dies shall live; ²⁶and all who live and believe in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷She said unto him, "Yes Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the son of God, who was coming into the world."

In this episode, one new group of actors is introduced, the Jews from Jerusalem who went to comfort the bereaved family. But they played no active role until v. 31. It was predominantly an encounter between Jesus and Martha.

Jesus arrives at the outskirts of Bethany to find that Lazarus was dead and buried for the past four days (v. 17). The body was in an advanced state of decomposition.¹⁰⁶ The confirmation of Lazarus' death surely reminded the disciples of what he told them on the way (v. 14); and would keep them wondering what kind of person Jesus is. The narrator gives us no

¹⁰⁵ Moloney, *Signs and Wonders*, 159. See also Brown, *John*, 424.

¹⁰⁶ Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 159.

description of the journey. He simply tells us of the arrival. We are not told when he died, but that he had been buried for four days. Morris accounted for the four days as follows: one day for the journey of carrier of the news to Jesus, two days that Jesus remained where he was (v. 6), and one day for Jesus' journey to Bethany. Lazarus might have died shortly after the dispatch of the messenger from Bethany.¹⁰⁷ The burial probably took place the same day according to their custom.¹⁰⁸ This means that even if Jesus had begun the journey to Bethany on the day of hearing the message, Lazarus would have been dead and buried a day before his arrival on the second day. But what is the significance of the four days? Four days in the grave suggests that all was over.¹⁰⁹ Haenchen points out that the fourth day thus has a special meaning here, and is taken over deliberately by the narrator for use in connection with the greatest of all possible resurrection miracles.¹¹⁰

In v. 18, we are told that Bethany to Jerusalem covers only two miles. This information according to Moloney makes the journey of many of the Jewish mourners from Jerusalem to comfort the bereaved family a genuine possibility (v. 19).¹¹¹ The narrator's use of number is significant, for it stresses the crowd which would witness the resurrection.¹¹² In addition, it points to the importance of social ties, and perhaps how prominent the family of Lazarus was.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ Morris, *John*, 479.

¹⁰⁸ It is explained that people are buried the same day in Palestine because the weather is hot and decomposition takes place very quick. Brown stresses that during funeral procession in Jesus' time, the sexes walked together and after burial the women returned alone from the grave to begin the mourning which lasted for thirty days. This mourning included loud wailing and dramatic expression of grief. (See Brown, *John*, 424.)

¹⁰⁹ It is said that one would have to visit a burial place of the newly buried for three days to ensure that the person was really dead. The most difficult part of mourning is the first three days after burial; for after three days the soul returns to the grave, thinking that it will return into the body; when however it sees that the color of its face has changed then it goes away, and leaves it for good. See Beasley-Murray, *John*, 189.

¹¹⁰ Haenchen, *John*, Jn 11:17.

¹¹¹ Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 159-160.

¹¹² Brown, *John*, 424.

¹¹³ Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Bellingham: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2002), 201-202.

Mourning is a very integral part of funerals. At the funeral, Morris explains, the mourners were left alone in their sorrow. Friends refrained from speaking to them. But later it was expected that they visit to offer their condolences. The Jews rated this duty very high.¹¹⁴ Keener explains further that visiting and consoling the bereaved in the days immediately following a close relative's loss was an essential duty, and demonstrates Jewish piety. The neighbors would provide the first meal after the funeral. The first week of deep grief after a close relative's burial would be spent mourning in one's house, sitting on the floor and visited by friends. This custom, called *shivah* (for 'seven' days), is still practised in Judaism today; and is very helpful for releasing grief. Mourners abstained from adornment for the next three weeks and from common pleasures for the next year.¹¹⁵

"Then when Martha heard that Jesus was coming," must be understood in terms of hearing a report of his coming. It would not be appropriate to translate in a way that would suggest that Martha actually heard the noise of Jesus' approach. That is to say, she heard a report of the arrival of Jesus, not the voice or footsteps of Jesus. Morris once more explains that it was natural for the informant to give the information to her, being the mistress of the home.¹¹⁶ One of the sisters had to remain at home in order to accept the condolences of the mourners who were constantly trooping in; thus, while Mary performed the receptionist's role at home, Martha hurried out to meet Jesus.¹¹⁷ It could be added that it was to create the opportunity for Martha to encounter Jesus in a special way, since she would be making the greatest of all the Christological confessions in the fourth gospel. From the discussions, it

¹¹⁴ Morris, *John*, 486.

¹¹⁵ Craig S Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary New Testament*(Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Libronix Digital Library System, Jn 11:20.

¹¹⁶ Morris, *John*, 486.

¹¹⁷ Haenchen, *John*, Jn 11:20.

can be infer that the interaction between her and Jesus was more or less a teaching period that creates a strong basis for the miracle.¹¹⁸

Then Martha spoke to Jesus, “Lord, if you were here my brother would not have died” (v. 21). The narrator tells us of Martha’s frustration. This conditional statement may not be intended as a reproach to Jesus. It simply expresses her grief. She does not doubt that had Jesus been present, he would have saved Lazarus from dying. The comment could also imply a deep disappointment expressed amidst frustration. It was with the same words that Mary met Jesus (v. 32). No doubt, the two must have said this to each other many times in the last couple of days. Moloney suggests that the use of the title κύριε (Lord), expresses genuine belief that Jesus' presence would have saved Lazarus (vv. 3, 21).¹¹⁹ But it is unfortunate that the one who was supposed to save the situation, and who had the power to do so, came at the time when in human sense, the services required of him were over.

She seems to say that “You could by your presence have saved my brother from dying; and even now you can do it, for God will not deny you anything.” Her brother’s death has not destroyed her faith in Jesus.¹²⁰ It could be argued that her words do partly stem from her faith, but as Calvin put it, “Her uncontrolled desires were mixed up; and carried her beyond the correct bounds.”¹²¹ Her horrified reaction in v. 39 suggests that she does not expect Jesus to recall her brother from his tomb.

¹¹⁸ Brown, *John*, 424.

¹¹⁹ Francis Moloney, “The Faith of Martha and Mary: A Narrative Approach to John 11:17-40,” *Biblica* 75, no. 4 (1994): 474, doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0028688500012637>

¹²⁰ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 186. Αἰτήση τὸν θεὸν (Will ask God) the verb αἰτέω (ask) is used for a request by an inferior from a superior. Ἐρωτάω is to ask on equal terms, hence is always used by Christ of his own asking from the Father, in the consciousness of his equal dignity. Hence Martha, as Trench observes, “plainly reveals her poor, unworthy conception of his person, which she recognizes in him no more than a prophet, when she ascribes that asking (αἰτεῖσθαι) to him which he never ascribes to himself.” (See Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies* (Bellingham: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2002), 202.

¹²¹ Jean Calvin, *John* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994). Libronix Digital Library System, Jn 11:21.

Readers recollect that earlier, he had told the disciples that Lazarus was asleep and he was going to Bethany to wake him up (v. 11). Martha was not privy to such information, but did not allow Jesus space to explain himself. Thinking she understands Jesus perfectly, she said “I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day” (v. 24). Thus she was referring to the final resurrection.¹²² Martha’s response is a revelation that Jesus’ statement was ambiguous. It could relate to the recall of Lazarus to life about to take place, or to his resurrection in the end time. For the Evangelist it will have included both, but for Martha, it meant the latter only: Lazarus will rise at the end of the age for life in the kingdom of God.¹²³ Again, it is explained that if the final resurrection idea was common, then many of the comforters said a similar statement to console her and so took Jesus’ statement as one of such.¹²⁴

At this point Jesus corrects Martha’s misunderstanding again by the categorical statement ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ (I am the resurrection and the life (v. 25). Believers in him will live even if they die; and those who live and believe in him will never die (v. 25-26). Moloney explains that people will die physically, but faith in Jesus ensures life that transcends death. Jesus therefore insists that faith in him produces a spiritual life both now and hereafter. These words of Jesus carry the idea that the believer even if he dies physically will live spiritually and the believer who is alive spiritually will never die spiritually.¹²⁵ Morris argues that this paradox reveals the great truth that physical death for the believer is not the important thing. For the unbeliever, death may be thought of as the end. The case is different for the believer in Christ. They may die naturally in the sense that they pass through the door of physical death, but they will not die in the real sense. For them, death is but a

¹²² Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 161. Moloney explains further that belief in the last day events was very prevalent at the time and the Pharisees held strongly to it.

¹²³ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 190.

¹²⁴ Morris, *John*, 448.

¹²⁵ Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 161.

gateway to fuller life and fellowship with God. For the believer, the moment he trusts in Jesus, he begins to experience that life of the new age to come which cannot be touched by death.¹²⁶

As Keener states:

The eschatological rule of God for which Martha hopes, with all its blessings for humankind, is vested in Jesus. The greatest gift of God's saving sovereignty is life eternal under that sovereignty, and entry upon it through resurrection. The power to initiate it resides in Jesus ("The Resurrection"); and to grant it in its fullness ("The Life"). Both elements of this function are his by God's appointment.¹²⁷

In place of the general resurrection on the last day, which is not Jesus' subject now, Jesus' saying presupposes another resurrection that follows here and now, at the belief and acceptance of the gospel of Jesus himself or his disciples. The resurrection consists of belief in the Son of God, who possesses the power to raise spiritually from the dead.¹²⁸ The narrator presents two clauses ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ζωὴ (v. 24). Beasley-Murray argues that ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις (I am the resurrection) is a promise of the future resurrection of the believer through Christ the resurrection, while ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ζωὴ (I am the life) can be interpreted as whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.¹²⁹ Beasley-Murray further explained that:

The revelation to Martha thus is an assurance of resurrection to the kingdom of God in its consummation through him who is the Resurrection, and of life in the kingdom of God in the present time through him who is the Life. Both aspects of the "life" are rooted in the understanding of Jesus as the Mediator of the divine sovereignty in the present and in the future, whose mediatorial work in earthly ministry reaches its climax in his death and exaltation to the throne of God, whereby the sovereignty of God is established in redemptive power for all humanity, and the Spirit of the age to come is released for the world.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Morris, *John*, 448-449.

¹²⁷ Keener, *Bible Background Commentary*, Jn 11:25.

¹²⁸ Haenchen, *John*, Jn 11:25.

¹²⁹ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 191.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

For Beasley-Murray, the consolation which Jesus offers to those mourning the death of a believer in Christ is not that their friend will rise again at some distant day when the dead shall be raised by a catastrophic act of God, but that the Christian believer never dies; his true life is never extinguished. Further to this, John did not discuss or contemplate the future life of those who are not ‘in Christ.’ The assurance of life, here and hereafter, in the fourth gospel, is for believers.

This question, πιστεύεις τοῦτο; (do you believe? v. 26b) is asked in the light of the context of vv 25–26, namely the death of Lazarus, which tested Martha’s faith. It is essential for Martha to grasp and receive this if she is to understand what Jesus is about to do for her brother.¹³¹ She must believe to see the miracle even though God could work whether or not she believed. It also tells the reader that salvation is a personal decision, and faith in Jesus brings life both now and here after.¹³²

She said unto him “Yes Lord; I do believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who was coming into the world” (v. 27). Her reply though straightforward, goes beyond a simple, “Yes I do.” This statement constitutes the Christological apex in the fourth gospel. Her confession contains three ideas. Jesus is ‘the Christ,’ that is the Messiah long-awaited by the Jews. He is also the ‘Son of God.’ That it is an assertion of the deity of Christ, and points to the close personal relationship he has with the Father. Finally, she speaks of Jesus as the one “who was to come into the world.” That is the long-awaited deliverer, the one sent by God to accomplish his perfect will.¹³³ If Jesus came from God, then he is the way to God.

In v. 21 Martha looked so dejected, but here, she seems full of faith. She now knows the resurrection as both eschatological and present reality. She came to Jesus as a defeatist, and

¹³¹ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 191.

¹³² Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 161.

¹³³ Morris, *John*, 134. See Bruce B. Barton, *John* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1993), 233.

left as a conqueror.¹³⁴ With these positive faith and confession she departed to invite her sister Mary.

2.4.4 The Teacher Encounters Mary (vv. 28-37)

²⁸ Καὶ τοῦτο εἰπούσα ἀπήλθεν καὶ ἐφώνησεν Μαριὰμ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτῆς λάθρα εἰπούσα· ὁ διδάσκαλος πάρεστιν καὶ φωνεῖ σε. ²⁹ ἐκείνη δὲ ὡς ἤκουσεν ἠγέρθη ταχὺ καὶ ἦρχετο πρὸς αὐτόν. ³⁰ οὐπω δὲ ἐληλύθει ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν κώμην, ἀλλ' ἦν ἔτι ἐν τῷ τόπῳ ὅπου ὑπήντησεν αὐτῷ ἡ Μάρθα. ³¹ οἱ οὖν Ἰουδαῖοι οἱ ὄντες μετ' αὐτῆς ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ καὶ παραμυθούμενοι αὐτήν, ἰδόντες τὴν Μαριὰμ ὅτι ταχέως ἀνέστη καὶ ἐξῆλθεν, ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῇ δόξαντες ὅτι ὑπάγει εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον ἵνα κλαύσῃ ἐκεῖ. ³² Ἡ οὖν Μαριὰμ ὡς ἦλθεν ὅπου ἦν Ἰησοῦς ἰδοῦσα αὐτὸν ἔπεσεν αὐτοῦ πρὸς τοὺς πόδας λέγουσα αὐτῷ· κύριε, εἰ ἦς ᾧδε οὐκ ἂν μου ἀπέθανεν ὁ ἀδελφός. ³³ Ἰησοῦς οὖν ὡς εἶδεν αὐτὴν κλαίουσαν καὶ τοὺς συνελθόντας αὐτῇ Ἰουδαίους κλαίοντας, ἐνεβριμῆσατο τῷ πνεύματι καὶ ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτὸν ³⁴ καὶ εἶπεν· ποῦ θεθείκατε αὐτόν; λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· κύριε, ἔρχου καὶ ἴδε.³⁵ ἐδάκρυσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς. ³⁶ ἔλεγον οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι· ἴδε πῶς ἐφίλει αὐτόν. ³⁷ τινὲς δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν εἶπαν· οὐκ ἐδύνατο οὗτος ὁ ἀνοίξας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τοῦ τυφλοῦ ποιῆσαι ἵνα καὶ οὗτος μὴ ἀποθάνῃ; ³⁸ Ἰησοῦς οὖν πάλιν ἐμβριμώμενος ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἔρχεται εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον· ἦν δὲ σπήλαιον καὶ λίθος ἐπέκειτο ἐπ' αὐτῷ.

²⁸And saying this, she departed and called Mary secretly and said, “The teacher is here and is calling you.”²⁹On hearing this, she quickly rose and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where he was met by Martha ³¹When the Jews who were there with her in the house and comforting her saw how Mary quickly rose and came out, they followed her thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³²When Mary came to where Jesus was, she fell at his feet saying “Lord! If you were here, my brother would not have died.” ³³But, as Jesus saw her together with the Jews who came also weeping, he was deeply moved with sorrow and troubled in his spirit. ³⁴And said, “Where have you placed him?” They said to him, “Lord come and see!”³⁵Jesus wept. ³⁶Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him.”³⁷But some of them said “Is this man who opened the eyes of the blind man not powerful to keep this man from dying?”

The setting remains the outskirts of Bethany where Martha met Jesus. Martha goes to invite her sister for Jesus. Mary comes with the self-invited Jews and fell at the feet of Jesus. The encounter was brief, without any major declarations.

Jesus had not yet come into the village; he was still in the place where he met Martha (v. 30). Brown suggests it was to keep his arrival a secret, judging from the elements of danger

¹³⁴ The use of the perfect tense ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα is to indicate that Martha continues in her belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

expressed by the disciples (v. 8).¹³⁵ Some scholars opine that he remained at the outskirts in order to give Mary the same opportunity given Martha.¹³⁶

Then, the Jews who were there with her in the house, comforting her, saw Mary quickly rise, and came out following her, thinking that she was going to the tomb in order to weep there (v. 31). Her sudden move raised suspicion. The layout of the entire scene is skillfully wrought. Lazarus has been entombed somewhere outside the village where Jesus does not know. Jesus does not go to the house where the mourners were, which would be the customary thing to do; and then Martha comes out to meet him. She does not know what subject was discussed in the conversation between Jesus and her sister. She only knows Jesus awaits her at some particular location along the road.¹³⁷ But the Jews thought she was going to the tomb to weep. Even though their intention was wrong, following her was purposeful. The crowd movement was used to move the Jews who were present, to come with her to Jesus, and thus to become witnesses to his act of restoring life to the decaying Lazarus.¹³⁸

Upon arrival, Mary greeted Jesus by falling at his feet in a mournful posture amidst tears. “Lord! If you were here, my brother would not have died” (v. 32). Some scholars suggest the narrator created this scene to create a contrasting picture between the two sisters. Mary complains as does Martha, but in a posture of adoration.¹³⁹ Her statement to Jesus does after all, reflect faith in the Lord’s power to heal, but grief clouds her vision, and the arrival of the ‘consolers’ prevented further conversation.¹⁴⁰ However, the picture painted of Mary is

¹³⁵ Brown, *John*, 426.

¹³⁶ William Hendriksen and Simon J Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002), 153.

¹³⁷ Haenchen, *John*, Jn 11:31.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Haenchen, *John*, Jn 11:31.

¹⁴⁰ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 192.

the Christian disposition to suffering and death.¹⁴¹ Schneiders suggests that what she did was what every believing Christian in history who was overcome with sorrow at the death of a loved one would do. It is the reaction of everyone who believes firmly that God could have prevented that death, and yet paradoxically, permitted it.¹⁴² But the words are a firm conviction that Jesus has power over sickness which could have spared Lazarus' life.

When Jesus saw Mary together with the Jews who came weeping, he was deeply moved with sorrow and troubled in his spirit (v. 33). The crowd joined her to weep; then Jesus was naturally moved to weep too.¹⁴³ By this, the author wants to emphasize the feeling of Jesus and the crowd in sharing the common feeling of sorrow for the death of a dear one.

In v. 34, Jesus requested to know where Lazarus was buried. This is a simple request for information. But Jesus had a deeper reason behind it. Come and see they replied.¹⁴⁴ Instead of directing him, they invited him. He was to witness the situation of a person who has been entombed for four days (v. 17). But they will be witnesses to what will happen at the

¹⁴¹ The verb ἔπεσεν (to fall) is indicative aorist active showing an action in punctual time. Mary is found three times in the Gospel record, and each time she is at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:39; John 11:32; 12:3). She sat at his feet and listened to his word; she fell at his feet and poured out her sorrow; and she came to his feet weeping, wiping and anointing it. Her only recorded words in the Gospels are given in John 11:32, and they echo what Martha had already said (John 11:21). See Wiersbe, *Expository Commentary*, Jn 11:32.

¹⁴² Schneiders, "John 11," 54.

¹⁴³ ἔνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι (deeply moved with sorrow and troubled in his spirit). There are several scholarly opinions about this verb. It occurred only twice in John. McNeile, and Hugh argue that in its primary sense, ἐνεβριμήσασθαι is "to snort" like a horse. In the LXX, it means "to show indignation" (Dan. 11:30), ἐνεβριμήσας is used of the anger of Yahweh at Lam. 2:6. A similar use of the cognate words occurs Ps. 7:12, Isa. 17:13 and Ezek. 21:31. In Mk. 14:5 ἐνεβριμῶντο αὐτῇ carries the idea of indignation: 'they roared against her,' in their indignation at the waste of the ointment. In Beasley-Murray's view, this main clause ἐνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι requires discussion and not justification in view of its departure from most of the English translations. He may be right because no one can explain Jesus' inner feeling, but himself. His point is that there have been sharp contrasting views between English and German traditions. The AV/KJV/RV rendered it "He *groaned in the spirit* and was troubled." It is reverberated by NEB "He *sighed heavily* and was deeply moved." RSV translated it, "He was *deeply moved* in spirit and troubled." Luther's rendering, "*Er ergrimme im Geist und betrübe sich selbst*," i.e., "He was *angry* in the spirit and distressed," influenced other German translations. The Zürich Bible: "He became angry in the spirit and was disgusted"; Heitmüller, "He was inwardly angry and became enraged." Such is the interpretation followed by Bultmann, Büchsel, Strathmann, Schnackenburg, Schulz, Haenchen, and Becker in their commentaries. See Beasley-Murray, "John," 192. The researcher renders it deeply moved with sorrow and troubled in his spirit

¹⁴⁴ ἔρχου καὶ ἴδε (come and see) Brown suggests the pronoun 'they' who invited Jesus to come and see were Mary and the Jews. Other scholars suggest Mary and Martha. See Brown, *Signs and Shadows*, 168.

cemetery, hence the invitation. Upon that invitation, Jesus wept (v. 35). Jesus' tears which confirm his humanity evoked once again a misunderstanding of his actions. They misinterpreted the action of Jesus as emanating from the love for Lazarus, and perhaps the hopeless situation in which he found himself. In the mind of the spectators, the situation of Lazarus was irreversible.

The misunderstandings and misinterpretations continue as some of them said, "Is this man who opened the eyes of the blind man not powerful to keep this man from dying (v. 37)?" Apparently, they were referring to the episode in 9:1ff. Some of them remembering Jesus' ministry to the sick expressed surprise that he stood helpless as themselves. Scholars opine that the conjunction δε is an expression of negative attitude and skepticism about Jesus' powers, hence a failed 'miracle worker.' But Morris is of the view that the comments were quite genuine; only that they were not as defined as the words of the two sisters (vv. 21, 32).¹⁴⁵

2.4.5 The Turning Point (vv. 38-44)

³⁸ Ἰησοῦς οὖν πάλιν ἐμβριμώμενος ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἔρχεται εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον· ἦν δὲ σπήλαιον καὶ λίθος ἐπέκειτο ἐπ' αὐτῷ. ³⁹ λέγει ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἄρατε τὸν λίθον. λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ ἀδελφὴ τοῦ τετελευτηκότος Μάρθα· κύριε, ἥδη ὄζει, τεταρταῖος γάρ ἐστιν. ⁴⁰ λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· οὐκ εἶπόν σοι ὅτι ἐὰν πιστεύσῃς ὅψῃ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ; ⁴¹ ἦραν οὖν τὸν λίθον. ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἤρειν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἄνω καὶ εἶπεν· πάτερ, εὐχαριστῶ σοι ὅτι ἤκουσάς μου. ⁴² ἐγὼ δὲ ᾔδειν ὅτι πάντοτέ μου ἀκούεις, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὄχλον τὸν περιεστῶτα εἶπον, ἵνα πιστεῦσωσιν ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας. ⁴³ καὶ ταῦτα εἰπὼν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ ἐκραύγασεν· Λάζαρε, δεῦρο ἕξω. ⁴⁴ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ τεθνηκὼς δεδεμένος τοὺς πόδας καὶ τὰς χεῖρας κειρίαις καὶ ἡ ὄψις αὐτοῦ σουδαρίῳ περιεδέδετο. λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· λύσατε αὐτὸν καὶ ἄφετε αὐτὸν ὑπάγειν.

³⁸Then Jesus once more moved with anger came to the tomb. It was a cave and a stone lay over it. ³⁹Jesus said "Remove the stone over the grave." But Martha the sister of the dead man said to him, "He has been dead for four days and it is smelling."⁴⁰Then Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" ⁴¹Accordingly, they removed the stone and Jesus raised his eyes up and said, "I give you thanks Father, because you hear me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me but on account of the multitude standing around, in order that they will believe that you sent me." ⁴³And with a loud voice he said, "Lazarus, come out now!" ⁴⁴The dead man came out, bound in the feet and the hands

¹⁴⁵ Morris, *John*, 496.

with grave clothes, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said unto them, “Loose him and let him go.”

In this episode, there is a geographical movement from the outskirts of the town where Jesus encountered the two sisters to the cemetery. This is the final scene where the promised glory is supposed to be revealed. We are not told the distance, but it might be a short one still outside the community.¹⁴⁶

Jesus moves to the burial ground. At the cemetery, he was again moved with sorrow (v. 38). With this emotional uproar, Jesus now commands that the stone over the grave be removed (v. 39).¹⁴⁷ It is said that this verse is of the greatest importance to the evangelist in the message John wanted to convey. The stone was there to stress the actuality of Lazarus’ death and to tell the reader that he was describing a miracle of resurrection and not a mere resuscitation.¹⁴⁸

The crowd at this time was engulfed in wonder, waiting what was going to happen. Martha objected strongly to the command, citing the stench that might erupt as a reason (v. 39).¹⁴⁹ Describing Martha as “The sister of the dead man” is to create an emotional bond and the kind of feeling a close relative might have when the loved deceased is exposed in a rotten state to the public. It buttresses the point of her natural resistance and offers the reader a further evidence of Lazarus’ death.¹⁵⁰ Moloney contrasts Martha’s statement here with vv.

¹⁴⁶ The burial place was outside the town; otherwise the living might contract ritual impurity from contact with the corpses of the dead. See Brown, *John*, 426.

¹⁴⁷ The word *μνημεῖον* is literally translated a memorial, or to remember, used frequently of a memorial for the dead, but mostly of the grave or grave chamber itself. It was a cave, such as was often used as a burial-place (Gen. 23:19, Isa. 22:16, 2 Chron. 16:14). The cavern is sometimes natural, sometimes artificial. The body was either let down through a horizontal opening, as is the European practice, or placed in a tomb cut in the face of the rock. In either case, the opening was closed by a stone, which had to be a heavy one to keep wild animals out (20:1, Mk. 15:46, Mt. 27:60, Lk. 24:2). If the cave were a subterranean one, then λίθος ἐπέκειτο ἐπ’ αὐτῷ must be rendered “a stone lay upon it”; if it were cut in the face of the rock, then the stone lay against the opening. With the text λίθος ἐπέκειτο ἐπ’ αὐτῷ the former was to be the case.

¹⁴⁸ Morris, *John*, 496. The stone also functions to drive away wild animals which might prey on the body. See Brown, *John*, 426.

¹⁴⁹ ὄζει is indicative present active verb denoting continuous giving of odor good or bad.

¹⁵⁰ Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Bellingham: Logos Research Systems Inc. 2002), 206.

22-23 and concluded that her first words proclaimed Jesus as a ‘miracle worker,’ and her parting words describes Jesus as ‘one that has no authority over a four-day old dead person.’¹⁵¹ However, Martha’s objection to the removal of the stone was firmly overruled, and the stone was taken away (v. 41). The narrator slows down the narrative to create a state of tension and expectation in the reader.

Upon the removal of the stone, the environment changed from sorrow and troubled spirit to a solemn moment. Jesus assumed a prayer posture.¹⁵² It is clear that he knew in advance that the Father would fulfill his request, as Martha had indeed earlier asserted (v. 21). He, therefore, does not utter the words as a request, but as thanks for something already granted. Furthermore, this thanksgiving does not need to be spoken aloud. He speaks them aloud only so that those standing about would know that he, Jesus, is really the one sent by the Father. Jesus is always in constant communion with the Father. His engagement in audible prayer is not for showmanship, but to testify that his source of power is not in himself, but from God.

So far, all the mourners, the comforters, and the followers have demonstrated skepticism. In order for their faith to be lifted, they must witness a miracle. Its manifestation would be a confirmation of, and crowning evidence of his Christological divinity. It would provide a firm basis for the disciples (vv. 15, 42), the Jews (v. 42), and for both Martha (vv. 26-27, 39, 42) and Mary (vv. 33, 42) to believe that God is revealed through the words and actions of Jesus, the one he sent.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Moloney, *Signs and Wonders*, 170.

¹⁵² These spectators included Martha and Mary, the Jews (who came to comfort the Lazaruses, not the hostile ones) and the disciples who upon arrival at Bethany were muted. Brown explains that the gesture of looking up to heaven is a natural prelude to prayer, as seen in Luke 18:13 where the publican does not feel worthy to make this gesture. The Synoptics mention that Jesus looked up to heaven before multiplying the loaves; John mentions this in the “priestly” prayer of 17:1. See Brown, *John*, 427.

¹⁵³ Moloney, *Signs and Wonders*, 172.

Now, the moment for which the reader has been prepared in this episode is here; raising Lazarus from the dead. Jesus cried out with authority, “Lazarus, come out (v. 43)!” The dead man came out bound in the feet and the hands with grave clothes, and his face covered with face clothes. Jesus ordered: “Loose him and let him go!” (v. 44). Beasley-Murray quoted Sanders:

The corpse would have been placed on a strip of linen, wide and long enough to envelop it completely. The feet would be placed at one end, and the cloth would then be drawn over the head to the feet. The feet would be bound at the ankles, the arms secured to the body with linen bandages, and the face bound round with another cloth to keep the jaw in place... So bound up, a man could not possibly walk. Hence Jesus’ final command, “Loose him and let him go!”¹⁵⁴

The account is closed by what Moloney calls double imperative: λυσατε αὐτὸν καὶ ἄφετε αὐτὸν ὑπάγειν (loose him and let him go v. 44). He must be free from the grave clothes which four days ago honored and respected his dead body, which now hinders his movement. He must be freed from the bondage of death and go his way to enjoy normal life.¹⁵⁵ The physical transformation of the dead and the ready-to-decay body of Lazarus to living one is a demonstration of divine authority. This is the manifestation of what he meant when he said that this sickness is not unto death, and to Martha that if you believe you will see the glory of God (vv. 4, 40). If he is to be loosed so he could go, then the miracle is not complete until there is human appropriation. The miracle makes Christ the conqueror of death. It has also shown the glory of God, a turning point in both Lazarus and Jesus, but how will the crowd respond to this news?

2.4.6 The Plot to Kill Jesus (vv. 45-54)

⁴⁵ Πολλοὶ οὖν ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων οἱ ἐλθόντες πρὸς τὴν Μαριὰμ καὶ θεασάμενοι ἃ ἐποίησεν ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν. ⁴⁶ τινὲς δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀπήλθον πρὸς τοὺς Φαρισαίους καὶ εἶπαν αὐτοῖς ἃ ἐποίησεν Ἰησοῦς. ⁴⁷ Συνήγαγον οὖν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι συνέδριον καὶ ἔλεγον· τί ποιῶμεν ὅτι οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος πολλὰ ποιεῖ σημεῖα; ⁴⁸ ἐὰν ἀφώμεν αὐτὸν οὕτως, πάντες πιστεύσουσιν εἰς αὐτόν, καὶ ἐλεύσονται οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι καὶ ἀροῦσιν ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν τόπον καὶ τὸ ἔθνος. ⁴⁹ εἰς δὲ τις ἐξ αὐτῶν Καϊάφας, ἀρχιερεὺς ὢν τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ ἐκείνου,

¹⁵⁴ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 195.

¹⁵⁵ Moloney, *Signs and Wonders*, 172.

εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἴδατε οὐδέν, ⁵⁰ οὐδὲ λογίζεσθε ὅτι συμφέρει ὑμῖν ἵνα εἰς ἄνθρωπος ἀποθάνῃ ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ μὴ ὅλον τὸ ἔθνος ἀπόληται. ⁵¹ τοῦτο δὲ ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ οὐκ εἶπεν, ἀλλὰ ἀρχιερεὺς ὢν τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ ἐκείνου ἐπροφήτευσεν ὅτι ἔμελλεν Ἰησοῦς ἀποθνήσκειν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἔθνους, ⁵² καὶ οὐχ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἔθνους μόνον ἀλλ' ἵνα καὶ τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ διεσκορπισμένα συναγάγῃ εἰς ἓν. ⁵³ ἀπ' ἐκείνης οὖν τῆς ἡμέρας ἐβουλεύσαντο ἵνα ἀποκτείνωσιν αὐτόν. ⁵⁴ Ὁ οὖν Ἰησοῦς οὐκέτι παρρησίᾳ περιεπάτει ἐν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις, ἀλλὰ ἀπῆλθεν ἐκεῖθεν εἰς τὴν χώραν ἐγγὺς τῆς ἐρήμου, εἰς Ἐφραὶμ λεγομένην πόλιν, κακεῖ ἔμεινεν μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν.

⁴⁵Then many Jews which came with Mary and saw what happened believed in him. ⁴⁶But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷Then the Sanhedrin and the chief priests gathered the council and said, “What shall we do, because this man performed many signs? ⁴⁸If we permit so, many will believe in him and the Roman council will come and take this place and our nation. ⁴⁹One of the chief priests called Caiaphas, the high priest for that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all! ⁵⁰You consider that it is better for one man to die for the people than for the whole nation to perish.” ⁵¹He did not speak this on his own but as the high priest of that year he prophesied that Jesus would die on behalf of the nation. ⁵²But not even on behalf of the nation alone but also the scattered children of God in one place. ⁵³So from that day they took the decision to kill him. ⁵⁴Jesus no longer walked boldly among the Jews, but departed from that place to the country near the desert in Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.

Jesus at last performed the unexpected miracle which paradoxically inspired faith and doubt, love and hatred. The family of Lazarus loved Jesus the more while the Jews hated and plotted to have him killed. What exactly happened?

Though the miracle was over, its effect lingered on. There was a mixed reaction. Many of the Jews who came to visit Mary and saw what happened believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus has done (v. 45-46). The deeds and words of Jesus usually created a division among the Jews (6:14–15, 24-33, 66-69; 7:10-13, 30–32, 40-44, 45-52). It was same on this occasion, but this time the evangelist observes, Jesus had the majority on his side. This crowd was anticipated would accord him great welcome on the Palm Sunday (see 12:9–13, 17–19).¹⁵⁶ Readers would be curious to find out why the narrator kept singling out Mary as the one the many Jews came to comfort. Probably, she

¹⁵⁶ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 196.

was more emotional, and the comforters paid greater attention to her.¹⁵⁷ But how did the council react to this sign?

A high profile emergency meeting was called by the Sanhedrin to determine what to be done.¹⁵⁸ Οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος πολλὰ ποιεῖ σημεῖα (This man performs many miracles, v. 47) is an acknowledgement that the Sanhedrin believed in Jesus. Their plot against him was not because he fakes miracles. Their concern was if permitted he may attract many followers and the Roman council would come and take this place and our nation (v. 48). Two anxieties are clear (1) Many will believe him. The Evangelist already revealed that because of the miracle many or rather many more have come to faith in him (v. 44). (2) Their nation would be taken over by the Romans. Scholars argue that it is not clear whether their temple or land. In any case, their life depended on both. If the temple was destroyed, sacrifices, and public worship of God, and calling on his name would cease. If their land was taken, they would either be exiled or become slaves in their own land.¹⁵⁹ But how is this to be prevented?

One of the chief priests called Caiaphas,¹⁶⁰ the high priest for that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all (v. 49)!” This statement confirms that the Sanhedrin believed national survival was at stake. So the principle of utilitarianism must apply-the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people.¹⁶¹ The implication of Caiaphas’ argument was that even if

¹⁵⁷ Morris, *John*, 499.

¹⁵⁸ In actual fact, the High Priest alone was responsible for convening the council, but the expression the chief priests represents both the High Priest and members of the prominent priestly families. See Beasley-Murray, *John*, 196.

¹⁵⁹ Calvin, *John*, Jn. 11: 48.

¹⁶⁰ Caiaphas was the high priest at the time. The office of high priest, under the ancient Hebrew laws, was for life; but in Roman times the high priest only held his position at the pleasure of the imperial authority. This could be for one year only, or for a term of years, accordingly as he pleased his Roman masters. Annas was high priest from 6 A.D. to 15 A.D when he was deposed by the procurator Valerius Gratus. But he retained his influence throughout his life, and several of his sons held the office after him. In the year 18 A.D. Joseph Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas, succeeded to this great position, which he held until 36 A.D. thus being high priest throughout the whole period of Pontius Pilate’s procuratorship.

¹⁶¹ Nichol asserts that this principle is attested in rabbinical literature with two quotations: “Better one life should be risked than that all should be certain to die”; also “Better that you should be executed rather than that the whole community should be punished on account of you”. See Francis D Nichol, *The Seventh-day*

Jesus was innocent, it would be to Israel's well-being to have him removed.¹⁶² So they concluded that the land would not be safe unless Christ is destroyed. It was a decision made in hatred, fear, and expediency.¹⁶³ The Evangelist saw a more profound meaning in his words: the death of Jesus would benefit not only the Jews, but the people of God drawn from all nations, leading to the kingdom of God being established.¹⁶⁴ For Caiaphas, the death of Jesus would save the people from the judgment of the Romans; for the Evangelist it connoted a death which would avert the judgment of God (3:10), and open the door of the saving sovereignty to all nations (12:31-32).¹⁶⁵

From that day, they took counsel in order to kill him. Then Jesus no longer walked boldly among the Jews, but departed from that place to the countryside near the desert in Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples (vv. 53, 54). The high priest's counsel was well noted.¹⁶⁶ Now they know what to do. Jesus must die at all cost. What they now seek is an opportune time to execute the agenda. John insists, this decision to kill Jesus has been triggered by the resurrection of Lazarus.¹⁶⁷ Surprisingly the council meeting extended their decision to kill Jesus to Lazarus too, (12:10) perhaps; because he offered Jesus the platform through his (Lazarus') death to advertise himself.

Jesus' decision not to walk alone was not due to the fact that he was afraid to die. After all he has proved that he is ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ (the resurrection and the life, v. 24). His life

Adventist Bible Commentary Volume IV (Washington, D C: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002), 1017.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ M.A Shepherd, Jr. "The Gospel According to John," in *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, ed., Charles M. Laymon (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 720.

¹⁶⁴ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 198.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. D. Moody Smith, "John," in *Harper's Bible Commentary*, ed., James L. Mays (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), 1063.

¹⁶⁶ The verb ἐβουλεύσαντο is first aorist middle indicative of ἐβουλεύω old verb to take counsel, in the middle voice suggesting an action for themselves. It is an action taken for themselves, among themselves.

¹⁶⁷ Carson, *John*, 243.

has been divinely ordered and the time to face the cross was not yet due. As Carson suggests, it was a theological decision that no man could force him to face his death prematurely.¹⁶⁸

He went to stay at Ephraim.¹⁶⁹ Though not too far a place, it was probably to avoid disturbances. The disciples kept him company, and might continue to benefit from his teachings.

2.5 Theological Reflection

The story of Lazarus' resurrection was the most challenging, emotional, and probably the only 'sign' which was preceded by a special prayer time by Jesus.¹⁷⁰ It was God's own plan to draw the disciples to faith in him, and to provide for the Roman authorities the right opportunity to accuse, arrest, and kill Jesus to complete his divine salvation scheme for humanity without which this God's universal rescue mission could be jeopardized. From the analysis, it could be concluded that even though death robs humanity of joy, it also creates a platform to demonstrate love (v. 36). It draws us closer to a higher spiritual source, and to one another. Mary and Martha were drawn closer to Jesus. Death also creates an opportunity for us to show solidarity, sympathy, and empathy with the bereaved family. This was exhibited by Jesus, the sisters of Lazarus, and the concerned Jews who travelled all the way from Jerusalem to Bethany (vv. 19, 21, 32, 35).

From the study of the text, it could be suggested that the raising of Lazarus is symbolic of Jesus' mission, ministry and demonstration of God's love for humanity. It further establishes his power as the liberator of humankind from the oppressive and tyrannical chains of death,

¹⁶⁸ Carson, *John*, 243.

¹⁶⁹ Ephraim should be about fifteen miles from Jerusalem. Ephraim is generally identified with the modern *et Taiyibeh*, a place about 4 miles (6.4 km) northeast of Bethel (See 2 Sam. 13:23; 2 Chron. 13:19). It was near the wilderness extending along the Jordan valley. See Nichol, *SDA Commentary*, 1018.

¹⁷⁰ Ruben Zimmermann, "The Narrative Hermeneutics of John 11: Learning with Lazarus how to understand Death, Life and Resurrection," in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, eds. Craig R. Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Mohr Siebeck: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 77.

and ultimately grants freedom to his followers. But more importantly, it points to, and authenticates Jesus as the way to the Father, the conqueror of death, the life and giver of life.

Jesus is the way to God. He demonstrates his willingness to lead the world to God. He links humanity to God the creator to experience a relationship which leads to eternal life. God reveals his love and will that the world might have life through Christ. He leads humanity to experience the glory of God (v. 4). Christ is the way in every act, word, and attitude. He is the Mediator between God and the world. Martha's confession of Christ (v. 27) affirms this point.

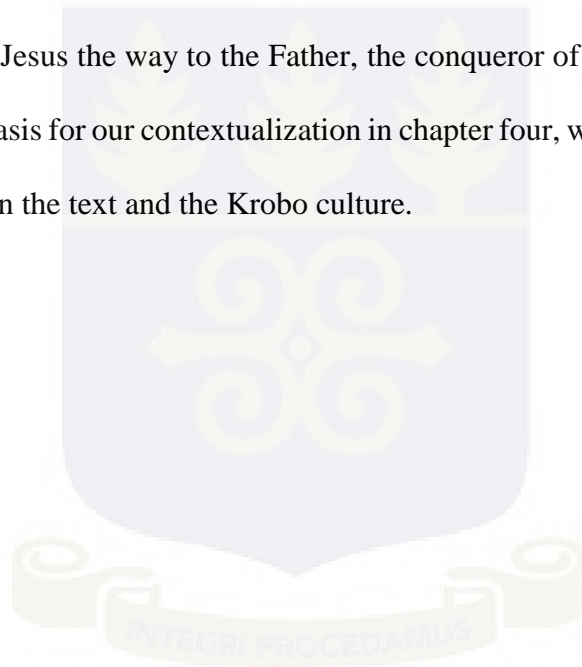
The analysis also shows that θάνατος (death) is a real human experience associated with pain and sorrows to which the Johannine community sought solution (vv. 17-27, 32, 33, 35, 37). The solution to this excruciating human experience is found in Christ (vv. 24-25). The analysis established him as the conqueror of death (v. 43). Raising Lazarus from the dead does not only suggest God's power over death, but ultimately demonstrates his love in giving life to humankind. Jesus by this feat, turned the horror of death into a hope of resurrection. In the presence of Christ, therefore, death has lost its dominion over his followers.

Furthermore, the analysis brings to the fore the fact of the story of Lazarus establishing Jesus as the life. John presented him both as "The resurrection and the life" (vv. 25-26). He who believes in him will live even though he dies; and he who lives and believes in him will never die (vv. 24-25). What it implies is that Christ gives life which is beyond the realm of death. When Jesus reveals God's redemptive truth which sets the world free from the enslaving power of death, he imparts the seed of life, which produces fellowship with the Father. This fellowship leads to victory over death which brings eternal life the moment one believes. The disciple may die in human sense, but will not die in the real sense. Death has

been overcome by life, and the terror of death becomes a gate way to eternal fellowship with the Father (1:4; 3; 15).

In this phrase, “anyone who believes,” Christ presents his audience with options. They may decide to believe or disbelieve. But it is incumbent upon anyone who desires life to make a personal decision to hear and believe in order to possess eternal life. It follows that such a believer has passed from death to life. Thus, death has no control over him/her because of faith in Christ. Eternal life for such a person commences the moment faith is activated in Christ.

These broad themes: Jesus the way to the Father, the conqueror of death, the life and giver of life will form the basis for our contextualization in chapter four, where the thesis discusses the encounter between the text and the Krobo culture.



CHAPTER THREE

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

The present day Krobo is made up of two groups, Manya and Yilo; and is part of one larger tribe called Dangme.¹⁷¹ Legends had it that they migrated together with the Ga, and Ewe tribes, wandered for a long time before settling on the Krobo Mountain (*Klo-yom*) after the incidence of *Lɔlɔvɔ*.¹⁷² What remains doubtful however, is the exact location of their original home which has generated some scholarly debate.¹⁷³ Huber for example, gathered from Reindorf's writings that their original home was Sameh, an island on the South West of River Ogum, adjoining Ladah and Dahome from where they moved to *Lɔlɔvɔ* under the leadership of Aklo-Muase or Aklo-Natebi.¹⁷⁴

Wilson agrees with Reindorf's assertion, and gave a possible date as between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries.¹⁷⁵ Odonkor, quoting Azu also cited Sameh or Saberma, but locates it in the Upper Niger or Kwara River valley, and mentioned Mohammedan raids as the main reason behind the migration.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ Some scholars refer to them as Adangme. Dornoo Escobar Leiku explained that the terminology Adangme is misplaced. We may say Ga- Dangme but not Ga-Adangme (the people of Ga and the people of Dangme together). Adangme is perhaps the language spoken by the people of Adaa –Adaagbi which is corrupted Adangme. Many people confuse all the Dangmes as Adaa people hence Adangme. The rest of the Dangme group are Adaa, Ningo, Gbugblaa (Prampram), Sɛ (Shai), Osudoku and Kpom (Kpone). Some contend that the Krobos are two tribes making the larger Dangme tribe eight instead of seven. The argument is made on the grounds that both of them have independent paramoucies. Dornoo Escobar Leiku, interview granted the researcher, 15th December, 2015 at Matsekope.

¹⁷² *Lɔlɔvɔ* is an Ewe word meaning "Love is ended." Rev. D.D.N. Tetteh, interview granted the researcher, 20th October 2015 at 9.00 am at Manya Setsunya, at Manya-Kpongonor.

¹⁷³ This for a long time to come will remain debatable due to unreliable chronological, oral and written facts, coupled with the absence of documentary sources, and scantiness of information available on the subject.

¹⁷⁴ Huber, *The Krobo*, 16. See S.S. Odorkor, *The Rise of the Krobo* (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1971), 6.

¹⁷⁵ Louis E. Wilson, "The Rise of Paramount Chiefs among the Krobo (Ghana)," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 20, no. 3 (1987): 473, url, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/219690>. According to Azu's account quoted by Steegstra, the original home of the Krobos was Sameh situated either in present-day Benin or in Nigeria. See Steegstra, *Dipo*, 30; Wilson, "Paramount Chiefs," 471-495. See also Arlts *Christianity, Imperialism and Culture*, 97.

¹⁷⁶ Odonkor, *The Rise*, 1.

However, in recent times, efforts have been made to trace the origin of the Krobo to Jewish ancestry. Muniyuhitum for example, claims the Krobos are escapees from Israel during the exodus. Tetteh on the other hand, suggested that they have migrated from the Western Sudanese Empire (Old Ghana) near the Middle East; and supports his claims with the reason the Krobos are referred to as *Beleku li* (people of the East).¹⁷⁷

The Krobos call themselves *Klo li* (plural of *Klo no*).¹⁷⁸ According to one hypothesis, the name Krobo originated from their Akan neighbors. The Akans in admiring the white substance the Krobo women smeared on their body the Krobo called *mime* (myrrh), but the Akans called *krɔbo* described the Krobos as people with the *krɔbo* on their bodies, otherwise the *krɔbo* people.¹⁷⁹

Another account suggests that the name was derived from the Akan way of describing the mountain dwellers or the rocky city as *Kro Ɔboɔ So fo*.¹⁸⁰ Others associate the name with *Aklo*, the Ewe name for tortoise, because of the way the Krobo Mountain is shaped. Some also suggest the name comes from *klom* (owl) arguing that there were many of these nocturnal birds on the mountain.¹⁸¹ Teyegaga suggests the name was from *Aklomuase*.¹⁸² Another version had it that the name came from a man called Klo believed to be the incarnated spirit of the mountain encountered by Muase and Maja¹⁸³ who taught them how to subdue the mountain.

¹⁷⁷ Rev. D.D.N Tetteh, interview granted the Researcher, 26th of October 2015 at 3.00 pm Manya-Setsunya, Manya-Kpongonor.

¹⁷⁸ Huber, *The Krobo*, 15.

¹⁷⁹ Rev. F.N. Muniyuhitum and Mary Dede Muniyuhitum, interview granted the researcher, 19th October 2015 at 9.00 am, at their residence at Salem, Manya-Kpongonor.

¹⁸⁰ Odorkor, *The Rise*, 1.

¹⁸¹ Huber, *The Krobo*, 15.

¹⁸² Aklomuase was said to be a great leader of the Krobos from the Manya clan.

¹⁸³ These were hunters commissioned by the wandering tribe to ascertain the suitability of the Klo-yo for habitation

Whatever be their origin and the meaning of the name, after many years of travelling, the Krobos crossed the Volta River and settled at Tagologo. By some strange circumstances which the informants could not explain, there was a separation of the tribes and this sad way of parting company led to the re-naming of the place *Lɔlɔvɔ*.

The Krobos moved camp to finally settle on the Krobo Mountain (*Klo-yom'*) where they lived for centuries. However, in 1892, the then Colonial government abolished the mountain settlement on charges of murderous activities associated with *nadu* and *kotoklo* deities, and burials of corpses under unhygienic conditions.¹⁸⁴ After this unfortunate expulsion from the mountain settlement, the need for survival led to the Krobos being scattered over their present settlements, ending their many years of travel in search of a permanent home.

3.2 Concept of Life (*Wami*)

In this section, the research looks at the Krobo understanding of the concept of life.¹⁸⁵ *Wami* for the Krobo people denotes life, age, and strength (*he wami*). When one is sick, they say, *e be he wami* (he/she/ is sick). They also say, *hi ngɛ wa dɛ* (beauty resides in the hands of growth). *Wami* signifies anything which enhances the total wellbeing of the human person; good rainfall, bumper harvest, good health, vitality in procreation in human, plant, and animals.¹⁸⁶ *Wami* also denotes growth or development, hence *e wa ta* (it/he/she is fully grown/developed). The opposite of *wami* is *gbenɔ* (death).

¹⁸⁴ *Nadu* and *kotoklo* are principal deities for the Manya and Yilo Krobos.

¹⁸⁵ The researcher undertook field trip to the Krobo Mountain, Odumase their capital, and some shrines to observe, participate and conduct interviews among the people in their own habitation.

¹⁸⁶ Philip T. Laryea, *Yesu Hɔmɔwɔ Nuntsɔ: Nikasemɔ ni kɔ bɔni Kristofoi naa Yesu ye Gamei Akusumfeemɔ Ke Blema Saji Amlɔ* (Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa, 2004), 127.

3.2.1 The Krobo Concept of Personhood

For the Krobo, the human person is a difficult concept to define.¹⁸⁷ There are two schools of thought. The first contends that the human person is of dual component: *Nɔmlɔ tso/nɔmlɔ adesa* (the material human body) obtained through the union between man and woman, and the *klaa* (immaterial part) which comes from the astral world to materialize on the earth through a chosen family) from God. Huber defines *klaa* as *o susuma nɔ nɛ o kɛ ba ligbi nɛ a fɔ mo ɔ* (your soul which you came with on the day you were born), but never discusses the concept of personhood.¹⁸⁸ For Huber, therefore, *susuma* is synonymous with *klaa*. Many interviewees including Okumo III shared this supposition.

The second opinion seems to distinguish between the soul and the *klaa*.¹⁸⁹ The soul, they call *susuma* from God, and the *klaa* from *huanim jem'*. That being the case, the word *klaa* has no English rendering and the Krobo considers a person a tripartite being composed of *Nɔmlɔ tso/nɔmlɔ adesa* (body), *susuma* (soul) and *klaa*. When the soul from God is permanently separated from the body, life ceases; and we say *e gbo/ e ngɔ e nya* (he is dead). Tetteh shares this school of thought.

From the foregoing, one could suggest that the Krobo idea about life is both physical and spiritual. This may explain why they consider spiritual matters very seriously. This notion of duality is present in most of their activities. It could be concluded that if the immaterial component comes from God, then God is the source of life and life is sacred.

¹⁸⁷ It is not as defined as the distinctive Akan tripartite composition of *mogya* (blood) from the mother, *ntoro* (patrilineal spirit) from the father and *okra* or *kra* (soul) from God. See Emmanuel Asante, *Toward an African Christian Theology of the Kingdom of God: The Kingship of Onyame* (Lewiston-Queenston: Mellen University Press, 1995), 76.

¹⁸⁸ Huber, *The Krobo*, 138.

¹⁸⁹ There is the spiritual companion from the astral world with which one is born on the same day. It accompanies you everywhere, but unseen. It could be sad or happy. It could withdraw from the person temporary in which case the person becomes antisocial and disorganized. So they will say, “*E klaa* or *susuma je e se*” (The *klaa* or soul has left him). In this case, the diviners could perform certain rituals to restore him/her. The *klaa* and *susuma* are sometimes used interchangeably, but very difficult to explain and the researcher believes otherwise.

3.2.2 The Source and Commencement of Life

Generally, the Krobo believes God as the source of all things including human beings. For this reason, life is considered sacred and the highest point in creation. The Krobo idea of sanctity of life accounts for the reason the unborn child and the mother do not only have to be fortified against forces of evil which might possibly militate against their survival, but also observe various taboos. When one is pregnant, they say *e ho Mawu pa ya* (she has gone to fetch water from God's river). Life for them owes its origin to God, a blessing, and a spiritual reality.¹⁹⁰ Traditionally, fetching water entails carrying a pot depicted by the protruding belly. There is the possibility of falling, breaking the pot, losing the water, and hurting oneself in the process. The state of pregnancy is therefore considered highly risky, and a battle between life and death. So when one delivers safely, they say *o tlikua*¹⁹¹ (literally, 'your head has life' or congratulations). Both the mother and the new-born baby are accorded a special treatment; a fowl is slaughtered, and gifts are showered on them.

There are, however, divergent opinions regarding when life begins. Sharing his experience on commencement of life, Munyuhitum suggests life begins immediately there is conception, i.e. cessation of menstrual cycle (*ke yo ɔ da si*). Degber Nartey and Ahulu Kodjo on the contrary think the Krobo has no reflection on the notion of when life begins. For Tetteh, life begins in the third month of conception. It seems there is no Krobo scientific means of ascertaining the fact, but there is an observance or a rite for the first time pregnant woman performed in the third month of pregnancy called *mi nɔ kpa fɔmi* ("putting string on the stomach"). This seems to support the third month hypothesis.

¹⁹⁰ Ossom-Batsa, "Rituals as Mechanism," 281.

¹⁹¹ *Tlikua* is of Akan origin. It is often said to someone who has survived an ordeal or an accident. The response is *mi tli da se* meaning "my head thanks you."

The ceremony, according to Huber, in former times was performed in the Krobo Mountain six months into conception by a priestess, usually *Klowekiwoyo*.¹⁹² Later on, after the incident of 1892, the centre for the ritual moved to the family house of the first-timer. The ceremony basically consists of cooking and eating. The mother-to-be chooses either light soup, or palm nut soup with *fufui* (fufu). All the items for the cooking are collected and assembled around her, so that from sitting position, she could stretch her hand and pick every item without much difficulty. She is to cook the soup and pound fufu by herself without assistance or moving. Before she begins, libation is poured for a successful ritual. A protective string (*kpa*) to which *hlangu* (cowries) and the feather of a parrot are tied is put around the neck and extending long enough to hang on the stomach. After cooking she eats all the food especially the fufu without any leftover. According to Etse Mo,¹⁹³ the string is then taken off by lowering it downwards to the feet and never upwards. The reason is that the child should descend easily during labor. This accompanying prayer which explains aspects of Krobo concept of life was recorded by Huber on an occasion of such rite:

<i>Mawu ke o yo Zugba Zu</i>	Mawu and his consort Mother Earth
<i>Nana Kloweki ke</i>	Nana Kloweki and
<i>Nye jemeawɔhi tsuo pepɛɛɛ</i>	all ye gods!
<i>Nye ba he da ne nyɛɛ nu</i>	Accept and drink this wine!
<i>Ne nye ba jɔɔ nɔ</i>	Grant us your blessing
<i>Ne jokueyo ne ngɔ hɔ</i>	The girl who is pregnant
<i>ne a ke ba ne ɔ</i>	who has been brought here
<i>Kpa ji neɔ ne</i>	this is the string
<i>ne i ke ngɛ hɔ ɔ nɔ fɔe</i>	which I am tying for her pregnancy
<i>ne e wa</i>	that it may develop well
<i>kone ke e ma fɔɔ</i>	and that at delivery,
<i>gbe ko nu he</i>	neither dog
<i>ne to ko nu he;</i>	nor sheep may hear of it
<i>e fɔ kpoo!</i>	She gives without any hitch!

¹⁹² Huber, *The Krobo*, 142. This sixth month hypothesis might be misleading since all my informants who themselves underwent the ritual including my own mother spoke of the third month; except that it was so in the past

¹⁹³ Etse Mo, interview granted the researcher, 22nd November 2015 at Manya-Kpongunor at 4.00 pm. His information is corroborated by the researcher's mother who went through the ritual when she first got pregnant in 1955.

The structure of the prayer suggests that the priestess is addressing three principal spirits, *Mawu*, *Kloweki* and the clan gods (*jemeawɔhi*) to intervene on behalf of the expectant mother for safe delivery. *Mawu*, the Supreme Being, is named at the beginning of the prayer, suggesting the primacy of *Mawu* among the divinities. *Mawu* is always regarded and portrayed as a benevolent God.¹⁹⁴

The mention of the three spirits implies a communal sense of life. For the Krobo, therefore, there is unity of purpose and agreement between *Mawu* and the other intermediary spirits. They could move and work together towards a common goal i.e., seeing to the protection and welfare of humanity. The prayer petitions them for blessing. Blessing is the essence of life for the Krobo, and it comes from the spiritual world.

Jokuɛyo nɛ ngɔ hɔ (This girl who is pregnant). This statement by the ritualist is an affirmation that conception has taken place. Once the ritual is performed, the pregnancy is fortified. As explained, some suggest life begins when the menstrual cycle ceases (*ke yo ɔ da si*), but not until the third month they are not very sure. The supplicant further requests that the pregnancy develops or grows, that is to materialize into human person, perhaps to be engaged in their service. The statement “To deliver without the knowledge of a cat or a dog,” Huber suggests, meant without the interference of any witches or harmful magic.¹⁹⁵ In the writer’s opinion, the cat and the dog are human’s most common and trusted domestic ‘friends;’ “without their knowledge” suggests a safe delivery without calling on even the closest neighbors. *E kple kpoo* (without any hitch) suggests avoiding any evil, such as prenatal death.

¹⁹⁴ Ossom-Batsa, “Rituals,” 151.

¹⁹⁵ Huber, *The Krobo*, 142.

3.2.3 Some Basic Krobo Beliefs

Among Africans, every tribe has its fundamental beliefs. This belief system guard and guide the relationship with one another, the environment and the supernatural world. Among the Krobos, the beliefs include: *Mawu* (God), *Zugba Zu* (Mother Earth), *jemεa- wɔhi* (spirit beings), *jemeli* (the sages), *nimeli* (ancestors), *wɔhi* (gods), *tsopatsemε* (medicine-men), *abosiami* (the devil), *abosiamitsεmε* (very wicked people), *hiali* (witches), *kpɔli*, *nyuali*, *abɔdɔhi* (dwarfs), *sε* (stool), *kɔhi* (taboos), good human relations, and best environmental practices among others. A few of these shall be discussed. Apart from the fact that the Krobos believe in God (*Mawu*), who is believed to live in the sky and *Zugba Zu* (Mother Earth) as the greatest and the highest of all powers; the rest of their belief system cannot be arranged in any hierarchical order.

Huber noted from an 1867 document of Zimmermann, that the Krobos say that God is eternal, and not created. He is the Creator of heaven and earth, the Protector, and Father of all. This assertion of Zimmermann alludes to the fact that the Krobos on their own know *Mawu* as Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent.¹⁹⁶ To say that God is Omnipotent means that he is all-powerful. In realizing this attribute of God, the Krobo would say *Mawu he kle*, *Mawu kle*, *Mawu ji ngua* (God is great).

The all-knowing nature of God is expressed by closely examining the sheep and the goat in light of the saying, *Mawu pε ε le to fitɔ mi tsulɔ* (only God knows the one who cleanses the anus of the sheep or goat). That is to say, God knows all secrets. God is ubiquitous to the

¹⁹⁶ The names of God among the Dangmes include: *Mawu*-The Sky God, *Nyingmo/Ongmo*-The all powerful Spirit, *OboadeNyingmo*-The Creator, *Lao Siada* -The Bountiful God, *Ope/Opeme*-Almighty, *Tsakuetsε/Tsaatse*-Father God and *Agboje*-The Great God.

There is also the Dangme Trinity in which the Krobos share-

1. *OboadeNyingmo* *God the Creator*
2. *Zugba Zu* *Mother Earth*
3. *Tete Nɔbi* *Son of Godthe Creator and Mother Earth*

Krobo in the sense that they say *he fεε he koɔ*, *Mawu kuɔ si* (everywhere is under the umbrella of God). Enquire of the health of a Krobo and the answer would be *Mawu dloomi*, or simply *dloomi* (by the grace of God). In bidding somebody farewell for the night, they say, *ke Mawu suɔ ɔ*, *wa maa kpe hwɔɔ* (if God permits we will meet tomorrow). Each time libation is poured, the drink is raised up purportedly to be shown to God before calling on Mother Earth to drink. Thus at every point in time, the Krobo is consciously saturated with God's presence, guidance and protection. God is at the center of every facet of their life situations. He is also the God of justice. He punishes evil, so when the wicked suffer they say, *Mawu wo lε hiɔ* (God has punished him/her). It is believed that sometimes he strikes through thunder with his 'Axe' called *Mawu gbiε*. As Quarcoopome noted:

God is the ultimate judge of man's character in this world, and in this connection, Africans speak of the wrath of God. The wrath is expressed correctly in the affliction connected with thunder. The Neolithic 'Axes' found in shrines as cultic objects represent the instrument of affliction. The 'Axe' belongs to God to be thrown at the children of disobedience. The Akans call it *Nyaame Akuma* (God's Axe). Among the Yoruba it is called *Jakuta*.¹⁹⁷

However, the Krobo and for that matter the African, has an idea that one cannot access the chief directly, but through a linguist. Seeing God as even greater than a chief, this notion has been transferred into their relationship with God.

According to Okumo III, head of the *Aklo jemeli* (sages of Kroboland),¹⁹⁸ *Mawu* has no shrine. When the 'high priest' takes a calabash of water and shows it to *Mawu*, and evokes his blessings, the drink is poured into the belly of Mother Earth, and then every problem at hand is solved.¹⁹⁹ He continued, "If it does not work, then *Mawu* has not allowed it." By this, the 'high priest' acknowledges God as the source of life and death, wealth and poverty,

¹⁹⁷ T.N.O. Quarcoopome, *West Africa Traditional Religion* (Ibadan: African University Press, 1987), 37-38.

¹⁹⁸ *Jemeli* is the corrupted form of *jem' le li* (those who know the in and out of the world)

¹⁹⁹ Nene Majano Treku Okomo III, interview granted the researcher, 21st October 2015 at 11.00 am, at Mampong.

health and ill-health. He ended, “*Nɔ fɛɛ nɔ nɛ Mawu dɛ mi*” (everything is in the hands of God). Furthermore, the Krobos believe in *Zugba Zu* (Mother Earth). The earth is thought of as the consort of *Mawu* (God). The rain that pours from the sky is considered a union between *Mawu* and Mother Earth, out of which comes food and plants for the sustenance of humanity.

The Krobos also believe in the *Aklo Jemɛawɔhi* (clan gods/spirit beings). These are believed to be spirits sent by *Mawu* to live with and guide the clans; for example, *Nana Klowɛki*. Their priests are the *Aklo Jemɛawɔnɔhi*. Among the Krobos each of the twelve clans has a separate *Jemɛawɔ* (clan god) which protects the clan. They also believe in spirits. These spirits may reside in rivers, mountains, sacred grooves, stones, etc. The spirits could be evoked in times of crisis. Sacrifices and rituals are performed to petition them for help.

Aklo Jemeli (the sages) are also part of the belief system. They are no priests of any gods, and therefore represent no clan god, but a ruling class, and custodians of political and moral codes which are believed to come from God.²⁰⁰ They include *Okumo*, *Asaa*, *Ajime*, *Okpletɛy*, and *Ajase*.

Again, they believe in magic and medicine and medicine-men. Through the medicine-man, powers are transferred to objects such as charms, talismans, amulets, rings etc. to avert evil and mischief. These objects are explored for healing and success in life. They could be made in several forms such as beads, bangles, metal rings, and carved images.²⁰¹

The Krobo believes in *abɔdɔhi* (dwarfs). These are believed to be mischievous-tiny-human-like-creatures that are only visible to their worshippers. They are worshipped in shrines called *abɔdɔ piɛ*. According to Chimah, he encounters them through certain rituals and

²⁰⁰ Tettey, “Krobo Christian Education,” 62.

²⁰¹ Quarcoopome, *Traditional Religion*, 39.

incantations.²⁰² They could mysteriously carry people away for days, or even years in some instances. Their best food is banana. They live mostly in the forest and could reveal therapeutic herbs to medicine-men.

There is also the belief in *abosiame* (Satan). This spirit is thought of as an ugly-male-being that is in charge of all evils, evil spirits, and responsible for all evil on earth. Connected to *abosiame* (Satan) are *hiali* (witches) *abosiamitseme*, *nyauli* and *kpɔli*. *Hiali* (witches) according to Nukunya are as male and female, who are believed to possess inherent supernatural powers which they use knowingly or unknowingly to harm others or benefit themselves.²⁰³ Among the Krobos they are mostly women. They operate at night by turning themselves into birds, reptiles, and other animals to cause harm to their victims. They engage in anti-social activities.²⁰⁴ Among the Krobos no one would claim openly to be a witch. Connected to the witches are *nyuali* who are those who have recourse to evil spirits (*mumiyayamihi*), manipulating them to harm, kill a person, or group of people. To say somebody is *abosiamitse* is to say he is wicked. *Nyuali* are those who kill others by use of evil medicine.²⁰⁵

Additionally, it is believed that the spirits of those who die ‘good deaths’ are ‘promoted’ to the rank of *nimeli* (ancestors).²⁰⁶ According to Huber, they are not worshipped, but given similar honor as they give to the gods; and they are given filial respect, and feared.²⁰⁷ They brought and instituted the gods. They know everything about the living. Major happenings in the family are reported to them through libation and animal offering by the *se nɔ hila* also

²⁰² Tetey Chimah, interview granted the researcher, 14th October 2015 2.00 pm, at Dawatrim.

²⁰³ G.K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2003), 59.

²⁰⁴ In 2007 during pastoral ministry at Manya-Kpongonor, a young girl confessed to me she was a witch and their gang collapsed her mother’s business.

²⁰⁵ Huber, *The Krobo*, 194.

²⁰⁶ The title *nimeli* is also used for the living who sit in counsel in the family.

²⁰⁷ Huber, *The Krobo*, 223.

called the *nɔpulo* or *kpade wɔnɔ* (the occupier of the stool, or the one with authority to oversee burials). Be it puberty rites, marriage, death, birth, construction of a new house, felling and tapping of palm-trees, they are not left out.²⁰⁸ The ancestral spirits bless, protect, warn, and punish their living relatives, depending upon how their relatives neglect or remember them.²⁰⁹

Sɛ (The stool) is another object of Krobo belief. Among the Krobos, every clan has a stool and, an officiant called *sɛ wɔnɔ* (stool priest). The *sɛ* has its own shrine called *sɛ tsu* (stool room). Libations and sacrifices are offered it annually. It is believed that the stool protects the entire clan, so they are consulted and petitioned during life crisis.

These gamut of beliefs are interrelated and together form a homogeneous body. They are interrelated because the world is under the control of one God (*Mawu*). These beliefs link man and the environment to the supernatural world. It is believed that the divinities have no absolute control. They function as *Mawu* (God) empowers them. The spirits manifest and aid humanity to be connected to the spiritual world. The ancestors are considered superhuman-beings who are intimately connected to mortals. The magic and medicinal objects protect and fortify humanity against evil forces and look for the success of man.²¹⁰ The Krobo believes that all these belief system function to hold the physical and spiritual worlds in harmony, and therefore regulate human behavior. In order to maintain harmony between physical and the spiritual worlds, there are regulatory taboos which include:

1. All males must undergo circumcision
2. All girls undergo *dipo* initiation before the first pregnancy²¹¹
3. No Krobo shall kill *nako*²¹²

²⁰⁸ Huber, *The Krobo*, 223.

²⁰⁹ Benjamin C. Roy, *African Religions, Symbols, Ritual, and Community* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1999), 103.

²¹⁰ Quarcoopome, *Traditional Religion*, 44

²¹¹ Huber, *The Krobo*, 245.

²¹² A non-poisonous snake which is believed does not bite.

4. No Krobo shall eat rat or snail.²¹³

What does this belief system illustrate about the Krobo concept of life? The belief system suggests that *wami* for the Krobo is connectional. It is a triangular relationship with fellow human beings, the environment and the unseen world. No individual is complete without regard to people and things around him/her. If there is a breach within any of these relationships, it has serious repercussions.

3.2.4 Contracting and Removal of Evil (*Gu*, *Okpe* and *Alɔkpli*)

Gu, *okpe* and *alɔkpli* are examples of relational offences which have such serious repercussion. It is believed these evil acts affect the culprit when not dealt with; it could even result in death. *Gu* (going against one's own words or an empty bluff), happens, for example, when out of anger one swears: "I will not eat anything from your hands anymore." When the words are not revoked and one violates the vow, *gu* is contracted. When the matter is made known, there is a ritual called *gu jemi* (removing the evil). It is always the case that the offender is the one who is affected. He or she provides the following items for the ritual: one black and one white fowl, *ohɛ* (incense), a bottle of drink, *ka* (earthen bowl), pepper, salt, and two eggs which shall be boiled. After cooking the items, the two sit in opposite directions facing each other. The guilty one confesses the offence after which the ritualist uses *tsitsii* (dried male flower of the palm tree) and *ohɛ* (incense) to purify them. Libation is poured to ward off the evil after the guilty party revokes the statement made.

Okpe is contracted when one does something abominable through over-reaction.²¹⁴ For example, when one whips a neighbour with a broom, sandals in use, ladle or any cooking

²¹³ According to ancient tales whilst in the *Klo-yo* (Krobo Mountain), a relative died and was buried. A few days later a rat was found eating the corpse up. The animal that eats our relatives must not be eaten, hence the taboo. According to Tettey Chimah the Adumule priest, in ancient days, there was a huge pot from which they used to drink. Some snails managed to climb and settled in the pot. One day, an elder looked into the pot and found the snails. The pot was broken and concluded that the snail is a deceptive creature and so must not be eaten. Tettey Chimah, interview granted the researcher, 14th October, 2015 at Dawatrim.

²¹⁴ Etse Mo, interview granted the researcher 22nd November 2015 at 4.00 pm, at Many-Kpongonor.

utensil, firewood, or scatters the fire while cooking is in progress. It also includes collecting and burning or destroying somebody's personal effects out of anger. If the matter goes before a fetish priest, then a goat may be demanded for the ritual. However, if it is settled by the family elders, the same procedure as in the *gu* process is followed.²¹⁵

Alɔkpɩ happens when one commits incest and covers up, or when two or more siblings share a common man or woman. The 'rule' is that they must not see the blood of each other, or visit each other in times of sickness. If this is violated, in case one of the parties is hurt, the blood will never cease oozing. With ailment, instantly, the sick person becomes stiff and falls into coma. When this happens, the elders become suspicious and investigate. Arbitration is quickly arranged. The same procedure for removal of *gu* is followed. The relationship may be dissolved. If the matter is not attended to in time, it could result in death. The issue of incest is considered a severe blasphemy and the relationship is severed at once. The Krobo say *o bɔ musu* (you have committed an abominable act).

The above interactions reveal that for the Krobo, morality is the bedrock of life. The human person needs to exercise control over his/her behavior. Words and actions if not well managed could lead to incurring the displeasure of the gods and the ancestors. It must be noted that the environment within which humans live, relationship with fellow humans as well as the unseen world is key to a successful life and nothing must be done to undermine these links.

²¹⁵ Etse Mo describes the process of removing *okpe* as involving *Ka* (earthen ware), *buna*, and *yɔkle*. The two white fowls are slaughtered and some of the blood dropped into the *yɔkle* (concoction) in the earthen-ware. The two involved sit in opposite directions. Each fetches the *yɔkle* with the hands and ritually bathes the water after arbitration. If it was an extra marital affair on the part of the woman, she will have to provide another white fowl for a ritual in order to be readmitted into the marital home.

3.3 The Concept of Death and Funeral Rites

Once there is life, there is death (*gbenɔ*). Death to the Krobo is a calamity. It is seen as a wicked act that has no mercy for the living. It kills humans, animals, trees and all living things for that matter. Death has no respect for the rich or the poor. It carries along the strong, the feeble, men, women, the young, and the old as well. Even though humanity has since time immemorial accepted death as part of the natural rhythm of life, yet, paradoxically, every human death is thought to be painful.²¹⁶

Death (*gbenɔ*) is considered a transition, but connected to *sɛsɛɛ* (destiny). It is believed that before leaving *huanim jem*, each person has a parting word (*sɛsɛɛ*) which reveals the one's destiny on earth.²¹⁷ That is why in parting company with the dead, the elders say ...*ke mo nitɛ o gbenɔ ɔ, lɛɛ o hwɔ kpoo, se ke nɔ ko nɛ kpatu mo ɔ, lɛɛ o pee ka* (if it is your destiny, then rest in peace, however, if someone has cut short your life, then take revenge). Huber argues that death is separation from things and persons of this earth, and also an introduction to the ancestral world.²¹⁸ No one can prevent it, so they say, *nɔ ko li gbenɔ nya ba* (no one has a remedy for death). But how did death enter this world from Krobo perspective?

3.3.1 Myths of the Origin of Death

There are several myths concerning the origin of death, but generally, death is considered as a creation of God. In most of these mythologies, God entrusts the message of immortality to a slower animal, while a faster animal is delegated to carry the message of mortality.²¹⁹ Huber noted one of these tales as follows: Long ago, the world was without death. One day, *Mawu* (God) asked for the opinion of the goat and the dog, whether man should die or not.

²¹⁶ Mbiti, *African Religion*, 151.

²¹⁷ Huber, *The Krobo*, 137.

²¹⁸ Ibid. 192.

²¹⁹ Dominique Zohan, *The Religion, Spirituality, and Thought of Traditional Africa* (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 36.

Dog responded in the affirmative, whilst the goat in the negative. They were to compete in a race, and the winner will have its decision endorsed. The dog started with speed, but along the line, it was attracted by a bone.²²⁰ The goat persevered and won the race, so its decision was affirmed. That was why in the past, each time a person died, a goat was slaughtered. Death, therefore, entered the world out of man's personal pleasure.

In another myth, God one day asked man whether the deceased should return to life; and man responded in the affirmative. God then gave him a very weak-old-man to be brought out to see the sun daily, failure of which would result in death. The man performed this duty religiously, but one day he forgot to do it. The result is that hence, humanity would die and not return to life again. Therefore, death, is the result of man's negligence.

In the third tale, a hunter watched two snakes fight. One of them died in the process, and the other picked a particular herb and placed it on the other and it came back to life. Since then, each time someone died, the hunter applied the same herb to restore the one to life. He however refused to reveal the type of leaf to anyone. When he died, no one could revive him because no one knew the herb.²²¹ Death is the result of man's self-centeredness.

3.3.2 Classification of Deaths

Generally, there could be three types of deaths in the Krobo context namely: *kpatu gbenɔ* (impromptu death), *otɔfo gbenɔ* (abominable death), and *adebɔ gbenɔ* (natural death).

²²⁰ When somebody went to some place and over-stayed, they say *e ya tlɔ wu kpemi* (he has side-tracked to chewing bones)

²²¹ Huber, *The Krobo*, 193. An old lady was one day digging clay. She heard a noise underground and decided to dig further only to find a rat with her dead offspring on her laps. Upon seeing her, the rat threw the dead offspring at the old lady saying "now you have seen it, take it." Hence death entered the world as a result of man's curiosity. Rev. D.D.N Tetteh, interview granted the researcher, 11th November 2015 at Manyakpongunor.

3.3.3 Impromptu Death (*Kpatu Gbenɔ*)

Kpatu gbenɔ (impromptu death) has to do with people who are believed to have died before their destined time, but not through an accident. In most cases a diviner is consulted to find out the cause of the death. The research considers four of such types of death for discussion.

a) *Mi sanemi* (Miscarriage)

A miscarriage in the first quarter of pregnancy is referred to as *muɔ ne kpa* (spilt blood).²²² Sand is poured on it and buried at *henyu nya* (outside the house, where rainwater from the roof could fall on it from the eave). The reason for such an action is that the water will wash away the evil and at the same time fertilize the blood to reincarnate. According to Yayo Nyemingɔɔ, it is believed a woman in need of a child could scoop the blood with her hands, touch her abdomen, and that could give her the desired fortune.²²³ After three months of conception, the (*muɔ loku*) fetus is considered a person of a sort. When miscarriage occurred at this stage, the fetus is collected into *tɔtɔso ba/tsimi ba* (calabash leaf) and buried similarly.²²⁴ There is no libation or any invocation because the fetus has no status.²²⁵

b) *Ba Fɔmi Bi/Mɔmɔ Tsom' Bi* (The First Child of a Couple to Die)

Ba fɔmi (bathing of concoction) is the ritual performed for parents who lost a child for the first time. This however, does not include the girl-child who has undergone the *dipo* rites. For by virtue of *dipo*, she is incorporated into full womanhood.

After washing the deceased child, the corpse is not laid in state for public view, but dressed in a room. Any box, wooden or metal could serve as the coffin depending on the age.

²²² Joseph Kwao Narteh, telephone interview granted the researcher, 20th October 2015 at 6.30 pm.

²²³ Comfort Nyemingɔɔ Okai, interview granted the researcher, 14th October 2015 at 3.00 pm, at Adensu.

²²⁴ Other informants say the fetus is collected into a rag.

²²⁵ According to Degber and Ahulu Kojo, if the man has not performed the full marital rites of the woman, he cannot even bury the spilt blood without the approval of the father-in-law. Degber Nartey and Ahulu Kojo, interview granted the researcher, 26th October 2015 at Agormanya.

Sometimes a special coffin is made. In the ‘coffin’ the corpse is covered with a special leaf called *mɔmɔ tso ba* (leaf of a flower tree).²²⁶ The burial takes place not in the cemetery, but behind a wall of the house. The ‘coffin’ without a cover is turned sideways to face the back wall of the house.²²⁷ It is believed that the child will reincarnate, but if the coffin is covered, or buried in the cemetery, the reincarnation process is blocked. Libation shall not be poured. The mother must not weep else the child is driven away. Burial takes place the same day and there is no funeral celebration afterwards. This kind of burial is considered as ‘preserving the deceased’ hence they say, *a dla lɛ* (it is preserved)

One week later, early in the morning, the couple is made to bathe a special concoction made of the same *mɔmɔ tso ba* in a calabash either at the outskirts of the house, or the entrance, hence the name *ba fɔmi bi*. If the mother is a single parent, her father or a male relative could represent the biological father.²²⁸ As they ritually bathe with the concoction, they keep repeating *wa yi bɔ, wa yi bɔ, kpale ne o ba* (we are not grieving, we are not grieving, please reincarnate). The concoction is believed to have powers to ward off any evil as well as cause the child to reincarnate. This practice still pertains.²²⁹

c) Death of a Virgin/Adolescent Death

When a person considered an adolescent (virgin) dies around age 15-16, it is considered an unfortunate situation, because he/she died at the brink of life. According to Tetteh, when such a death occurred in the past, the deceased was not given full burial, but *a kɛ maa wo etsemɛ a misi* (put in the bosom of the ancestors). In the traditional worldview, such people

²²⁶ According to D.D.N Tetteh the leaf is *nyaba tso*. Other informants mentioned *atsli tso* or *vɔ tso*. Mr Paul Tetteh Mine, interview granted the researcher, 14th October 2015 at Dawatrim.

²²⁷ If the deceased attained age three, the coffin may be covered even though it is still *ba fɔmi bi*.

²²⁸ Yaa Mamle told me that when she lost her first child her brother represented the husband because she was a single parent. Mamle Amedɔ, interview granted the researcher, 14th October 2014 at Adensu.

²²⁹ About 5 years ago, I officiated one of such burials where the corpse was buried beside the back wall of the house.

would reincarnate and have sexual union before they finally die. What the above rituals reveal about the concept of death is that the deceased are buried according to categories. One's age determines how one is buried.

d) Disappearances²³⁰

Among the Krobos, when someone disappears, and is not found for a long time, the person is considered dead, and the case treated as *kpatu gbenɔ* (impromptu death). According to Dadematse Mensah, the oracles may be consulted. Sometimes they are able to give direction on as to what to do to bring the person back home. That is if the person is alive. When all attempts failed, the family waited for a considerable period of time and is then considered dead; burial and funeral rites are performed. The time duration depended on the age, and health status of the victim.

At the appointed time, a match box is used as a miniature coffin into which either two match sticks are put, or instead a piece of the dress of the victim. Libation is poured, and it is symbolically buried. Burial takes place not in a cemetery, but outside the house. Usually the funeral is not performed in isolation, but together with that of those in waiting. In some cases, no symbolic burial takes place, but libation is poured. If later in life the victim comes back, a ritual called *julaami* (purification rites) is performed with one sheep. Then *a maa wo le nguɔ* (he/she is 'declared victorious') with powder smeared all over the body amidst feasting to welcome the victim home.

3.3.4 Summary

The understanding of death emerging from the foregoing discussion is that it is not the end of the departed one. There is a belief that the deceased will reincarnate. For example, *muɔ*

²³⁰ Emmanuel Mensah Okai, interview granted the researcher, 20th December 2015 at 6.30 am at Manyakpongunor.

nɛ kpa (miscarriage in the first trimester of pregnancy), suggests that it could be a sickness. Since the body parts are not yet formed, it is not seen as a person. The family is supposed to show no sign of sorrow. Hence, it is not considered at all as death, but a spilt blood.

Mi nɛ sane (miscarriage) connotes the idea of something which has shifted from position, but not destroyed or spoilt. If it is only shifted, then it shall be repositioned for reincarnation. The death of a toddler (*ba fɔmi bi*) is considered as the child who has left something very important in the astral world, and is going for it to be back soon; or sometimes thought of as not fully prepared, so it will come back when ready. On all these occasions, they say *nyu ɔ nɛ kpa, se dudɔ ɔ nge. Wa maa ye nyu kɛ wo mi* (it is not the pot which is broken. It is only the water that has been spilled out. We shall fetch it afresh). That is why the parents are not to weep or grieve. The traditional belief is that all who died in this category would reincarnate.

3.3.5 Abominable Deaths (*Otɔfo Gbenɔ*)²³¹

Abominable deaths could be classified into three categories: Self-inflicted, for example, suicide. The second is one caused by an agent other than the victim him/herself as in vehicular accidents, murder etc. The third category is what the researcher prefers to call ‘natural accident.’ These include natural disasters, prenatal death, or in the case of a widow, death during the period of widowhood.²³²

²³¹ Huber calls it evil death. See Huber, *The Krobo*, 219.

²³² A situation in which a woman dies with the placenta after delivery is included. This actually means it is not the child but the placenta which makes it abominable. What is not clear is whether the *nɔ blɔ mi pɔmi* ritual could be performed for such a victim at the point of death to avert *otɔfo gbenɔ*. Among the Krobo, *otɔfo gbenɔ* is most unwelcomed. Huber describes it as death through an accident or murder, through suicide, or in the case of a woman, death during pregnancy or child birth. Huber, *The Krobo*, 219-220.

It is not the death through an accident *per se* which makes it evil and detestable, but the fact that a *po we le blɔ mi* (the road-crossing ritual was not performed).²³³ In any critical accidental condition, to avert *otɔfo gbenɔ* (abominable death), the road-crossing ritual must be performed by any adult present at the accident scene. The victim is assisted to cross the path three times. On each occasion, the name of the is mentioned saying for example, *Oda, i nge mo blɔ mi poe o* (Oda, I am performing the road-crossing ritual for you).²³⁴ Either white clay, powder, or in their absence, ordinary sand is smeared in the hair and shoulder of the victim as the name of the victim is mentioned. Alternatively, a grain of salt or *ngma* (millet) could be administered. With the ritual done, should the person die, it is not *otɔfo*.

Traditionally, victims are neither brought home, nor laid in state; only *ta dumi* rite is performed for them.²³⁵ They are buried with the cloth they wore at the time of death, and no funeral is celebrated in their honor.²³⁶ In the case of drowning, the victim is buried near the water body where the accident occurred.

a) Prenatal Death (*Yo ne je Kuasia*)

When a woman dies during pregnancy, the Krobo says *e je kuasia* (she has been foolish). For this reason, it is forbidden to insult a woman as being foolish. The worst of all is to insult her so during pregnancy.²³⁷ There are two kinds of prenatal deaths. The first is when a pregnant woman dies with the whole pregnancy (baby and placenta), while the other may be when she dies after the baby is born, but the placenta fails to come.

²³³ *Nɔ blɔmi pomi* is a ritual that is performed for an accident victim to restore him/her to normal life status. It involves putting preferably white clay (*nguɔ*) three times in the head and shoulders, each time calling the name of the victim and saying *i nge mo blɔ mi poe* (I am helping you to cross road).

²³⁴ Any adult around could perform this ritual for the accident victim.

²³⁵ *Ta dumi* is a symbolic washing of one who died in a battle or an accident.

²³⁶ Such cloth is called *dengme bo*.

²³⁷ According to many informants, any woman could sue you at the traditional court for calling her *kuasia* and the court could rule in her favor.

The victim is carried into the bush for the necessary rituals and from there, at midnight, she is thrown away, buried without covering, left exposed to the mercy of the weather and wild animals in the forest, or laid against a well-watered ant hill.²³⁸ Hence there is a traditional *tegbɛ* song: *i gbe ha koku ne baba ngɔ ye* (I killed for the ant hill and the termites ate it up).²³⁹

Chimah explains that the ritual involves cutting open the womb to remove both the baby and the placenta. The baby is then put in between the legs of the dead mother. It is forbidden to bury a woman with a fetus or placenta. He continues that the ritualist carries along, *gbɔ kɛ su*,²⁴⁰ and a special black powder that is sprinkled on the dead body to tame the ghost.

Libation with the following formula may be poured before attending to the dead-body:

<i>Ee Ayongo,</i>	<i>Ayongo</i> ²⁴¹
<i>wa li nɔ nɛ gbe mo</i>	we do not know the cause of your death.
<i>Eko ɔ o ni peepee</i>	Perhaps your own deeds
<i>O ya hwɔ kpoo</i>	rest in peace.
<i>O ko nyɛɛ nɔ ko se</i>	Do not haunt anyone.
<i>Oko ba we nɛɔ mi</i>	Do not come into this house
<i>O ba gba imi tsopatɛ ɔ</i>	Marry me the medicine-man

By this, the deceased becomes the wife of the medicine-man, and he carries the soul away to his shrine and spiritually cages it. The ritualist charges the husband of the deceased for trespassing and having illicit affairs with his (medicine-man's) wife (*e maa gu lɛ ayifale*).²⁴²

After paying the fine, the necessary rituals are performed including purifying the house where the victim died. A libation is poured to ward off the ghost and separate her from the widower and the family:

<i>Ee Ayongo, mwɔnɛ ɔ,</i>	<i>Ayongo, today,</i>
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²³⁸ This is done amidst whistling. For this reason, the Krobo doesn't whistle in the night. If you do, you are inviting the spirits of such victims.

²³⁹ Terkpertey, *Dangme Blebo Nɔ*, 85.

²⁴⁰ Special herbs very potent for rituals.

²⁴¹ The entire paper shall refer to the female deceased as *Ayongo* and the man as *Oda*.

²⁴² A fine imposed on a man for having affairs with someone else's wife.

igu Oda ayifale nge o he. I have fined Oda for trespassing and having illicit affairs with you
i yo ji mo. You are my wife.
i ke mo yaa ne o ya gba mi Let us go and marry me.

When he gets home, he pours libation again at the shrine:

Ayongo, i ke mo ba I have brought you Ayongo
ne o ba gba mi. to marry me.
O ko ya he ko hu Do not roam about.

It is believed that if this ritual is not performed, any woman that the widower marries would die. All the properties of the deceased, be it clothing, money, houses, or cars belong to the ritualist, because the deceased has become the wife of the ritualist. The medicine-man may sell the items to the deceased's family after 'blessing' them. To allow the ghost to rest, the ritualist hands over the funeral to the family at a fee. If this is not done, her spirit is unable to cross over into the ancestral world. That is why the ghosts of such persons become wanderers and are considered harmful.

b) Other Abominable Deaths

The following rites with a slight variation could be used in general for most abominable deaths.²⁴³ After the burial, the following items would be required for a ritual to ward off the evil, and this could be done at the outskirts of the house, or the place where the incident took place: one life goat to ward off the evil, a life sheep for purification of the spot/house, and a bottle of schnapps for libation; two pen knives, a piece each of *klala*, *blisii* and, *kɔjai*, (calico, black, and red cloths,). The rest are a bottle of kerosene, a box of matches, two packets of cigarette, personal used clothes of the deceased, a gun and four cartridges of life ammunition.

²⁴³ This may include *tso gbenɔ* (killed by a tree), *la gbenɔ* (death through fire), *tu gbenɔ* (killed by a gun), *pa gbenɔ* (death through a river), *nɔ nitse e he gbe mi* (suicide), *duɔ gbenɔ* (death through poisoning), *lɔle gbenɔ* (vehicular accidents) *sulue nya gbenɔ* and *piti nya gbenɔ* (death in the act of sex), and *yaloɔyo ne gbo ke e yi yayi* (death of a widow during her widowhood period) among others.

The personal clothes of the victim are heaped, and doused with the kerosene. Libation is poured, and it is set ablaze. A gun is fired three times, each time mentioning the name of the victim and hooting at it. After this process, the goat is sacrificed; then the sheep is slaughtered to purify the house or the spot. At motor accident scenes, after ‘collecting the blood,’ a white flag is hoisted where the accident took place. It is believed that if the ritual is not performed, the ghost will linger around the accident spot causing havoc to the living in search of companions in his/her predicament.²⁴⁴

For the Krobo, all abominable deaths are understood as *musu* (something very bad which should not have happened). They say, *a duɔ ba kpa; a woɔ nyami ngo nɔ loko a woɔ ta* (one must eat salt before mentioning). That is to say, it is not the first news or sight to behold in the morning. It is also considered disgraceful. They are considered as what should not happen to any family. The rituals of not bringing the corpse home or performing the funeral at the ‘outskirts’ of the house, coupled with the fact that they are not given traditional burial; the gunshots, setting ablaze the personal effects, and hooting at the deceased point to the fact that the deceased has died a dishonorable death, and has not lived a fulfilled life. The rituals suggest a perpetual separation from the family and the earth. Even though the Krobo believes in reincarnation, such victims are never expected to reincarnate.

3.3.6 Natural Death

Natural death is thought of as one that occurred not through accident, but when the deceased had attained full age, had children, and great-grand children, fell sick, and died in the process. For Krobos, the first step to ‘normal death’ is sickness. That is why when somebody is sick, we say, *e nge gboe* (literally, he/she is dying). Every means is sought to restore the sick back to normal health. When all has failed, and the sick person is about to die, a close

²⁴⁴ Elom Dovlo, “Ancestors and Soteriology in Africa and Japanese Religion,” in *Study in Interreligious Dialogue* 3, no. 1(1993), 54.

relative must sit behind and hold the patient firmly to the chest. So they say, *e gbo fɔ i gugue mi* (he/she died in my chest).²⁴⁵ This process is called *wo kuɔmi* (climbing the sea).²⁴⁶ The assistance is to minimize the pain, and to assure the departing one of the family's support even in death. When the person finally dies, he/she is laid on a mat on the floor, and a cloth is pulled over the head. The news is kept secret until some preliminary embalming processes had taken place. These include sitting the corpse on a chamber pot and giving lemon juice, detergent, and kerosene or cement grout.²⁴⁷

According to Okumo III, the corpse could also be covered with a herb called *acheapong* to prevent early decomposition.²⁴⁸ The corpse is later washed and laid in state for some time before the journey to *Dɔm*, the final resting place, begins if the person died at the upper country.²⁴⁹

The corpse is carried with the head looking ahead. Some informants say it is rather the legs. According to Maa Terbi, the head comes first, because during normal birth it is the head of the child that first appears.²⁵⁰ This information is supported by the proverb that *nibwɔ tloowe flɔ yi* (a stranger does not carry the head of the corpse). If the death occurred in the village, before leaving for *Dɔm*, the room of the deceased is left unlocked with all valuable items removed. It is believed that the ghost would come for some items needed for its journey. If the door is locked, the ghost may question those in charge for denying it access to the room and properties.

²⁴⁵ See T.T. Terkpertey, *Dangme Blebo Nɔ* (Odumase-Krobo: Universal Printing Press, 2004), 78. It seems *wo* and *huanim* are used synonymously to mean the astral world in the same way as *woje* and *sesɛɛ* are used for destiny. There are some habits that the Krobo says “*e kɛ je wo kɛ ba* (he came into the world with it).

²⁴⁶ The Krobo believes the world of the dead is beyond the sea, so dying is climbing the sea home.

²⁴⁷ Terkpertey, *Dangme Blebo Nɔ*, 79.

²⁴⁸ The leaf is so called because it surfaced for the first time in the country during the reign of the late General I.K Acheampong, one-time Head of State of Ghana.

²⁴⁹ Huber, *The Krobo*, 197. It used to be obligatory that the corpse is brought to *Dɔm* for burial.

²⁵⁰ Docia Terbi Baah, in interview granted the researcher on 28th October 2015 at 6.00 pm, at Mɛmlesi.

At *Dɔm*, the corpse is welcomed to the family house with the first ritual called *gbogboe nya he nyu tomi* (giving water to the dead). An elderly woman does this with a calabash. The water is administered three times, each time saying “I am giving you water. When you get home, the ancestors will give you water. When one is travelling, one does not branch anywhere for water.” It is believed that the water will sustain it throughout the journey to the world of the dead. The Chagga share a similar idea where the dead body is anointed with fat, and given milk, wrapped in hide to provide it with food, and protect it from the scourging desert sun on its journey to the world of the dead.²⁵¹ After all the necessary rituals, the corpse is again laid in state and the burial arrangements continued. The final funeral rites follow later.²⁵²

From the rituals and pageantry displayed by the families during the funerals of those who die natural death, every Krobo may prefer to die a natural death. Though death is thought of as a calamity, it is believed those who die in this category are going home to rest. They become super-humans, ancestors who are always in the memory of the living. From this position, they become co-administrators in the affairs of the living.

The next segment of the paper shall be devoted to discussing death and funeral arrangements in contemporary times.

3.3.7 Funeral in Contemporary Times

There is an adage that bad news spread faster than good ones, and so is the information about death. The traditional way of officially informing important personalities such as in-laws in general about a death is with a bottle of local gin. The chiefs are informed with a bottle of schnapps.²⁵³

²⁵¹ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1989), 156.

²⁵² For detailed discussion see Huber, *The Krobo*, 192-225.

²⁵³ Today, some are using invitation cards. This mode of invitation has been borrowed from the Akan.

Ordinarily, today one could use mobile phone either by a call or text message. The social media such as WhatsApp, email, twitter, and others are also used. Funeral announcements could be made through the television, radio, and the many print media. One of the general ways which could hardly be done without is the posting of obituary notices with catchy captions at public places. The particular obituary and caption gives the public an idea about the social standing, economic class and age of the deceased. The inscriptions on the impromptu death posters may be headed: “What a shock!” “Gone too soon!” “So soon?” etc. The normal deaths may be captioned, “Home call,” “Glorious call,” “In loving memory,” “Eternal call,” “Eternal bliss” “Transition ,” “Celebration of life,” “At rest,” etc. Banners and direction posts have also emerged.²⁵⁴

a) The Journey to Dɔm

Many today die in the hospitals where the idea of ‘assisting the person to die’ (*wo kuɔmi*) is not allowed. Immediately death occurs, the corpse is bundled into the mortuary. The advent of mortuaries has made the combination of the burial and the funeral a one-time event. Normally, but not always, three meetings are held prior to the funeral for the purpose of planning. It is important to state that a special person is chosen to visit the mortuary once a while to ensure the corpse is in good condition of preservation.

If the funeral is to be held at *Dɔm*, which is normally the case, on Monday, relatives with whom he/she had lived in the village come with all kinds of food items needed in a specially arranged vehicle.²⁵⁵ The mourners comprise close and distant relatives, including the *nɔpulɔ*.²⁵⁶ The items include firewood, maize, charcoal, palm fruits, palm oil, beans etc.

²⁵⁴ It must be explained that this development is not only peculiar to the Krobos. Children up to ages 12/13 have no such obituaries. Between say 13-17, only the portrait may appear with the age and a caption, but without detailed funeral arrangements.

²⁵⁵ This is due to the fact that all Krobos live at *yonɔ* (upper country)

²⁵⁶ Huber, *The Krobo*, 205.

Immediately on arrival, *a maa pɔ blefo/wo blefo nyumi* (maize is put into water).²⁵⁷ Maize is the chief foodstuff that is used for funerals. There is no particular activity on Tuesday.²⁵⁸ The following day, Wednesday, is the Agormanya market day.²⁵⁹ The soaked maize is ground and kneaded to ferment. On this day too, the women go to the market to buy the supplementary items especially *kpokpoku*²⁶⁰ (tuna fish), *Jɔlo* (fish from the Volta River), *loase* (salted fish), and all other necessary ingredients.

In the morning of Thursday, the women fry and grind the maize which would be used the following day for *akuafo ku* (the farmer's dish).²⁶¹ Among the Krobos, everyone is considered a farmer. The *akuafo ku* is to celebrate the deceased's life as a farmer. It is now customary that whether in practice the deceased was a farmer or not, it is prepared.

In the evening, the funeral begins officially with *ya tue nɔ 'huemi'* (creating awareness of the funeral). This is done with a bottle of drink and libation by the *nɔpulɔ*. It is followed by series of traditional songs amidst drinking which could run deep into the night.²⁶²

On Friday, early in the morning, the *nɔpulɔ* greets the house with a bottle of local gin, and announces the activities for the day. The youth erect sheds at designated places and arrange the place. A hired public address system is also fixed and music of all kinds begins to bash. Friends, relatives, in-laws and other sympathizers come to greet and offer condolences. Each

²⁵⁷ This is done by the women who will be in charge of the cooking.

²⁵⁸ According to an informant, some families now prefer soaking the corn on Sunday, so that they could grind it on Tuesday. Otherwise nothing in particular is done. Eunice Akwele Tettey, telephone interview granted the researcher, 18th October, 2015.

²⁵⁹ This is the major market for the Krobos. People from all walks of life patronize the market.

²⁶⁰ *Kpokpoku* is the chief fish for public cooking among the Krobos.

²⁶¹ *Akuafo ku* is a dish that is prepared with palm nut soup and fried corn dough stirred together on fire. This is known as *apaplasa* when prepared for ordinary consumption. There is another type called *kungmi* which is made of the same dough, but instead of soup, water is used to prepare it. This could be served with light soup of okro

²⁶² In the past the activities included firing of musketry.

contingent is received with weeping and wailing. The *akuafu ku* which is the official meal for the day is served to all.

In the afternoon, a delegation to collect the corpse from the mortuary²⁶³ is dispatched by the *nɔpulɔ*, with the following libation formula:²⁶⁴

*Ee Oda, mwɔnɛɔ,
o kpa onya bu si.
Wa nge tsɔe nɛ a ya
ngɔ mo ke je ngmɔ ke ba we
konɛ wa ba to mo.
Moo jɔɔ blɔ ɔ nɔ.*

Oda, today
you are no more
we are sending for you
from the farm village
to give you a befitting burial
we appeal for safe journey

The team includes the youth to lift, and the elderly women to bathe the corpse. They take along such items as sponge, soap, towel, powder, cream, blanket, and a mat.²⁶⁵ It is even the practice today that the mortuary-men bathed the corpse for a fee. What the women actually do at the mortuary nowadays is *ta dumi* (war bathing). That is symbolic bathing for someone who died on the battle field.

After the mortuary rituals, the corpse is wrapped in a *kuntu/ sa nɔ bo* (blanket), the straw mat and put into the ambulance.²⁶⁶ Other accompanying vehicles bearing mourners follow in a convoy amidst siren and touting of horns.

Upon arrival, the corpse is removed and carried amidst wailing straight to the designated room. Enough time is allowed for those wailing to do so to their satisfaction. The *otsiame* (linguist) on the instructions of the *nɔpulɔ* now appeals to the wailing public for silence (*e haa maa agooo*)! The mortuary team exchange pleasantries with the elders. After that the

²⁶³ Within the Krobo environment, there are six mortuaries namely: Agormanya Roman, Atua, Akosombo, Akuse and Asesewa hospitals. Normally, but not always the corpse is preserved in anyone of these mortuaries. Because the youth have become rowdy of late, there is a prohibition on releasing corpses by the hospital authorities between 6.00 am and 6.00 pm.

²⁶⁴ In a Christian home, prayer is rather said.

²⁶⁵ Formally, the traditional sponge called *kɔkɔtɛnyɛ* is used, but the hospital authorities have banned it because it makes the place dirty.

²⁶⁶ Formerly, ordinary vehicles were used for the transportation of the bodies, but today, it is a rule that only a motor hearse is used. In fact, without an ambulance, no corpse is released to the family at the mortuary.

nɔpulɔ and, or a delegation of very close elderly relatives of the deceased led by the leader of the mortuary team ascertain whether it is the actual corpse of the deceased that has been brought. This is to avoid a situation where a body with a mistaken identity is brought. When it has been certified that it is the deceased, the corpse is given water (*a maa to e nya nyu*). The *nɔpulɔ* performs *ngmɔ tsumi haami* (thanking the mortuary team for coming from the farming village) with a bottle of drink. Libation is poured, or a prayer is said depending on the situation and the practising faith of the family. After a period of weeping and wailing, the *nɔpulɔ* disperses the gathering through the *otsiamɛ* to reconvene later in the night for the funeral processes to continue. Meanwhile music continues blaring.

b) Washing the Dead and Funeral Process

In the past, washing of the dead was a revered duty for widows.²⁶⁷ This rite is very important for the departed relative. There is no condition under which one could be buried without being washed. Even in *otɔfo gbenɔ* (abominable deaths) there is *ta dumi* (symbolic washing). For the dead, it is a way of preparing them for gallant entry into the world of the dead. There is the need to follow a specific order to avoid a query.

According to Terkperthey, among the Yilɔ Klo, there is a strict rule that males wash the male and females wash the female.²⁶⁸ This information was confirmed by a focused group discussion at Nuaso that the practice also pertains in some Manya Klo clans.²⁶⁹ What is interesting is that the males who wash the male are not widowers. As mentioned earlier, the items for bathing include soap, sponge, lemon, powder, *mimɛ* (myrrh) kitchen stool, and a bucket of water. According to Okumo III, the water must fill the bucket to the brim. He

²⁶⁷ In some homes this still persists, whilst in others, it is those who have courage.

²⁶⁸ Terkperthey, *Dangme Blebo Nɔ*, 79.

²⁶⁹ A focused group discussion, 31st October 2015 at Nuaso.

explained that the living do not bathe water full to the brim. It is the last respect for the departed person.²⁷⁰

The washing process begins with the leader sitting on a kitchen stool to pour libation. This stool according to Maa Terbi is very significant in that it was a similar stool on which the mother sat to bathe the deceased at birth.²⁷¹ In some cases, the deceased is given both water and drink. This is *he dumi da* (drink for bathing). Maa Terbi further explained the significance of the water as when the deceased was young, the mother used to give it water to quench the thirst. The corpse might be thirsty and the same water must be given it.

Depending on the situation, a prayer is said or libation poured as follows:

<i>Awetse Oda, o kpa o nya ngo bu si.</i>	Brother Oda, you are dead.
<i>Wa li no ne gbe mo,</i>	We don't know what killed you;
<i>se wa maa du ha mo.</i>	But we shall wash you.
<i>O nyu ke da ji neɔ ne.</i>	This is your water and drink
<i>Wa li peemi.</i>	We are amateurs
<i>Ke wa pee we le ne e hi ɔ,</i>	if we erred
<i>sese yiɔme nge leje ɔ²⁷²</i>	the 'inquisitive women' are there
<i>ne a ma dla ha mo.</i>	They will put things right for you.

This prayer is important because it is believed that the dead are attentive. If things are not rightly done, they may call the culprit for questioning. The 'newly dead' must enter the world of the dead well organized and unblemished.

There are two main principles of washing the dead. It is washed from either the feet or the head. According to Maa Attah, in their family, they wash from the feet, and that is the Christian way.²⁷³ Maa Terbi washes from the head. She explained that when a child is born,

²⁷⁰ Nene Majanor Treku Okumo III, interview granted the researcher, 21st October 2015 at 10.30 am at his shrine at Mampong, Odumase Krobo.

²⁷¹ Terbi Docia Baa, interview granted the researcher, 26th October 2015 at 7.00 pm, at Mɛmlɛsi.

²⁷² *Sese yi ɔme* are the elderly in the ancestral world. Some say *otseme ke onyeme* (the ancestors). They will always ensure ritual cleanness of the new arrivals.

²⁷³ Maa Atta, interview granted the researcher, 26th October 2015 at 7.30 pm, at Mɛmlɛsi. The idea that there is a Christian way of washing the dead which is from the feet cannot be proven. No Christian church can claim such a proclamation. When we were young, each time we bathed beginning from the feet upwards, my grandmother would scream at us, "Do not bathe from your feet; you are not a corpse!" This lends credence to the fact that the dead are washed feet up and not necessarily a Christian way of doing so.

it is the head that comes first. When one bathes the child, the head is first bathed. The same principle must be applied. She added “What is done when you came, must be done when you depart.”

Maa Atta explained that she washes it in four stages. The first process is from the sole to the knee. She moves to the palms, armpits, and back to the knee. The next is the head, neck and face and finally the back. During the process, one does not talk much because the dead have ears and could take you on. If it is a woman, the hair is washed and well plaited. According to a focused group discussion at Manya, each part of the body is bathed thrice. This information was confirmed by Maa Terbi.²⁷⁴ According to Yayo Nyemingoo, the dead are just washed and not necessarily three times as pertains in other families. The only principle is that they are well-washed.

The body is smeared with *mimɛ* (myrrh), cream, and powder. Then *kpambue/glo* (special string) is tied around the waist.²⁷⁵ If a woman, the loin cloth is put on for her anticlockwise. For a male, *adia/data* (loin cloth fashioned in a special way) is tied around the waist. As the *adia* is fixed, they keep repeating “If you go, tell them that I put on *adia* for you.” The underpants which is always white in color is put into the coffin with these words “*O pioto ji nɛ ɔ nɛ. Ke o ya su nɛ o wo. Se i de we ke o ba tɛ mi nɛ ma ba wo ha mo*” (“This is your underpants, when you arrive, put it on, but I am NOT to be invited to do it for you”). Family beads are tied on the wrist. For the man, it must be on the right hand to greet the ancestors. Every joint of the female are decorated with beads with the message “*Ke o ya nɛ o ke ya je yie; se i de we ke o ba tɛ mi nɛ wa ba je yie*” (“These beads are for your dressing, but I am NOT saying I must be called upon to accompany you for dressing”). It is important to state that the family beads are the ‘identity marks’ by which the dead are identified. It is

²⁷⁴ A focused group discussion, 27th October 2015 at 6.30 pm at Manya.

²⁷⁵ Yayo Nyemingoo calls it *nazii*

interesting that the Lozi wear tribal marks on the arms and ears so that they may be recognized in the next world and received happily.²⁷⁶

Dressing the corpse to be laid in state is normally assigned to undertakers at very high fees. The state is decorated and well organized. While they organize the body, the funeral process may begin between 8.00 to 9.00 pm. The *nɔpulɔ* through the *otsiamɛ* announces to the public, *ngatsemɛ* (fathers-in-law and sons-in-law)²⁷⁷ *bajɔmɛ* (brothers-in-law) and *huɛmɛ* (friends) and all sympathizers that *nɔpulɔ ke e ma ya jemi o* (the chief mourner is about to commence the funeral process) with *da buɛ enyɔ* (two 'pots' of local gin). This may be followed by some traditional songs. But mostly today, the Christian churches take over to keep the wake even though some churches have banned it.²⁷⁸ In the absence of this, the public address system (P. A system) provides music.

The church's singing and preaching, testimonies, tributes, and tale telling which are the main components of the night continue till the corpse is ready for public viewing. An announcement to that effect is made using the prescribed formula. The church elders are the first to go, sing, pray, and file past. This will be followed by the family and all present who wish to do so.

The church members may leave after a period, but not without an announcement of what to expect the next day; whether the burial service will be held in the house, the chapel, or any designated place, the time, and what is expected of the family. The family and other sympathizers may continue with keeping of the wake in the absence of the church. With the help of the PA system, the place continues to produce both Christian and traditional songs

²⁷⁶ Mbiti, *African Religions*, 155.

²⁷⁷ Among the Krobo, the designation *ngatsemɛ* includes sons-in-law and fathers-in-law. The announcement formula here is applied each time there is a general announcement from the *nɔpulɔ*.

²⁷⁸ The Presbyterian Church of Ghana has banned wake-keeping, but it is not effective as it makes the funerals look dull.

till day-break. Traditional groups such as *oglojo*, *ohue-sabe*, etc. may be arranged for, to feature.

At daybreak, the *nɔpulɔ* greets the house with two bottles of drink as usual. The file past continues till about 8.00 or 9.00 am when the casket will be closed. Before that the *nɔpulɔ* announces to the public, *ngatsemɛ* (father-in law and sons-in-law) *bajɔmɛ* (brothers-in-laws) and *huemɛ* (friends) and all present that *yatse ɔ ke e ma nɔ daka mi womi* (the chief mourner says all is set for the corpse to be put into the coffin).²⁷⁹ It must be ensured that the sponge and towel with which the dead-body was washed are placed under the feet of the corpse in the casket. Then other clothes, especially ones he/she had been fond of, together with the one in which he/she died (*dengme bo*) must be put in the coffin. The corpse must not be buried with a pair of sandals, soap, and walking-stick. If any of these items found its way into the coffin and buried, the body would have to be exhumed and retrieved. In the same way, if an item which ought to be put into the coffin is forgotten, a portion of the grave would have to be dug for it to be buried. If this is not done, the ghost could keep haunting the family elders until the appropriate thing is done.²⁸⁰

When the corpse is properly laid in the coffin, the coffin is closed and brought out. If the service would be in the house, the coffin is placed at the designated place where the head is supposed to point towards the east.²⁸¹ If not, then it must be carried to the chapel or the designated place for the celebration of the burial service.

²⁷⁹ Each of those mentioned may offer a token of money as *bo ke da* (cloth and drink)

²⁸⁰ Emmanuel Mensah Okai an informant told me a few years ago that when he buried his mother, she appeared in a dream and complained of some particular beads which were not given her. At once a spot on the grave was dug and the beads buried. She has since never appeared in any form to anybody. Emmanuel Mensah Okai, interview granted the researcher, 10th January, 2016.

²⁸¹ According to one informant, the head of the corpse points to the east because the Krobos migrated from the East. It means the corpse is going home.

c) Burial service

Today, everybody belongs to one religious group or the other, and is considered a ‘shame’ to die without belonging to any. If the deceased did not belong to any religious organization, the family hires the services of one.²⁸² Whether in the chapel or elsewhere, the procedure is almost the same. The activities include: hymns, songs, local choruses, tributes, reading of scripture, and preaching. In most cases brochures are provided. Contents of the brochure may include the list of the officiating team,²⁸³ the order of service, biography/autobiography, and tributes from various associations, the widows or widower, children, etc.²⁸⁴ In some cases, the deceased’s portrait in fliers may be distributed and fastened as badges in clothes and shirts of sympathizers. After the service, burial takes place at the cemetery or sometimes in the house.²⁸⁵

d) Post Burial Refreshment and Entertainment

From the cemetery, the mourners move to the family house where the *nɔpulɔ* and the elders must be anxiously waiting. Pleasantries are exchanged. The leader of the cemetery team informs the family of a successful burial. In response, the *nɔpulɔ* shows appreciation to the whole gathering for their support throughout the funeral with two bottles of drink and some minerals. But this would not be done until the usual announcement informing the *ngatsemɛ* (fathers-in law and sons- in-law), *bajɔmɛ* (brothers-in-law), and *huɛmɛ* (friends) and all is made. It is mandatory for the sons-in-law to support the thanksgiving with a bottle of drink.

²⁸² There are many churches which would do that for a fee, or at least the family will agree to attend the thanksgiving service the following Sunday, which helps the church financially.

²⁸³ This could be a long list of clergy and some important personalities. To beautify the programme some may add list of recognized musicians, organists, pastors, Apostles, Archbishops, and other church leaders with big titles most of whom may not even be present at the function.

²⁸⁴ This includes the widow, widower, siblings, children, in-laws, grandchildren, and many more. Some of these things are due to modernity and not peculiar to the Krobos.

²⁸⁵ It is becoming a fashion for those who are well-to-do to designate a place in their personal houses for burial.

Refreshment and donations follow amidst blaring music.²⁸⁶ Refreshment has today taken the centre stage of funerals with heavy financial outlay.

As the refreshment progressed, tables are set for donation. Each time there is an announcement of donation by the table clerk, he/she asks *ke wa ma de le/me kee* (what shall we say to him/them)? The response, *le/me tsumioo!* (Thanks be to him/them). Woe betides you if you fail to announce or acknowledge receipt. There is no official closure of the post-burial gathering. One could take a leave at will.

e) Sunday Morning

Normally on the Sunday, the *nɔpulɔ* greets the house with a bottle of drink as usual. Breakfast is served, and the house gets ready for memorial service. A token of money is given to the church as thanks offering in memory of the deceased. After church, in some cases, the elders of the church follow up to pray with the family. The *nɔpulɔ* again through the *otsiame* informs the gathering that *e ma tsumi haami* (he is about to thank the gathering). He offers *da bue enyɔ* (two 'pots' of drink) in appreciation of the sympathizers. A second refreshment may follow. The donation table continues to receive and announce donations. If there will be *yo se do fiemi* (traditional drumming by a son-in-law), it follows in the afternoon, else it is the 'spinners' who take over till late in the night. There is no official closing ceremony. For the general public, the funeral process is ended.

f) Tɛ Nya Himi (Post-burial Family Executive Meeting)²⁸⁷

Normally, in the morning of the day after the burial, the elders sit at *tenya* (meet to decide on critical issues). After greeting the house, the *nɔpulɔ* announces that *a maa hi tɛ nya*. This

²⁸⁶ Depending on the financial status of the funeral, there is heavy or light refreshment. Traditionally, the refreshment is made up of such foods as water-yam, yellow-yam, *kenkey*, *banku* with okro stew or palm nut soup. Millet drink (*ngma da*) and maize drink (*blefo mamu da*) are also served.

²⁸⁷ Originally, this meeting was held at *Klo-Yom* (Krobo Mountain) sitting on stones.

is an official meeting held outside the main house. The *nɔpulɔ* does not attend, but delegates his deputy to preside. Huber writes:

Of all the important businesses and questions to be decided at this *tɛ nya* meeting, assigning of the deceased's properties and wives rank first. The report of a general stock-taking is put before the elders. Then the dead man's wife or wives are called. They are questioned whether any of them owed the late husband or whether their husband, before he died, owed money to any of them. The same question is put to other members of the "house" and the rest of the assembly. A male of the house usually, the younger brother of the deceased, is chosen to takeover his wife, and continue in his place with the marital relations and the care for her [and her children].²⁸⁸

This is called *yalɔ gba* (levirate marriage).²⁸⁹ The meeting decides who takes oversight responsibility of the deceased's landed properties, animals, birds, guns etc. called *kpakplakuhi*. It could be his male children if of age, else a brother of the dead man or a close relative. At this meeting, a decision is taken as to *nihɛ nɛ a maa to yanɔ* (those to be left behind after the funeral).²⁹⁰ They will remain there till one-week celebration (*otsi da numi*). This is to avoid late comers coming to see no one in the house.

When the house reconvenes, the whole family is asked a similar question. If anyone owns up as owing the deceased, *e maa nu gba nya* (a rite of self-identification as owing a deceased is performed).²⁹¹ This is done with a bottle of drink; and a time is set for the settlement of the debt. If the deceased owed anyone, the person also identifies himself with a bottle of drink. This is called *he si jemi* (rite of self-introduction and evidence that the deceased owes you). If it happens that the debt is proven beyond all reasonable doubt, the elders now take

²⁸⁸ Huber, *The Krobo*, 206. If there are many wives, they are shared among the brothers of the deceased.

²⁸⁹ In the past, it ended in real marriage. See Huber, *The Krobo*, 121ff for detailed discussion. If the woman decides otherwise and finds a suitor outside the family, the new suitor will have to provide a life sheep, a bottle of schnapps, and token amount of money to the late husband's family and not to the woman's family. This is called *tɔkemi*. Among the Krobos, it is forbidden to perform the full marital rites of a widow.

²⁹⁰ Usually, the widow, *nɔpulɔ*, the oldest daughter and son, a few elderly women and one or two young girls to help with house hold chores. The rest of the family is entrusted into the hands of one of the men who leads them to *yonɔ* (upper country) to keep supplying those at *Dɔm* with foodstuff.

²⁹¹ This could include his tenants; those taking care of his animals etc. In this case, a new agreement has to be signed.

the drink and libation is poured to inform the deceased. A time is set to pay the debt. If the supposed creditor could not prove the debt, the drink is rejected.

The care-takers keep taking care of the properties until after the *ya yi kpami/jemi* ('shaving/removing of the funeral head') by the widow, when an official time is set to share the properties. Formerly, it was after one year, but now it ranges between three to six months.²⁹²

g) Ya Yi Fimi (Widowhood Rite)²⁹³

This is the ritual of tying a mourning ceremonial headgear called *ya yi* for the widow. According to Tetteh, in the past, it used to be a very demanding ritual. When the coffin was brought out, and prior to departure to the cemetery, the widow was blindfolded and one of the deceased man's cloth used to cover the head.²⁹⁴ She was led around the coffin three times and then to a room where she was confined for a week (*a wo le ya tsumi*). The *nɔpulo* instructs the elderly widows in the house to tie the *ya yi* (widowhood-headgear) for her. The hair may be shaved and a black scarf was tied in a special way after putting on the traditional black cloth for mourning called *blisii*. A libation is poured:

*Ee Oda, mwɔnɛ ɔ, o si wɔ.
Wa nge ya yi fiie ha o yo Ayongo.*

*Ko ha ne nɔ ko ne kɔ e he
kɛ ya su be ne e ma je bo yumu.*

Oda, today, you left us
We are tying the mourning headgear for your
wife Ayongo
Let no disaster befall her
till the end of the weed-off.

²⁹² In some homes, the *ya nyemi* (period of mourning) begins from the day the person is dead. For example, if the funeral takes place a month later, then the *ya nyemi* period is counted retrospective from the day the person died.

²⁹³ The churches have taken over the widowhood rites. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana for example, has a special liturgy for it. It could be officiated by the agent, the presbyters, or any trained lay person. See Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Worship book: Normal* (Accra: A-Riis Company Ltd., 2010), 120-126.

²⁹⁴ This cloth is symbolic of the man's presence. The two used to sleep together. Now that the man is no more, if in the night she feels cold, this cloth gives her warmth. When later the woman passes on, this same cloth will be part of the items to be put in the coffin. With it, the man is able to identify and welcome her in the world of the dead.

h) Taboos During Widowhood Confinement

It is important to state that some of the practices about to be described have ceased to exist. Traditionally, during the confinement period, she must observe a number of prohibitions. She must not wear beads, and underpants. She must not sleep on a bed, and not shake hands with any man; she must neither be seen by nor see the sun. If there was the need to come out, she would have to be covered in a man's cloth. All chores must be done at dusk or dawn; and she must bathe only with cold water.²⁹⁵ Others include abstaining from wearing footwear, eating meat, beans, engaging in buying and selling, and sexual activities for the period of mourning. Death during widowhood period is considered a taboo. This is an abominable death (*otɔfo gbenɔ*). If it is realized that the widow is sick and the sickness could lead to death, a short ritual is performed by the *nɔpulɔ* to 'untie' the headgear.

In fact, the widow is the person who is made to feel the death of the husband more than any other one. She mourns for the longest period of time, sleeps in the same room, and on the same bed alone as she used to with the deceased. Putting on the man's cloth given her in the night is traumatic and a constant reminder of the loss of a partner. It is unfortunate that the widower has no such taboos and any period of mourning to observe at all. In a polygamous family, he could even choose to make love with the other wives during the funeral. He could marry at will whereas the widow is given a levirate marriage, a decision she has to comply with without a question, and which could be consummated only after the weed-off (*bo yumu jemi*).²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ Bathing cold water and 'tying the widowhood headgear' is very important for the widow. After the weed-off, if the family denies her access to the properties of her late husband, she could sue them based on that.

²⁹⁶ In most families today, levirate marriages are mere traditional administrative procedures which are not expected to end up in marriage.

i) Weed-off (Bo Yumu Jemi)

This is the ritual to officially bring to an end the period of mourning. On a Friday, usually the last of the particular month, the *nɔpulɔ* or his representative performs this function.²⁹⁷ A bottle of drink is offered to the gathering which comprises as many as possible of the family members who wish to be present, in black, including the widow(s), children, and the levirate husband. In the Christian home a prayer is said; otherwise a libation is poured to signify the end of the mourning period as follows:

<i>Tsaatse Mawu, ba jɔɔ da ne ɔ nɔ</i>	God our Father, bless this drink.
<i>Mwɔnɛ ɔ Soha, tsemɛ a Soha</i>	Today is Friday, Friday of our forefathers
<i>Oda, ba he o da ne o nu.</i>	Oda, come and receive your drink
<i>Ne o tse nimeli ɔmɛ tsuo</i>	call all the ancestors
<i>Jeha kake jine ɔ ne o kpa o nya ngɔ bu si.</i>	It is one year since you left us;
<i>O yo Ayongo nye o ya</i>	your wife Ayongo and the family mourned you
<i>kaa bɔ ne a pee ha nimeli ɔ.</i>	as was done for the ancestors
<i>Mwɔnɛɔ, wa nge o ni yumu jee</i>	today we are removing your black cloth;
<i>Moo da wo se</i>	stand by the sea shore
<i>Ne o ple o se ne o gbaa wɔ</i>	and turn your back to bless us

They retire, and all of them including the widow(s) change into white attire. The levirate husband provides them with all the items including a white fowl which shall be used for a meal for all. That night the levirate marriage could be consummated. Church service follows on the Sunday together with a feast with friends and relatives. This is supposed to be the last remembrance gathering since death anniversaries celebrations are usually not common in Krobo traditional life.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ I remember when I was young, in 1979, I was made to pour libation for one of such occasions, because I was the only male available.

²⁹⁸ In the Kutse Okai family of Kpler, the mourning period is six months.

3.3.8 Life after death

Though the Krobos seem to have no reflection on the resurrection of the dead, they believe strongly in life after death, but the idea is nebulous. The location of the world of the dead (*gbeje*) is not exactly known. There are two basic schools of thought: The first hold that the world of the dead is located in the underworld;²⁹⁹ while the second opinion suggests it is far beyond the sea.³⁰⁰ The latter appears most probable, because of the belief that the newly dead crosses a river or the sea to the ancestral world. That is why some amount of money is always put into the coffin for the ‘ferryman.’ Another belief which lends credence to this opinion is that in the past, one could encounter a dead relative when one traveled in the night to estuary of the Volta River at Azizanya.³⁰¹ Under the circumstance of limited knowledge about both the location of the world of the dead and what happens after death, the Krobo is compelled to contemplate whether the dead head towards *Ani we* (a place for the righteous) or *Boso we* (a place for the wicked).³⁰² To be designated to any of these two locations depended upon how one behaved during his/her life time. But because of the belief in reincarnation, the idea of judgment and punishment after death seem rather, a Christian notion which has found its way into the Krobo belief system.

²⁹⁹ Dornoo Escobar Leiku, interview granted the researcher, 16th June 2016 at Matsekope.

³⁰⁰ Rev. D.D.N. Tetteh, telephone interview granted the researcher, 10th June 2016. Mbiti wrote similarly about the Lodagaa who believe that the world of the dead lies in the west and separated from this world by the river of death. See Mbiti, *African Religions*, 155.

³⁰¹ Azizanya is a small village at the estuary of the Volta. The sea in the olden days was very boisterous, so if one was going there, one had to be firm (*o ma za or ja o za*). Mr Olua, telephone interview granted the researcher, 12th October 2015 at 6. Am. Aziza means dwarf in Ewe. It is possible the name means dwarf’s village. There is another community close to the village called *Azizakpe* which could also mean dwarfs’ stone. This idea of the dead crossing the river at Azizanya is also known among the Adaas. When an Adaa falls into coma, no matter the location, people would face and walk towards the direction of Azizanya calling the name of the person. It is believed that the soul might be heading toward the estuary to be ferried away. Calling the name is for the soul to return into the body. Mr. Addi, interview granted the researcher, 11th November, 2015 at 10.27 am, at Ada-Tesonya.

³⁰² According to Gbertey, Ani is called Tete Ani and has a hut at the Sea shore where people transit. Going to *Ani we* is therefore a good place. *Boso* is a very large sea fish which could live in one place in the sea for years. When the fishermen went fishing, they landed on its back thinking it was an island. When the animal moved, they all sank into the bottom of the Sea. *Boso we* is therefore a place of destruction. Enoch Awasabi Gbertey, interview granted the researcher, 25th October 2015 at Lom Osiekuse at 3.25 pm.

3.3.9 Summary

From engagement of the culture, it is realized that the ideal death in Krobo thought is ‘natural death’ and considered unavoidable. Prayers and libations said during funeral ceremonies show that they are happily going home. They are never evoked to take revenge since it is believed that *a be le su* (their time is due). Rather, after ‘crossing the sea,’ they are to turn back and bless the living. In the dying process one is considered ‘climbing’ the sea. Now that the sea is crossed successfully, she/she stands at the sea shore, turns back, and blesses the living (*moo da wo se, ne o ple o se, ne o gbaa wo*). In this case, the death of the aged is seen as a blessing in disguise.

If the person’s time is due, then death appears to be a transition to another life.³⁰³ This due time nobody knows, but everybody’s time will come; *tsemε ke nyemε a ya he* (a place for all). This being the case, the mourners feel consoled at the thought that they will meet, or join the departed again. Yet, the death of a relative is considered an excruciating experience. There is an *ohuε-sabe* traditional dirge: *I ngma wo tso he, nɔ ne o pee mi neɔ, i ngma wo tso he* (I have inscribed it on the tree, what death has done to me, I inscribed it on the tree).³⁰⁴

Those who died impromptu and abominable deaths seem never happy because their lives have been cut short by circumstances. While reincarnation is expected of the normal and the impromptu deceased members, those involved in abominable death are never expected to reincarnate. This could be deduced from the parting rituals. It is also realized that age and circumstances surrounding one’s death determine the kind of burial suitable. Importantly, it is the words and rituals which actually bury the deceased and not the one who covered it with sand. For this reason, the *nɔpulɔ* does not go to the cemetery, but ritually buries the deceased with libation and rites done before the corpse is taken away. What they do at the

³⁰³ Huber, *The Krobo*, 214.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

cemetery is covering it with sand on behalf of the *nɔpulɔ*. It is for the same reason that the ghost does not question the one who covers it with soil, but the *nɔpulɔ*. *Nɔpulɔ* actually means the one with authority to oversee a burial.

Death at certain times should evoke togetherness. A dirge goes like: *Kungwɔ kɛ e nyemime ngɔ a yi to a yi he* (The chicken brood put their heads together).³⁰⁵ When the mother-hen dies, the chicken stand together with their heads and beaks put together. Thus death is in some sense understood as a situation which evokes sympathy, unity and love.

Death has varied meanings and does not always express grief. The presence of the religious organizations with praises, worship songs, and the sermons preached in most cases transform the environment of grieving to rejoicing in the presence of God. Also, the post-burial refreshments, the traditional drumming and dancing, the Ghanaian and African music provided by the bandstands, and music rendered by various groups of interest, provide soothing for the sorrow-stricken mourners who join to dance and make merry at least temporary.

3.4 Conclusion

In Krobo cosmology, it seems that life and death have close similarities. As Zohan observed, life and death are so closely related that one cannot be conceived of without the other.³⁰⁶ The following comparisons attest to that: When a human being is born into this life, the first substance to be given it is water. In the same way when one passes on, the last substance given is water.³⁰⁷ During normal birth, when the child comes into this life, it is the head that first appears from the womb. So, when one dies and is departing this world, the corpse is carried with the head pointing forward. One of the first activities that a new born baby is

³⁰⁵ Huber, *The Krobo*, 215.

³⁰⁶ Zohan, *Religion*, 36.

³⁰⁷ In traditional homes, even before a fowl is slaughtered, it is customary to give it water.

taken through is bathing. During the process of washing the child, the head is first bathed, then the torso, feet and the back. In washing the dead, the same procedure is followed. After bathing, *mimɛ* (myrrh), and pomade are smeared on the child, with beads fixed at various joints to make it very gorgeous and admirable. In a similar fashion, the dead are decorated before they depart into the underworld.

The mother sits on the kitchen stool to bathe the child in the same way as they do when washing the dead. The Krobo says, *futaa, ayilɔ* (white signifies victory). So, the new born baby and the mother celebrate in white clothes. The child's bed is always dressed with white bed sheets; also the shroud and state on which the dead are laid is always in white.

When a mother returns from a journey with the child, she gives it water in a calabash. Similarly, when the Krobo brings the dead from the mortuary, or anywhere to the family house, it is given water in a calabash (*a toɔ e nya he nyu kɛ tismi*). In life, the child is told what to say, so upon death, the corpse is told what to say when they get to the ancestral world. The process of birth is considered painful, and so is the process of death in Krobo cosmology painful. When a child is born, the mother is congratulated *mo fɔmi tsumi* ('thanks' for a successful labor), so when a member passes on, the bereaved family is consoled, *mo yaka tsumi* ('thanks' for laboring in vain).

Further, one week after birth, the child is named (*otsi biɛ womi*) to formally accept it into this world. In the same way, the Krobo celebrate one week after demise called *otsi da nu mi* to part company with the deceased from this world. During the naming ceremony of the child, gift items in cash and in kind are given out by friends and relatives. In the same way when one passes on, donations are given to defray debts incurred in connection with the funeral.

From this comparison between the beginning of life-birth and the end of life-death, it could be seen that for the Krobo, there is an inseparable identity between life and death. The two concepts could be described as parts of the same process. It also explains why those who pass on to the next life are never considered separated from this life. The dead are part and parcel of the living community; they are informed, invited, petitioned to participate, bless, or act on behalf of the mortals. This close proximity help the living to relate to the dead through dreams, libation, prayers, and sacrifices to the extent that the Krobo seems more secured with the presence of the dead than without. It might not be far from right to say it is the reason the afterlife is considered the continuation of this life.

In general, four cardinal identities have been unveiled through the dialogue with the Krobo reality namely: Life is sacred, life is communal, God the source of death, and the fear of the afterlife. These themes shall be briefly highlighted by way of summary in this concluding segment, but shall be considered for a major discussion in the next chapter.

The analysis established that life is sacred. When a woman ‘takes seed’, the news is kept secret from everyone except her husband and very close family members. They say *e ho Mawu pa ya* (she has gone to fetch water from God’s river). Life for Krobo owes its origin to God, a blessing, and a spiritual reality.³⁰⁸ Traditionally, fetching water entails carrying a pot depicted by the protruding belly. There is the possibility of falling, breaking the pot, losing the water, and hurting oneself in the process. Through the *mi nɔ kpa fɔmi* ritual, both the mother and the unborn child do not only have to be fortified against forces of evil which might possibly militate against their survival, but also observe various taboos. Human life is first in all endeavours. In prayers, libations, sacrifices, and other rituals, the aim is to petition ‘the powers that be’ to avert evil and grant human peace, health, long life and

³⁰⁸ Ossom-Batsa, “Rituals as Mechanism,” 281.

prosperity. The Krobo above all conceives that life comes from God and so gives various theosophical names to their children.

Furthermore, life is mostly lived in communal sense. When the Krobos migrated from their original home, they did so in a group. Their early settlement in Klo-yom' was a communal settlement. When after the incident of 1892 they dispersed, they created a capital called *Dɔm* where they converged for funerals, performed the *dipo* rites and celebrated the *nadu* and *kotoklo* deities. The idea of communal sense of life may account for why they place premium on marriage.

The Krobo considers death as one of the creations of God which became operational out of human lapses. For this reason, death is irrevocable. The Krobo believes that each person prior to birth has a fixed time to die. But this time is only known by God. So when one dies, it is believed that such time is due and God has permitted it. Strongly, the Krobo believes no death could occur if God does not permit it.

But the Krobo is anxious about the afterlife. He/she is always in the contemplative mood of the final destination of a departed member which they consider located beyond the sea or elsewhere. They contemplate whether the dead will suffer ill or good fate in the afterlife. The greatest question is, where do the dead go after here, *Ani we* (place of rest) or *Boso we* (place of torment)? These main ideas about life and death prepare the ground for contextualization which is our theme for discussion in the next chapter

CHAPTER FOUR

ENGAGEMENT TEXT AND CULTURE

4.1 Introduction

Having completed the exegetical analyses of the text and the Krobo culture in chapters two and three respectively, the next stage in line with the proposed theoretical frame-work is the encounter between the biblical text and the Krobo culture. In this chapter, therefore, the thesis considers the Krobo Christian's socio-cultural milieu interpretation of the biblical text, and the textual engagement with the culture in relation to key themes resulting from the journey into the text and the culture. Even though the contextualization is mainly centered on the Krobo Christian, the traditional Krobo world-view is considered as well. This is crucial for the study, because the Krobo Christian is first and foremost a traditional Krobo, and comes to the text with a baggage of cultural philosophical presuppositions which the conversion to Christianity does not change overnight. Informed by this fact, the study takes a panoramic view of how the Krobo in general would react to key issues in the text such as Jesus' delay in responding to the message sent by the two sisters, Mary's supposed action of going to weep on the tomb, Martha's attitude to eschatological issues, especially the resurrection, and the Sanhedrian plot to kill Jesus among others.

This is followed by an encounter between the culture and the text. The call to action suggested by the text is applied to the Krobo Christian worldview for possible enrichment and transformation. The expectant result is a dialogue geared towards the realization of what the relevance of the meaning of life and death in John 11:1-54 is to the Krobo reader.

4.2 Reading John 1:1-54 in a Krobo Context

The Krobo Christian reads this text with keen interest. There are portions of the text which challenge the religio-cultural presuppositions, while other segments reinforce his/her

cosmological aspirations. Martha and Mary sending to Jesus on behalf of their sick brother correspond to his/her worldview. Among the Krobos, the *tsopatse* (medicine-man) could be invited to attend to the sick and would gladly comply. What is surprising is Jesus' failure to respond in time to the extent that he not only traveled to a different location upon hearing the message, but openly announced that the sickness would not end in death; rather in God's glory. For the Krobo reader, it would be surprising how *Mawu* considered as a good and merciful God could be glorified when a person goes through such agony and pain.

Jesus' attitude and utterance would be interpreted as a betrayal of friendship. For the Krobo, *a li nɔ piani nɛ a suɔ kane ke hyɛɔ e hemi nyɔmi* (a friend in need is a friend indeed). The Krobo Christian community would be suspicious when contrary to what Jesus said, the sickness ended in death, and for four solid days he did not turn up only to appear at the outskirts of the town calling Martha and Mary to a private meeting.³⁰⁹ Jesus' 'supposed' love for the family (11:5) would be in doubt; thus the Krobos say, *hemi jaa pi nɔ suɔmi* (a cheerful face is not necessarily a sign of love). The traditional obligation in light of Krobo custom, having finally appeared, was to show up, first at the house where the funeral is taking place. This would be followed by exchanging of compliments, giving the reason(s) for his inability to turn up in time, offering words of condolences, and making a token donation towards defraying some cost incurred during the funeral process.³¹⁰ Though this seeming delay might have hurt the reader in some way, the explanations could soothen the perceived anger.

³⁰⁹ *A ko de ke e le hiɔ he nɔko* (They could have said, he had something to do with what has befallen Lazarus).

³¹⁰ There are three principal reasons for donating-*a ke wo ya hiɔ* (to defray part of the debt incurred), *a ke wo daka he hiɔ* (donation toward the purchase of the coffin). This goes directly to the one who purchased the coffin. Finally, a donation *nɛ a ke tsu he mi vonyu* (to wipe away the tears from the face). In this case particular name(s) are mentioned. What seems appropriate for Jesus to do is the last one, a donation to wipe the tears of Martha and Mary.

The Krobo worldview conforms to the large throng that attended the funeral, for when a young person dies, the funeral attracts a crowd. There would have been several parting rituals, but prominent among them would be a libation by the *nɔpulɔ* evoking the ghost to either rest in peace or take revenge.

Most of the funeral processes including burial at the outskirts of the town although not explicitly stated would have been well understood by the Krobo, although the issue of Mary going to weep or mourn at the sepulcher would be questioned. According to Tetteh, this is a taboo among Krobos.³¹¹ For the Krobo, private mourning is discouraged. Mourning or weeping on the grave is considered more or less invoking a curse. It means inviting the ghost to intervene in a seemingly inexplicable situation. Mourning privately means loneliness. It is feared that the ancestors will ‘come for such a one’ in order to give him/her company. For Mary to go to the grave to weep without any stated grievance or provocation would be mind-boggling to the Krobo. It could attract a ritual to ward off the ghost.³¹²

The dialogue between Jesus and Martha also raises some concerns for a member of the Krobo community. Frankly, the statement by both sisters to the effect that if Jesus were present their brother would not have died is without doubt understandable. The Krobo believes in the potency of the *tsopatse* (medicine-man), that when present on time, death could be averted and health restored; moreso with a probable understanding of Lazarus’ death to be a *kpatu gbenɔ* (premature/ impromptu death), the ancestors would have been consulted for a possible intervention.

Reading about the Sanhedrian plot to physically kill Jesus sounds bizarre because apart from probably war situations, a council of elders could never openly scheme to exterminate

³¹¹ D.D.N. Tetteh, interview granted the researcher on Monday 18th April 2016 at 3.00 pm at Manyakpongunor.

³¹² Degber Nartey, telephone interview granted the researcher on 4th March 2016 at 10.30 am.

someone's life. But Jesus' reaction not to walk alone in public is understood because as they say: "moo le o he ɔ, pi fɔ" (to be forewarned is to be forearmed).

As emerged in chapter three, from the exegesis of the culture, some major conceptual beliefs were raised. These include the sanctity of life, the communal nature of life, God the source of life, and the fear of the afterlife. To understand better the Krobo attitude towards the text, the research explores these ideas.

4.2.1 Life is Sacred

Life for the Krobo is believed to have come from God and for that matter it is sacred. This idea is found in most of their life expressions in word and deed. For example, murder and abortion are regarded as unpardonable sins in Krobo unwritten moral code. There are also some categories of people considered wicked and antisocial upon which curses are repeatedly heaped amidst clapping and tamping of feet during the *koda kpami* (the rites of hooting and expelling hunger from the community). These are *nyuali*, *hiali*, and *abosiamitseme* with whom no one would want to associate. Ossom-Batsa described them as follows:

The *nyuali* are human beings believed to inflict sickness and death on others by casting evil spells on them by means of some efficacious magical word spoken or sung. *Abosiamitseme* are those who have recourse to evil spirits (*mumiyayamihi*), manipulating them to harm or kill a person or group of people. On the other hand, *Hiali* are witches, persons believed to be possessed by evil spirits, whose principal activity is to destroy human life and all that contributes to the progress of human beings.³¹³

Thus, it would be understood from this point of view that the Krobo considers humans as the highest point of God's creative activity, and no one has the right to interfere with anyone's life because of the sanctity of life.

³¹³ Ossom-Batsa, "Rituals as Mechanism," 146-7.

The Johannine community no less considers life as sacred. For example, Martha and Mary sending a messenger to Jesus to inform him about Lazarus' ailment suggests the preciousness of life. This becomes even more pronounced when both of them on separate occasions lamented that had Jesus been present, their brother would have been saved. In the same way the Jerusalemites who accompanied Mary to the graveside might be expressing a similar thought of the sacredness of life by their concern over why Jesus who opened the eyes of the blind (9:1-12) could not prevent Lazarus from dying (11:37).

Arguably, it was the belief of sanctity of life which was being expressed by the disciples' protest and questioning of Jesus' rationale for embarking upon the Judean trip. Their action sought to protect Jesus' life from the impending danger (11:7-8). In the same way, bringing Lazarus back to life with all the accompanying stress and emotions reinforce the point that in the Johannine world like that of the Krobo, life is of great importance.

But more importantly, Jesus' mission in the whole gospel of John, summarized in 3:16, 10:10 and 20:30, is for humanity to have full life. This mission of saving humanity from the destructive power of death by believing in Christ affirms not only the love and sovereignty of God, but also the importance of human beings from divine perspective. In God's scheme of affairs, therefore, human life ranks first and foremost in all creation, and warrants his intervention for their redemption.

Like the Johannine counterpart, the Krobo appreciates the sacredness of life with the strong human right protection mantra, *a kpɔ we gbiɛ nɛnɔ bi yi he* meaning "we don't strike an axe against the head of a person." This is a caution to consider the value of a person over non-living things. Human beings must not be treated as lifeless objects since the one against whom the action is taken is the image of God, who feels pain.

Again, sanctity of life is expressed through the proverbs: *a fani nɔmlɔ yaya nge we mi gu he* (“better a bad person than an empty house”) and *damadama hu nɔ e nɔ* (“even the abnormal person has relatives”). This further buttresses the point that the Krobo places more value on a person to the extent that there is supposed to be no discrimination against people with disability. In the same way, all humans deserve, and therefore ought to be accorded dignity, respect and honor. People’s right must be protected and not trampled upon.

The Krobos give names to their children to demonstrate the value of a person such as *Ohipeni*- (You are more precious than wealth). Such names as *Kɔli*, *Otaka*, *Zagba*, *Powa*, and *Juɛni* are given to children to express similar thoughts. *Kɔli*, *Otaka*, *Zagba*, *Powa*, and *Juɛni* are names of very precious beads found among Krobos which only wealthy people could afford. Some also give names such as *Sika* (money), *Sikajɔɔ*, (money is heavy), and *Dumas* (a high quality cloth). These and other expressions suggest the value of the human being to the Krobo world. This explains why to pass by without greetings is frowned upon as an act of disrespect and indignity to the person.³¹⁴ There is an axiom that *nɔ nɛ hi hu nɔ yeɔ lɛ* (a bad or ugly person too feels pain). Thus, all human beings have equal feelings and rights which in the sight of the Krobo ought to be protected. From whichever angle one thinks about life, whether from the Johannine or Krobo perspective, the bottom line is, life is sacred.

4.2.2 Life is Communal

Similarly, in the Krobo cultural landscape, though the individual matters and has rights, the sense of communality is never undermined. As Adewuya noted, there is profound sense of interdependence, from the extended family to the entire community.³¹⁵ The whole existence

³¹⁴ Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, 26.

³¹⁵ J. Ayodeji Adewuyi, “Revisiting 1 Corinthians 11:27-34: Paul’s Discussion of the Lord’s Supper and African Meals,” *JSNT* 30, no.1(2007): 103, doi: 10.1177/0142064X07081548.

from birth to death is characterized by the notion of communal awareness. Olagunjo observed:

The African setting is more of communal outlook where every member of the community sees themselves as brothers and partners in progress. The community leaders are appointed to see to the growth of the community and make it a duty to see that peace and harmony prevail in the community. This communal setting brings in improvement in human relations. Every member of the community assists themselves in one form or the other; there is no room for selfishness in any quarter. The level of interaction among the people is so cordial to the extent that they do things together.³¹⁶

When the announcement goes that a child is born, the community responds to this good news in several ways that suggest the idea of communal living. It is expected that all within the neighbourhood come to congratulate the mother and welcome the 'visitor.'³¹⁷ It is interesting that as the women come along with either a pot of water or a head-load of firewood, the male counterparts respond with foodstuff. This is even more pronounced when they are twins. At out-doorings, participants present a token to the child and the mother to either *e ke he nu ne e ke wo e biɔ yimi*, or *i ke ha le tlikua* (buy cream for the hair of the child, or congratulate the mother). The father of the child is left out as no gifts are usually presented to him. It is mother-child affair.

Humans are objects of moral concern entitled to humane treatment, appreciation, compassion, and assistance which demonstrate a communal spirit. That is why the sick are taken care of, and not left to die. For the same reason, all within the community make time to visit and sympathize with a member going through challenges or known crisis. When one passes on, it is not an individual but a matter of concern to the entire community. Farming activities come to a halt, and shops are closed to enable all attend the funeral. Condolences are offered

³¹⁶ Olugbenga Olagunju, "Globalization and Inter-Religious Dialogue in African Cultural Context" *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences* 2, no.1 (2013):39.

³¹⁷ The child until is named is considered a visitor for it could decide to stay or return to the place of origin.

the bereaved family. It is the responsibility of the community that a grave is dug, and the deceased given a befitting burial and funeral.

This same communal spirit or attitude was exhibited by Martha and Mary when they jointly sent the message to Jesus for and on behalf of their sick brother. Lazarus must be helped out of his ailment and not left to his fate (vv. 2-3). No doubt many people came from Jerusalem to Bethany to comfort the bereaved family (11:18-19). All their actions were not in their personal interest but towards togetherness.

Jesus on various occasions demonstrated communal sense of living in this account. He beckoned his disciple to accompany him to Judea and Bethany (vv. 7, 15). Jesus needed the company of the disciples for his earthly ministry. He is God and could have worked alone, yet he chose the twelve and continued in fellowship with them. Perhaps he was expressing from Krobo perspective the saying: *yi kake ye dami* (“one head does not go on consultation”). This sense togetherness could be inferred from v. 54b where he withdrew from public appearances and stayed with his disciples. In such distressing moments, the company of trusted friends could be most refreshing.

Thomas, the ‘spokesperson’ in this particular episode, displayed a very high sense of communal spirit when he more or less spurred the colleagues on in v. 16, “Let us go, that we may die with him.” For Thomas, loyalty is necessary in communal living although the statement is ambiguous, for whether Jesus or Lazarus, it does not matter. Jesus was their leader, Lazarus their friend, and solidarity was needed even in death.

Before raising Lazarus, Jesus commanded that the stone sealing the grave be rolled away. Though we are not told who exactly rolled the stone, certainly not Jesus. It was probably a section of the ‘concerned spectators’ who put their strengths together to roll the stone which is a demonstration of a communal sense of living. When finally Lazarus appeared from the

grave with his hands, feet, and face bandaged, the command was “Loose him and let him go!” Who loosed him? Surely, it was members of the crowd. This crowd must have left whatever businesses they had. They came to mourn, showed concern, followed Mary to the graveside (v. 31), wept together with Mary and Jesus at the grave (v. 33), rolled away the stone (v. 41), and waited no matter the time to see the outcome of the miracle. They finally unshackled Lazarus from the oppressive clothes (v. 44). All these actions point to nothing other than an act of solidarity, communality, and the importance of social ties in life’s crises which the Krobos share.

No doubt the Krobo says, *tu tso kake peeɔ e tɛ ya, se nɔ kake pee we ya* (“though one gunshot performs a father’s funeral, one person does not perform a funeral”). For this reason, team spirit is expressed in all facets of life, be it marriage, birth, death, or any other social event. Life is a family and communal affair, and everybody must be invited to such occasions. Those who may not be able to attend have an obligation to send regrets.

There are several idioms, and maxims which point to communal living, for example, *Nine kake nuu we ngmo* (one hand does not catch lice), *Ma ji hue kpɔ* (the community is a protective grove), *Nɔ kake yi ni* (one man ‘no chop’), *Nɔ kɛ e nyemi le yaa wesetsonɔ* (it is your sibling who accompanies you to the ‘outhouse’) *Nɔ kake nɛ gbɛɔ suɔ nɛ ma saa* (it is one hunter who kills the elephant for the benefit of the whole community).

All these wise sayings suggest that the Krobo is mindful of the role of the community in shaping the individual into a holistic personality. The idea of communal living is so important that on some occasions the individual is sacrificed to save the community. The Jewish authorities for example sacrificed Jesus for the entire community, just as the Krobo banishes a pre-*dipo* pregnant girl from the community to save it from the wrath of the gods. The Krobo like their Johannine counterpart, share the belief that mere birth does not

necessarily make one a person. Personhood is derived from series of relationships with other people.

4.2.3 God the Source of Death

Paradoxically, the same God who is considered the source of life is believed to be the source of death. They say *Mawu pe le le gbenɔ nya ba* (it is only God who knows the herb which neutralizes death). For the Krobo, medicine is herbs or leaves. The potent medicine-men among them use herbs to save lives. To say it is only God who knows the herb which neutralizes death is to distinguish God as the greatest of all herbalists. This thinking places *Mawu* as the head of all the spiritualists comparable with none. The medicine-man could to some extent postpone death through the use of herbs, but cannot prevent death altogether. But God can both prevent and allow death. This was precisely the reason Martha and Mary sought the assistance of Jesus in the case of Lazarus' ill-health (11:1-3). Jesus' prayer was addressed to God because he has control over death (11:44). God responded to Jesus' prayer to confirm his authority over death (v. 45). This could also account for the reason the Krobo traditional medicine-man would hardly pour libation for healing without first showing the drink to *Mawu*, or inviting his blessings before evoking any other spiritual powers for rituals. Connected to this is another maxim that goes: *ke Mawu gbenɔ gbi moɔ, o gbo we* ("if you are not 'killed' by the death from God, you do not die"). Death comes from God. The Krobo understands that all deaths occur according to God's design, though in some cases, the cosmology seems to suggest that evil forces could kill. This maxim seems to propose that death cannot occur outside the knowledge of God, and so was Lazarus' death because he is omniscient. When one dies, no matter the immediate or remote cause, it is believed that it is sanctioned by God. Upon losing a dear one, the Krobo may conclude that "If it is the will of God, I leave my plight in his hands." Martha and Mary seemed to have said the same thing having waited in vain for Jesus' response to their message.

During ailment, they say, *hiɔ gbi nɔ, se gbenɔ ɛ gbeɔ nɔ* (it is death which kills, but not sickness). This means that any ailment could be cured except those destined by God to end in death as was the case of Lazarus. But anyone who dies, dies at God's appointed time. So Lazarus' time was due. Though the Krobo believes in destiny, there is also the belief that destiny is controlled by God. It is specifically for this reason the Krobo believes that the days of humanity on earth are numbered by God. So when the time comes, and God calls him/her through death, he/she would have to respond. Here the notion is that one cannot fight death. Only God has power over both life and death.

4.2.4 The Fear of the Afterlife

Martha's beliefs in the resurrection of the dead, whether here and now, or in eschatological terms, and final judgment (11:24) is not present in Krobo cosmology. At best, the Krobo considers reincarnation as a reality, but not resurrection of the dead. There is, therefore, a word for reincarnation, (*blaami*) but none for resurrection. This lack of vocabulary for resurrection has influenced the Dangme translation of the portion of the Apostles' Creed "...I believe in the resurrection of the body," as "...*i heɔ...nɔmlɔ tso si temi.*" which the researcher believes needed a further reflection. A better rendering would be *ni gbogboehi a si tlemi* (resurrection of the dead).

The Greek ἀνάστασις, suggests rise, rising (Lk 2:34), or resurrection of the dead (11:24-25; Mt 22:31; Lk 20:35; Acts 1:22; Ro 6:5; 1 Cor 15: 12 ff; Rev 20:5 ff). Among the Krobo, the noun *si temi* denotes, the process of getting up from a sitting or lying position on one's own. Unless qualified, it may not suggest resurrection from the dead. *Si tlemi* on the other hand suggests being helped to rise which also needed to be qualified. To say *nɔmlɔtso si temi* even if accepted may mean the person getting up or rising on his/her own whilst *ni gbogboehi si tlemi* designates being empowered, or helped to rise. Since it is a power which will enable the dead to rise, a preferred rendering could be *ni gbogboehi a si tlemi*.

The same problem is encountered in the translation of 11:25. I am the resurrection and the life (*i mi ji sitemiɔ ke wami ɔ nɛ*). By the same argument, a more informed rendering could be *i mi ji gbogboehi a si temi ke wami ɔ nɛ* (I am the resurrection and the life).

Likewise, even though Krobos strongly believe in the afterlife, the eschatological dimension is not the core of the culture. Thus, for them, religion seem not about the afterlife, but rather the daily life, welfare, prosperity, health, material prosperity, marrying and bringing forth many children. The thoughts, actions, arts, and institutions of Africans and for that matter the Krobo are geared towards human welfare and the importance of the human being here on earth.³¹⁸ Though life after death is considered as the continuation of this present life, this notion is undermined by the uncertainties of the afterlife. In their contemplative moments, they wonder whether the dead live in *Ani we* or *Boso we*. This perception is shared by the Yoruba of Nigeria who are uncertain about the final lot of the departed: some put it in a good place and others in a bad place.³¹⁹

Having explored how the Krobo believer dialogues with the text, attention is now shifted to how the text meets the culture. Again, this dialogue is done with reference to the three key theological themes arising from the text.

4.3 The Text Encounters Krobo Culture

In this section, the thesis examines how the text engages the Krobo culture in a dialogue. Attention is paid to how the community of John affects the life and thought of the Krobo Christian community towards an informed understanding of the concepts of life and death.

³¹⁸ Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, 23.

³¹⁹ Mbiti, *African Religions*, 157.

4.3.1 Jesus the Way to God

The Krobo conceives God as unapproachable directly; hence he is not given direct worship. They fall on other intermediaries to reach God; so they say, *ke o nge hlae ne o de Mawu no ko ɔ, mo de ha kɔchiɔ* (“if you want to talk to God, speak to the wind”). The gospel of John introduces Jesus to the Krobo culture as the ‘missing link’ to God, the connection between God and humanity they mistook for the wind, the gods, and the ancestors. The writer of John’s gospel explicitly states, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This word became flesh and lived among men as the only begotten of the Father (1:1, 14).

Also Jesus himself said he is the way (14:6). He demonstrated this relationship with God by calling him Father to whom he prayed. His prayer to God which led to the resurrection of Lazarus is evidence that he is from God, and for that matter the link to God which the Krobo unsuccessfully sought for ages (11:4, 41-42; 14:6). The Johannine community proposes Jesus to the Krobo believer as the new and authentic way of interaction with God which they desperately did by communication through other creatures.

When John inscribed that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (1:14), he meant that God became human being and lived in a particular geographical location in a specific culture. It is by virtue of God living among the community of John in the human form (Jesus Christ) that his $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ was beheld on various occasions including raising Lazarus up. This led to the transformation of the Johannine cultural horizon. The repercussion is that for a culture to experience the transformational power of the gospel, two key requirements may be needed. God must reveal himself in a specific culture, and God must speak their language.

In the Krobo experience, God manifested himself through nature, tradition and culture, the Basel missionaries and other servants of God who propagated the good news. Also through

the various translations of the bible, most specifically the Dangme bible, God spoke to the Krobos. Having seen, or rather known God through Christ (14:9), the Krobo believer in Christ no longer speaks via the wind to God, but gains access to God through Jesus Christ on all occasions.

4.3.2 Jesus the Conqueror of Death

Death has reigned over humanity since the days of Adam, but Christ has conquered it through the resurrection of Lazarus (11:43-44) and above all, through his own resurrection (20:1ff). When Jesus says in 11:25, "I am the Resurrection" rather than I am the resurrected one, or the one who will rise, he describes the role of his glorification in the life of believers whom he indwells rather than something which occurred in his own life.³²⁰ By this declaration, he broke the mystery surrounding death. It is also a manifestation that Christ has power over all classifications of death according to Krobo cosmology, be it natural, impromptu, or abominable.

In principle, death has been transfigured without rendering it an illusion. For the traditional Krobo who is in constant fear of death and the dead, a new horizon of hope is opened through faith in Jesus. That is Jesus conquered death in the lives of those who believed in him, whether in response to his words, his miracles or his disciples (5:24). Now, by establishing relationship with Jesus, he expels the fear of death which has enslaved the Krobo since time immemorial. Christ does not only become spiritually present in his/her life as he/she becomes a disciple like Lazarus, but above all, in his/her death and the life hereafter. With this new Christian status, the gospel of John invites him/her to trust Jesus in order to be

³²⁰ Sandra M. Schneiders, "John 20:11-28: The Encounter of the Easter Jesus with Mary Magdalene-A Transformative Feminist Reading," in *What is John? Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 156.

emancipated from the constant fear of death, and similar life situations. The text beckons Krobo Christians to believe and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior who not only conquered death, but gives eternal life.

With the promise of life after death, the Johannine text re-proposes a new understanding of death to the Krobo Christian community. He/she is called upon to confront the reality of death with the hope of resurrection, and eternal life in Christ. The Krobo believer is beckoned to see death not as a calamity, but a means to a better relationship with Christ. Having so seen death, mourning the dead would no more be in state of hopelessness; weeping as well would not be out of anxieties and uncertainties of the afterlife, but as a sign of love and nostalgia of the faithful departed (11:36).

4.3.3 Jesus the Life

Though not explicitly stated, Lazarus probably was the first child of his parents to die. He died without a wife/wives and children to mourn him. In Krobo cosmology, either a broomstick or an alligator pepper would have been thrust into his manhood because he has not lived a life in full; hence he would not be considered an ancestor. As Gatti observed, the innocent death of the just is not a relevant subject within the African cultural context: a person that dies at a young age without leaving behind any offspring cannot be innocent; and does not remain in the collective memory, because he cannot be numbered among the ancestors.³²¹ The Johannine text here seeks to engage the Krobo culture in a dialogue to rethink the notion that it is rituals and social standing which confer full human status on a person. Though Lazarus may not have attained the social standing according to Krobo criteria, for Jesus, Lazarus is complete and reflects the image of God.

³²¹ N. Gatti, "L'alterità negata. Egesi pragmatica e interculturale di Gen 4,1-16," in *Il Diverso e lo Straniero nella Bibbia Ebraico-Cristiana*, Massimo Grilli and Joseph Maleparamphil, eds. (Bologna: EDB, 2013), 48.

The text challenges the Krobo Christian to recognize and accept the fact that God accepts all irrespective of social, religious or economic status. The death and resurrection of Lazarus impresses upon the believer that the way one dies does not make a difference. It does not matter whether one died through labour, accident, during the period of widowhood, or by HIV/AIDS, Ebola, old age, or any other disaster. It is the person's personal association and trust in Jesus, the resurrection and life which matters. In Jesus, there is neither *adebɔ gbenɔ* (natural death), *kpatu gbenɔ* (impromptu death), nor *otɔfo gbenɔ* (abominable death). What matters is acknowledging and having personal relationship with Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Apart from the physical life, Jesus offers spiritual life often referred to as life in full or eternal life (10:10, 20:31). For what concerns the afterlife, John did not give a very elaborate view to his community, but hinted that the anchor of this life is faith in Christ. It is this life that Jesus meant when he said, "Whoever believes in me will never die" (11:26). Though nobody can describe in full what eternal life is because none has experienced it in its real sense except Jesus Christ who existed before the beginning of time, the Christian is certain. The certainty of the believer is based on trust in Jesus' promise. This promise is sure because he that promised is dependable and can be trusted. Jesus has promised life after this life when the dead shall rise and die no more. In that life, God will be present and the believer and all followers of Christ are members and part of the community (14:1-4).

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the major themes arising from the analysis of the meaning of life and death from the perspectives of both the Johannine and Krobo communities. It sought to understand the relevance of the concepts to the Krobo Christian which is the answer to the research question posed namely: what is the meaning of life and death in John 11:1-54, and

what is its relevance to the contemporary Krobo reader? The section also explored what the text meant to the Krobo Christian. It further reflected on an engagement between the community of the text and the Krobo culture. An attempt was made to observe how there could exist a symbiotic relationship leading to an informed understanding from both viewpoints. It is established that for both communities the issue of life and death is fundamental.

Like the Krobo, the Johannine community was overwhelmed with the dread of death. But their encounter with Jesus Christ enhanced their understanding and liberated them from this fear through the resurrection of Lazarus. Jesus gave them a new sense of hope in seemingly hopeless situation, and condition when confronted with death. He unraveled the mystery surrounding death by the raising of Lazarus from the dead and his own resurrection. In Christ therefore, there is no death; death can only mean the absence of Christ. Death is no more a calamity but a doorway to eternal life.

It is observed that God is at the center of the Krobo reflection about life and death, but unlike the Johannine community, they access him through other intermediaries. In that sense, the text proposes to the Krobo Christian Jesus as the new way to God. It projects the Johannine Jesus as the source of life to believers in him, not dependent upon social standing and rituals, but relationship with Christ. Thus with Jesus, every human is complete. John introduced Jesus to the Krobo as the conqueror of death which for a long time had enslaved them, and invites the community to re-experience death with the hope of resurrection rather than in calamity, fear and bondage.

Finally, though no one can describe life after death in full, the Johannine community's understanding of the phenomenon is enhanced by the presence of Jesus. It is a life in which

mortality has no functional effect, a life for all believers in which God himself is present.

This kind of life is the one into which the Krobo Christian is invited to participate.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter presents a summary of the findings based on the research questions guiding the research and result obtained from the data gathered from the field. The main thesis is to demonstrate how to interpret the concept of life and death in John 11:1-54 from Krobo perspective. The chapter also presents conclusions on facts drawn from the findings and the main thesis of the study. Lastly, it made some recommendations for the purpose of further academic discourse, and some pastoral concerns.

5.2 Summary

The study explored the concepts of life and death by interpreting John 11:1-54 from Krobo perspective. It sought to answer the question as to what is the meaning of life and death in the Johannine community and its relevance to the Krobo Christian community. The research analyzed both the core pericope, John 11:1-54 and the Krobo culture, for the possibility of a mutual discourse. To achieve this goal, the study applied the three steps suggested by Ossom-Batsa's communicative perspective as a guiding framework. The first is the exegesis of the text, employing narrative criticism. The second is the exegesis of reality (Krobo culture) and finally, engagement of the text and culture. The Krobo culture was analyzed using the phenomenological approach. In this approach, three main tools were used namely: interviews, focused group discussions and participant observation.

Chapter two is the analysis of the text employing narrative criticism. Beginning with delimitation, the chapter set the lower and upper boundaries of the text, giving it the desired focus. The analyses brought to the fore three major theological themes which were used to engage the Krobo culture.

In the first place, the thesis established that Jesus is the way to God (11:43-44; 14:6-10). He is the way to the Father (13: 3; 16:5, 10, 17). As the link to the Father, he not only shows people the way, but he himself is the way, and leads the way to God through his redemptive work. He is the connection between God and the stiff-necked world. He leads the way for sinners to be reconciled to God, and for the dead world to have life. He connected the Johannine community to God through interactions, fellowship and teachings. Martha realized this and proclaimed him as the Christ, the Son of God who was coming into the world. He came to lead the way back to the Father so that all through him might have life and have life in full (10:10).

Secondly, the exegesis revealed Jesus as the conqueror of death (5:24; 11:43-44). Thus, the Johannine Jesus has destroyed death which is considered impediment to life. As the conqueror of death, he raised Lazarus from the dead to demystify death. It follows that those who have faith in him have passed from death to life (5:24). Death no more has control over them.

Finally, it established Jesus as the life (3:16; 4: 14; 5:21, 24-26, 39; 6:35, 40; 10:10, 28; 11:25; 17:3). He is not only the life, but gives life (3:16). As the life, he gives eternal security to those who come to him, so that people may perish no more (10:28). Faith in Jesus as the giver of life opens one's eyes to, as it were, behold and attain the promise of the fullness of life which Christ has made. Jesus is both the life and the source of life to his followers.

Chapter three presents the second step of the methodology namely, exegesis of the reality. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first part, considered the Krobo understanding of life (*wami*) through the study of concepts such as the personhood, commencement of life, removal of evils including *gu*, *okpe*, and *alɔkpli*; some basic beliefs about the Krobos among others. The second segment analyzed the Krobo understanding of death. The study classified

death into three: impromptu (*kpatu gbenɔ*), abominable (*otɔfo gbenɔ*), and normal death (*adebɔ gbenɔ*). Among the three, abominable death (*otɔfo gbenɔ*) is deemed the most detestable. The Krobo perception about the two phenomena suggests an emphasis on the sanctity and communal sense of life, God the source of death, and the fear of the afterlife.

The fourth chapter considers the third and final step of the methodology, which is the dialogical engagement between the text and the culture. It sought to answer such questions as how the Krobo reader understands and interprets the story of Lazarus as located in John 11:1-54, what happens when the Krobo believer encounters the text and *vice versa*, and how the Krobo Christian appropriates the suggested call to action in the text to his/her *Sitz im Leben*. The chapter observed that the Krobo comes to the text with a set of cultural presuppositions which make him/her question some aspects of the text. It is established that the Krobo Christian had issues with the reactions of Jesus, Martha and the Sanhedrin in the text. He/she has reservations about Jesus not according the message of Lazarus' ill-health the necessary consideration, and saying it was for God's glory (vv. 4-5), why he tarried for a number of days (v. 6), why Martha went to the tomb to weep (vv. 30-31), and how Sanhedrin could scheme to eliminate Jesus (vv. 45-54).

5.3 Conclusions

The thesis argued that the concepts of life and death are very important phenomena for both the Johannine and the Krobo socio-cultural settings. These twin terminologies are not only used to express what the two communities communicate in terms of their aspirations in life and in death, but also the hereafter.

Within the context of Johannine theology, it appears that the search for life is central. This quest for life is the community's attempt to secure salvation. That is, to obtain a kind of life over which death has no dominion (11: 24-25). The evangelist in line with this used the sign

of raising Lazarus from the dead to present Jesus as giver of life which is the solution to the quest for life (v. 43-44).³²² Jesus offers holistic life— physical, moral, and eternal. He is the principle and source of life (14:6). This is emphasized by his statement; “I am the resurrection and the life” (v. 25).

The thesis established that life in the NT is expressed by two Greek words, ζωή and βίος. While ζωή means life as contrasted with θάνατος, βίος is the period, the means or the manner of existence. But John further expressed life in two categories, ψυχή and ζωή, physical and spiritual. The physical life is subject to death, but the spiritual life, or eternal life offered by Jesus is beyond the domain of death (v. 25).

This ‘life in full’ is personal, and non-transferable. It is obtainable and activated only by faith and trust in Jesus. Lazarus was consequently raised to inspire such a faith and trust which will enable the disciples establish a personal relationship with Jesus and the Father (11:14), leading to eternal life. Faith in the divine life-giver opens one’s eye to behold and attain the fullness of life. When Jesus asked Martha whether she believed, he was referring to this kind of faith upon which eternal life depended (vv. 26, 40). The life in question is not entirely eschatological. That is a promise for the adherent to be received not in some distant future, but a realized eschatology. Since in John’s context Jesus is the life, his physical presence in the Johannine world therefore signifies life. The life in the believer is the presence of Christ in him/her.

The research established further that death is a real human problem, and a source of great grief to humankind. The community of John regarded physical death as painful, an unwelcomed experience, and an ‘indispensable’ enemy (11:31, 33; 20:2, 11, 13, 15). That

³²² C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge-London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 366.

was what the message from the Bethany sisters to Jesus intended to avoid (11:3); so also the disciples protest against the Judean trip (11:8), and Jesus' avoidance of public appearances (11:54). Death is associated with pain and mourning as demonstrated especially by the grief of Mary, Martha, the Jews (11:31-32), and Jesus himself (11:35). But with faith in Jesus, death is not finality.

From the study, we can conclude that Jesus is the life, and gives life in full. Because he is the life, he has overcome death. And so he is the resurrection and the life. In his absence death could reign as it did in the case of Lazarus. But just as his presence enabled Lazarus to regain his life, so he does for all who hear his word and believe. Death, could therefore, be considered as the absence of Christ, whilst life signifies his presence. Physical death, consequently, is not the end of the believer. For after all, what death does to the believer is to open to him/her a doorway to a better life in eternity.

The thesis analyzed the cultural reality using the phenomenological approach, and concluded that life in Krobo thought denotes vitality in human beings, animals and plants. This is evidenced in their petitions through libations and rituals. Though the individual is responsible for his/her life (*wami*), personal deeds and actions, life in general must be lived in harmony with fellow humans, the environment, and the unseen world that include *Mawu*, the ancestors (*nimeli*), the gods and other spirits (*jemεawɔhi*). This relationship is made possible through prayers, rituals, and sacrifices. A break in this relationship may have severe consequences. Life means continuous cycle of many years, marriage, having many children and seeing one's grand and great-grandchildren. No matter how worthy one is, life is never fulfilled without having children. Dying in the state of childlessness is reckoned pitiful and could disenfranchise one from the Krobo ancestral role of honor.

We have also found out that death is considered a calamity and a great loss. That is why the Krobo mourns the dead and expresses condolences to the bereaved. There are several beliefs about the afterlife which include the idea of *blaami* (reincarnation), becoming an ancestor, or going home, which are supposed to help both the living and the dead to cope with the reality of death. However, neither these nor the catchy obituary captions such as “Glorious home call,” “At rest,” nor even the Christian idea of life after death, and belief in eternal life is able to completely cure the mischief surrounding death. These ideas sound great from dogmatic position, but in practice it is difficult for the Krobo to grapple with. It explains why nobody in his/her right sense would want to, and is ready to die.

Our analysis has established that in the encounter between the text and the Krobo culture, there are common ideas shared by both communities about the concepts of life and death. For both, life is not only sacred, but communal; and even though they seem to concur that death could not occur outside the knowledge of God, understanding death as a phenomenon continues to pose a challenge. For the Krobo, there is constant fear of death, and the afterlife. For this reason, in the textual encounter with the Krobo Christian, the text invites him/her to accept Jesus as the master over death in order to face both life and death with hope through Jesus as the life and the resurrection. In Jesus, the concept of resurrection from the dead which appears absent from Krobo belief systems is introduced, with intent to minimize the pain of loss, and grant hope for the future and the afterlife. In this encounter, there is a symbiotic relationship in which the text influences the culture, and the culture shapes the text. The chapter concluded that though death was a real challenge to the Johannine community, just as it is to the Krobo, Jesus Christ has demystified it by raising Lazarus back to life and his own resurrection. The Krobo community is thus beckoned to encounter the Johannine Christ and share in his life.

5.4 Recommendations

The recommendation section of the thesis is divided into two parts, academic and pastoral.

5.4.1 Academic

From the arguments emanating from the analysis of both the text and the reality, it is realized that the topic, “The concepts of Life and death: Interpreting John 11:1-54 from Krobo Perspective” has not been fully exhausted, and there is the need for further academic engagement. The thesis proposes the following for future scholarly enquiry and discourse:

1. A Comparative study of life and death in the Krobo religio-cultural setting and the Gospel of John
2. Comparing and Contrasting the Johannine and Krobo view of the afterlife.
3. Dangme reflection on the concepts of Life, death, resurrection and reincarnation in relation to the New Testament.

There is also an urgent need for a Krobo (Dangme) lexicon; the absence of which is the gradual loss of lots of the traditional vocabulary as most of the youth, more especially the educated, prefer speaking English to the mother-tongue.

5.4.2 Pastoral

From pastoral perspective the research recommends that the holy scriptures especially, the gospel of John, chapter 11 be used to help Krobo Christians organize funerals in a way that will show the presence of Christ as the life and conqueror of death. In this regard, the funeral will be solemn, devoid of opulence, and showmanship which have characterized funerals among Krobos today. The presence of Christ within the funeral organization would also minimize the fear of death for which reason there are classifications of death.

It is further recommended that the Christian church intensifies teachings on the mission and ministry of Christ as the life and the source of life. This understanding will enable the Krobo Christian appreciate that life comes through faith and trust in Jesus. It is not dependent upon the person's social, economic, or marital status.

The thesis recommends Jesus' pastoral strategy in John 11 to be adopted to guide the contextualization of the Christian faith in the Krobo context. Just as Jesus gradually built Martha's faith during their encounter (11:17-27), so biblical truth about life, death, resurrection, and the afterlife must be steadily expounded in order that disciples of Christ in Kroboland will be grounded in faith. They should be led through thorough bible study to build their faith in Jesus Christ as the source of life, the way to God the Father, and the conqueror of death as demonstrated by the raising of Lazarus. By this they will be empowered to confront death and issues of life with hope.

Based on the compassion Jesus had for Lazarus, by raising him from the dead, the kind of love and sympathy Mary and Martha had for Lazarus, and the sympathy of the Jews from Jerusalem for the Bethany family, it is recommended that the Krobo Christian widower must show the same sympathy and love for his deceased spouse as does the widow. As realized from the analysis of the culture, whereas the widow is compelled by tradition to mourn the deceased husband, the widower is under no such obligation. To this end, the thesis recommends a dialogue between the Christian churches and Krobo traditional authorities on this subject. The following outfit is proposed for discussion: black footwear, a specific black or red hat/cap, a particular bead on the wrist, and abstinence from sex for a period which could be half that of the widow.³²³ I am fully aware of the debate this proposal might spark regarding polygamous families, besides the Krobo community being patriarchal; but

³²³ These are proposals which a healthy dialogue could shape.

polygamy or patriarchalism cannot be enough a justifiable ground for not mourning a deceased loving wife.³²⁴

Finally, I hope that academically, the thesis has added knowledge to the African cultural biblical hermeneutical debate by the reciprocal engagement of the text and the Krobo culture. Pastorally, it has contributed to an informed understanding of the gospel of John by helping the Krobo Christian to put the faith and trust in Jesus as the life and conqueror of death.



³²⁴ This should not be considered as asking more than could be granted since our Ada neighbors have a similar tradition

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APPENDIX I

GLOSSARY OF USED KROBO WORDS

<i>Adebo gbeno</i>	natural death
<i>Amane</i>	another name for death
<i>Ani we</i>	place for the righteous after death
<i>Bajome</i>	brothers-in-law
<i>Bosowe</i>	place for the wicked after death
<i>Blaami</i>	reincarnation
<i>Dom</i>	the capital town of the Krobos
<i>Dipo</i>	the puberty rite for young girls before they get pregnant
<i>Gbeje</i>	the world of the dead
<i>Gbeno</i>	death
<i>Gbeno yaya</i>	evil/bad death
<i>Hlangu</i>	cowry
<i>Huanim weku</i>	family in the astral world
<i>Huanim' huno</i>	husband in the astral world
<i>Huanim' jem'</i>	astral world
<i>Huanim' nye</i>	mother in the astral world
<i>Huanim' tse</i>	father in the astral world
<i>Huanim' yo</i>	wife in the astral world
<i>Hueme</i>	friends
<i>Jemior Jem'</i>	the material world
<i>Klo-yo</i>	Krobo Mountain
<i>Kpakplakuhi</i>	material properties of the deceased
<i>Kpatu gbeno</i>	impromptu death
<i>Kpade</i>	ghost
<i>Kplokoto</i>	prosperity
<i>Lolono</i>	love is ended
<i>Manye</i>	blessings
<i>Mime</i>	myrrh
<i>Ngma</i>	millet
<i>Ngatsemε</i>	fathers-in law and sons- in-law
<i>Nopulo</i>	the one with authority to oversee burials
<i>Ni gbogboehi a si tlemi</i>	resurrection of the dead
<i>Nimeli</i>	ancestors
<i>Oglojo</i>	Krobo cultural orchestra used to celebrate funerals
<i>Ohe</i>	incense
<i>Otofogbeno</i>	abominable death
<i>Tsopatse</i>	medicine-man
<i>Wami</i>	life
<i>Yobu</i>	malevolence
<i>Yono</i>	upper country
<i>Zugba</i>	the land
<i>Zugba Zu</i>	Mother Earth

APPENDIX II: PICTURES



Nene Sackite II, Paramount Chief of Manya Klo traditional area flanked by his elders during the *Yokama* (ideal woman) celebration. *Yokama* is one of the activities marking the 2015 Ngngmayem festival.



Some ancient rocks in the Krobo Mountain



Ascene on the Krobo Mountain.



A portion of the Kpong-Tema end view of the Klo-yo. (Picture taken by the researcher on 18/01/2016 at 2.00 pm)



Some ladies relaxing on a rock in the mountain.



Some Krobo beads on display during the 2015 Ngmayem Festival





These young girls are waiting for their turn to perform the popular Krobo traditional klama



The researcher on the Krobo Mountain