



Proverbs in Akan highlife lyrics: A case study of Alex Konadu's lyrics

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ABSTRACT

In pragmatics, the proverbs serve as one of the major tools of politeness and indirection. They effectively help the composer to politely comment on very delicate issues without incurring the displeasure of his audience. This paper examines the use of proverbs in Ghanaian folksongs. It highlights the pragmatic aspects, didactic and communicative functions of proverbs. The data for discussion is based on Akan proverbs extracted from four popular songs by the late Alex Konadu, a renowned highlife musician. The paper is discussed under the theoretical framework of linguistic politeness, which reflects the use of tactful and practical language to obviate crisis. We will subject the proverbs to socio-linguistic semantic, stylistic and pragmatic analyses. The paper argues that proverbs are indispensable in Akan oratory and politeness systems and form part of speakers' communicative competence. Konadu spices his songs with proverbs that enrich the lyrics. The paper demonstrates that generally music serves as a storage facility for the documentation of Akan proverbs. It finally comments on the absence of proverbs in current Ghanaian highlife lyrics and its replacement with vulgar language, and recommends ways for improving this precarious literary situation.

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1. Introduction

The introduction deals with the background information of proverbs, the Akan people, information about the musician and the justification and aims of this paper. The paper demonstrates the creative power of an Akan renowned highlife composer. Highlife is a Ghanaian contemporary genre with authorship that emerged out of Akan traditional folksongs around 1920s (Collins, 2010). This paper notes how the Akans consider the usefulness of proverbs and witty sayings in Akan highlife songs. Oral literature scholars like Agyekum (2005), Finnegan (2012), Okpewho (1992) and Yankah (1989) have researched extensively into proverbs, however, not much has been written on the connection between proverbs and highlife songs.

In this paper, we consider proverbs as a pragmatic tool in indirection. Proverbs are terse sayings that embody general truths or principles and ways of life. The proverbs in the selected songs in this paper assist listeners to cognitively understand the general truths of the Akan people. These are based on their socio-cultural concepts, beliefs, ideology, perception, mindset, philosophy, worldview, past experiences, and social structures (see Agyekum, 2012: 11, Brookman-Amisshah, 1985).

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Agyekum (2005: 9) opines that “proverbs are interpretations of traditional wisdom based on the experiences and socio-political life of our elders.” In Akan indigenous communication, speakers' abilities to use appropriate proverbs in right socio-cultural and pragmatic contexts¹ depict their competences and versatility in the language. In Agyekum (2005, 2016), the oral artist, Alex Konadu uses a series of proverbs in his highlife lyrics to depict his competence in the Akan language. The crafty ways by which the proverbs were aesthetically interwoven to promote the song's communicative functions, identify the artist's creativity.

The indigenous Akans conceptualise proverbs as the most precious stone of speech that curtails matters. Again, the proverb is an indispensable and aesthetic device of vitality that spices and enhances the taste of speech. Proverbs are thus very important aspects of the Akan politeness system and effective communication.

Proverbs are used as polite pragmatic verbal strategies that effectively handle tense situations in Akan face-to-face communication. Multiple proverbs in language concretise the value of language and the positive attributes of the speaker to effectively handle very delicate and face-threatening acts and depict his politeness level (see Agyekum, (see Agyekum, 2012, 2017; Yankah, 1989, 1991). A well versed and cultured Akan speaker who knows the background of his/her interactants, and the context of speech, uses proverbs in appropriate contexts are discussed in this paper.

Hussein (2005: 61) discussed African proverbs and how African literary arts scholars have placed premium on proverbs in communication. Hussein asserted the indispensability of proverbs and their strong links with philosophy and thought. He cited Finnegan (2012), Oluwole (1997) and Ssetuba (2002) as seen below.

Oluwole (1997: 100) records that among Africans, “proverbs are the analytic tools of thought, when thought is lost; it is proverbs that are used to search for it”. Ssetuba (2002: 1) opines that “The proverb is regarded as a noble genre of African oral tradition that enjoys the prestige of a custodian of a people's wisdom and philosophy of life.” Finnegan (2012: 380) posits that “In many African cultures, a feeling for language, for imagery, and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology comes out particularly clearly in proverbs.” All the above, place proverbs as one of the best pragmatic tools for effective communication and presentation of people's ideas based on the socio-cultural and ethnopragmatic perspectives. Konadu finds it prudent to use proverbs as persuasive and indirect politeness strategy in his songs.

1.1. The Akan people

The word ‘Akan’ refers to both the people and their language. The Akans are the largest ethnic group in Ghana. In the 2010 national population census, 47.5% of the Ghanaian population were Akans and about 44% of them speak Akan as non-native speakers.

The Akans are found predominantly in southern Ghana. Akan is spoken as a native language in nine out of the sixteen regions in Ghana namely, Ahafo, Ashanti, Bono, Bono East, Central, Eastern, Oti, Western, and Western North Regions. The Akan speaking communities in the Oti Region are sandwiched by Ewe and Gur language communities. The Akan language has 13 dialects, namely Agona, Akuapem, Akwamu, Akyem, Asante, Assin, Bono, Buem, Denkyira, Fante, Kwawu, Twifo and Wassaw. Some Bono speakers are found in Cote d'Ivoire. Akan is studied from primary school up to the university level (Agyekum, 2019: 310).

1.2. Socio-cultural background of Alex Konadu

Alex Konadu was born in 1950 at Adwumakaase Kεse, a village in the Kwabre III district of the Ashanti Region. His parents featured prominently in the village's local Adowa Orchestra. Konadu's knowledge in composition and the blend of Akan folk songs and highlife was hereditary. He acquired and absorbed the ideas, language and techniques of composition and singing from his parents. He used his creativity to tap from the large repertoire of relevant local materials to compose highlife songs (see Agyekum, 2005).

Konadu completed his elementary education in 1967 and immediately joined the Akwaboa Guitar Band from 1968 to 1971 as one of the leading vocalist and composers. In 1973–1974, he joined Happy Brothers Band as a vocalist. In 1975, he established his own band, Konadu's Guitar Band, and released his first record in 1976. Konadu won the “Band of the Year” award for two consecutive years in 1976 and 1977 and was consequently named “One Man Thousand” based on the prowess of his constant new releases. Konadu was versatile, and his works covered Akan social life.

Apart from compositions, Konadu featured prominently in Ghanaian Highlife at funerals, and had dances and short popular drama performances. He embarked on musical tours to the US, Canada and parts of Europe. He was a Christian and a chorister of the Methodist Church and was conversant with classical music but his major interest was in African traditional music.

1.3. Objectives of the study

The aim of this paper is to investigate how proverbs can be effectively used as a tool of indirection to comment on Akan sociocultural issues via highlife songs. This paper looks at the proverbs in music from Akan linguistic politeness systems

¹ Brookman-Amisshah (1985: 84) states that “The effectiveness of a maxim is its contextuality. To isolate a maxim from its concrete occasion or situation is to invite obscurity.”-

and ethnomusicology. It argues that one of the best ways to understand the use of proverbs in highlife is to subject the study to anthropological and pragmatic review. The pragmatics views the proverbs as practical ways of using them in context (see [Mey, 2001](#)). The discussion will be linked to ethnopragsmatics and indirection to see how Ghanaian highlife artistes embark on politeness in their compositions and performances, bearing in mind the potential face-threatening acts in their songs.

In this paper, we will note that even though some hiplifers use some level of proverbs, they cannot be compared to the highlife composers in the 1960s–1980s. The current generation rather uses vulgar language by hiding behind sound resemblances e.g. *hwε*, ‘to look’ and *twε*, ‘vagina’. The problem is that the current highlife composers lack the competence in the rich Akan language full of politeness and indirection in their compositions. The research questions are:

1. What is the role of politeness and indirection in highlife lyrics?
2. How do proverbs function as tools of politeness in highlife lyrics?
3. What lessons can the current highlife and hiplife musicians pick from the old ones like Alex Konadu?
4. Why are the departments of linguistics and African studies interested in oral literature and folksongs?

2. Theoretical framework

This paper hinges on the theory of politeness by [Brown and Levinson \(1987\)](#). Politeness can be defined as proper social conduct, awareness of etiquette and tactful consideration for others (see [Grundy, 2000](#)). [Ide \(1989: 225\)](#) posits that.

“Linguistic politeness is the language usage associated with smooth communication realized through the speaker’s use of intentional strategies to allow his or her message to be received favourably by the addressee, and the speaker’s choice of expressions to conform to the expected and/or prescribed norms of speech appropriate to the contextual situation in individual speech communities.”

The above definition conforms with the Akan traditional mode of communication where interlocutors should respect the cultural norms and values of the society but not limit themselves to individuals. [Mills \(2015: 129\)](#) states that “Brown and Levinson proposed that politeness is largely strategic, a calculation that speakers make when interacting with others about the social distance from the other person, the power relation between them and the ‘cost’ of the imposition on the other”. In Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory, individuals need to maintain and defend their ‘face’, and maintain their self-image during social interactions with others (see [Mills, 2015](#)). They must at the same time avoid face threatening acts (FTAs), which potentially disturb the balance of face maintenance among interactants. Politeness is a viable theory for the discussion of proverbs as an essential source of indirection and the face concepts in social interaction.²

2.1. Criticisms of the politeness theory

The major criticism levelled against Brown and Levinson was the notion of Universalism. They claimed politeness was universal and could cater for all languages; and cultures subscribe to the same system of politeness. Another criticism is that the model is too Anglocentric and not an effective model for describing politeness in Japanese, Chinese and other Asian, American and African cultures.

Again, Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory is not manifested in collective cultures like the Akans of Ghana. [Mills \(2015\)](#) looks at collectivist cultures as follows.

Collectivist cultures are those where the group is seen to be at the fore and the individual is not seen to be of the greatest value. In collectivist cultures, [Triandis et al. \(1990\)](#) argue, the group has primacy and individuals give up their personal autonomy to the group. Individuals are not seen and do not see themselves as isolated but rather solely as part of a social whole. Collectivist cultures emphasize adhering to cultural norms and harmony. One’s position within a grouping is at the core of one’s value and status ([Mills, 2015: 134](#)).

In African collectivist (communalistic/antipersonalistic) societies, politeness’ strategies and expressions avoid conflict and provide harmony among communicative participants and thus strengthen the collectivist aspect of African culture (see [Agyekum, 2004; Matsumoto, 1989](#)).³ In a collectivist society like Akan, the group has a binding force on the individuals, and the societal norms and values are dictated by the society, and individuals must conform for mutual cohesion to prevail. In collectivism, the priority is on the communal goals instead of the individual’s because the individual can only exist effectively if the society exists. In Alex Konadu’s lyrics, the proverbs and other stylistic devices take cognizance of Akan collectivist nature, indirection and politeness systems.

² [Gu \(1990\)](#) posits that among the Chinese, politeness is more appropriately seen as adherence to social norms than attending to individual’s face wants.

³ [Brown and Levinson \(1987: 129–211\)](#) discusses some major strategies of negative politeness namely (a) *be indirect*, (b) *apologise*, (c) *minimise the imposition*, (d) *give deference*, etc. The use of proverbs in Akan communication conforms to all these, especially being indirect and minimising the imposition.

2.2. Indirection and its roles

One of the pillars of politeness in Akan is the use of indirection as a social interaction strategy (see [Brown and Levinson, 1987](#): 129ff.). Indirection is the art of not speaking directly, but saying one thing and meaning another. In indirection, there is a transfer from one reference point to the other and the linguistic forms do not directly reflect their communicative purposes.

[Obeng \(1994](#): 42) defines verbal indirection as “a communicative strategy in which interactants abstain from directness in order to obviate crises or in order to communicate difficulty and thus make their utterance consistent with face and politeness.” The conventions of indirectness vary across speech communities but they all aim at social cohesion and harmony.

Indirection is considered a non-committal strategy that prevents the easy assignment of malicious motives to its user. By its ambiguity, the speaker cannot be committed to one particular interpretation of his act. Indirection can preserve and save the speaker's face and avoid conflict and crises; it thus depicts the speaker's mastery of oratory and politeness.

In collectivists' cultures like Japan, Akan and the other Ghanaian cultures, indirection is adjudged more polite than directness. Konadu cleverly uses proverbs as a form of indirection in his highlife songs to embellish his language. The proverbs and indirection are used to skirt and avoid delicate issues, and to mitigate the shock of face-to-face communication. Polite and indirect forms are used by high cultured and communicatively competent Akan speakers.

Indirection falls within the general framework of politeness which encapsulates the face concept. [Owomoyela \(1988](#): 11) avers that “To the Yoruba, Speech is like an egg when dropped it shatters, because of this, proper care must be taken during speech since an improper verbalization may lead to serious consequences.” It implies that language is precious and fragile like the egg. The face in speech is so vulnerable that it can hurt and also receive hurt. A high premium is thus put on face-to-face communication rather than writing in purely oral-based languages, especially in African. In Akan power relations, pertinent issues are perfectly discussed using indirection, and one of the best reliable and time tested tools is the proverb.

Strategies involved in indirection include, metaphors, proverbs, euphemisms, circumlocution, innuendoes, irony, sarcasm, folksongs, etc. These are meant to avoid direct confrontations in social interactions. These strategies are part of the training of children in collectivist societies like the Akan.

2.3. Ethnomusicology and Akan folk songs

Ethno-music and folksongs are songs that relate the indigenous songs to the people's culture, ideology, religion, belief systems, philosophy and their worldview. Ethnomusicology is one of the avenues by which one can understand people's language, culture and behaviour very well through their music. To better understand and appreciate people's music you need some level of knowledge of their language, culture and their contextual use of language (pragmatics). Ethnomusicologists go beyond the form, description, structure and analysis, and study the people's music from anthropological standpoints that encompass their culture and language ([Agyekum et al., 2019](#)). The functions of the music and their interrelationship with other aspects of life are considered.

Ethnomusicologists investigate, document and preserve music as a physical, psychological, aesthetic and socio-cultural phenomenon that involves many aspects of human activities. These include language, history, social identity (individual and group), gender, politics, economics, religion, indigenous knowledge, and creative arts. It is upon this backdrop that this paper is discussed employing proverbs to see how the Akans use music to store their proverbs, and further embellish their musical texts. It considers how music is effectively used in social pragmatics and cultural contexts.

Oral literature scholars like [Finnegan \(2012\)](#) and [Okpewho \(1992\)](#) devoted some chapters of their books to folksongs and discussed various types of songs from anthropological standpoints. [Finnegan's \(2012\)](#) chapter 10 is captioned “Topical and Political songs”. She asserts that songs are used as forms of indirection to comment on delicate issues especially those about traditional rulers and people in higher positions. Finnegan therefore states:

This indirect means of communicating with someone in power through the artistic medium of a song is a way by which the singers hope to influence while at the same time avoiding the open danger of speaking directly. The conventionality of the song makes it possible to indicate publicly what could not be said privately or directly to a man's face ([Finnegan, 2012](#): 268).

Indirection is employed as a pragmatic tool to obviate crisis in social relations and interactions. In ethnomusicology, researchers approach music as a social phenomenon, by investigating and analysing it within an ethnographical framework that considers the ethnopragmatics of people's language and culture from the inner perspectives. Since ethnomusicology deals with music in socio-cultural context, Alex Konadu, Nana Ampadu, Ampofo Agyei and most Akan renowned highlife musicians intersperse their musical texts with many proverbs as tools in indirection. Among the Akans, one of the marks of a person's communicative competence is the mastery of proverbs in their appropriate contextual usage (see [Agyekum, 2005, 2016](#)). Most of Konadu's proverbs are on death, for Asantes spend so much time on death and funerals.

3. Methodology

The methodology was basically qualitative through interviews and secondary data. This paper is a continuation proverbs usage by the renowned Akan highlife composer Konadu. Some of the earlier papers looked at the use of parallel proverbs and

how they have been cleverly crafted in Akan highlife song. Alex Konadu died in 2010, so it was impossible to interview him; the paper therefore relied on secondary data (see [Agyekum, 2005](#)).

The paper discussed the proverbs from four of Alex Konadu's songs on CD and on YouTube. Using this method the songs could be listened to many times to transcribe them accurately. It gave the opportunity to track back any time there was any doubt about the authenticity of particular expressions or sentences. The portions of the songs on proverbs and their contexts are transcribed and translated from the Akan language into English. I used Google Search to find the record labels and years of release of the four songs under this study. The proverbs are analysed from ethnomusicological and pragmatic levels by looking at their themes, stylistic forms and communicative functions.

Two retired Akan lecturers of the University of Ghana and some M. Phil holders of Akan were interviewed. Apart from them, Mr. Daniel Amponsah (aka Agya Koo Nimo, a folksong composer) and Mr. Bosie Amponsah a retired Akan broadcaster and Akan language and culture expert were consulted. The interviews and consultations were conducted to get better interpretations and contextual usage of the proverbs in the lyrics.

4. Analyses of proverbs in Konadu's song

This section looks at syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and thematic analyses of the proverbs in the texts of Konadu's four songs. The analyses are meant to open the gates for further research in oral Akan literature. They look at the interface between music and language especially, folksongs and highlife as genres that can be studied in the departments of languages and institutes of African studies. The analyses group the proverbs into four thematic areas, namely (1) death, (2) family, (3) disobedience and self-affliction, and (4) opportunistic behaviour. Each thematic proverb is taken from any of the four songs and discussed in details before the others. The titles of the songs and the lines in which the proverbs appear are given in [Appendix](#).⁴ Each song text and proverbs are translated from Akan into English and analysed. In the thematic discussion of the songs, each proverb comes with its sequential number as found in the [Appendix](#).

4.1. Proverbs on death

In discussing Akan proverbs about death, Brookman-Amisshah postulates that

The use of proverbs in Africa is mainly an oral art which serves as a rhetorical device to add spice to speech and human discourse but, more importantly, as a means of conserving and conveying the society's traditions, institutions, values, and culture. In a culture which depends so much on oral tradition, proverbs perform the important task of encoding the philosophical outlook, religious conceptions and worldview of society in a digestible form ([Brookman-Amisshah, 1985: 75](#)).

Two of the songs are on death and the texts are couched in elegiac poetry. During interviews with two of my informants, Agya Koo Nimo and BA, it was understood that in the first song (dirge), the singer laments using the title *Me buroni aka asuogya*, 'My lover is trapped at the other side of the river. The expression *me buroni*, (*borɔ*, 'ocean' + *ni* 'personal suffix'), means somebody from overseas (a white person). It is semantically extended to somebody you cherish, a benefactor, and a dear one. The trapping of the dear one on the other side of the river implies that you cannot contact him/her; the expression is a metaphor for death, "my lover is dead". The composer looks at the power of death and quotes proverb 1.

1. *Owuo kura adee a, nkwa ntumi nnye.*

'When death takes hold of something, life cannot snatch it.'

Proverb 1 has two clauses, a subordinate followed by a main clause; the subordinate emphasises the power of death, while the main clause depicts the vulnerability of life. Death is so strong that when it grips somebody, life cannot snatch him/her, hence when a person dies, the Akans are consoled that one cannot struggle with death. These are enshrined in the song *Me buroni aka asuogya*.

The dirge singer, Konadu, laments on the sudden death of the lover by indicating that he did not hear of her sickness but just the death, and hence questions the nature of the sudden death. Another proverb on death is number 3.

3. *Owuo na de baako ba.* 'It is death that brings about loneliness.'

Death is topicalised using the focus marker *na*, 'it is'. The Akans have strong conviction about the effect of death and the loneliness it brings to the relatives as in Proverb 3. Until you lose a close relative you may assume that the entire family is one unit, however, after the person's death you will experience utmost loneliness.

The next proverb pictures the confusion that sets in on the death of one's mother. Things get out of hand and matters are turned upside down in an ironical situation that contrasts with nature. The pressure of the death disorganises him and he cannot put things right. The composer metaphorically puts this in proverb 7a.

⁴ The record labels and the years of release of the four songs are: Song 1, *Me Buroni*, Label: Adonten Music INC 2002, USA; Song 2, *Eno Abenaa*, and Song 3, *Me na Mepɛ: Me ara Masoa*, Label: Brobischo House of Music (BHM), 1980, Ghana, and Song 4, *Wakum Dehyee*, Label: Tropic Vibe Productions, 2007, USA (see https://www.discogs.com/artist/274629-Alex_Konadu).

7a. *Adeε nsae nso, woama nkwanta ayera.*

'It is not yet dusk but you have made us miss the junction.'

Death has the power to metaphorically turn daylight into darkness. When it is dark visibility becomes poor, and searching for things, including junctions that connect major roads, is difficult. In this song, the dirge singer uses the transformed form of the proverb. Semantically, the two parts of proverb 7a are connected by the contrastive (adversative) coordinating conjunction *nso*, 'but' (see [Downing and Locke, 2006: 285](#)).

7b. *Adeε nsae a, nkwanta nyera.*

'When it is not dark junctions cannot be lost.'

4.2. The theme of the family

There are proverbs that hinge on the theme of family and they are found in both songs 1 and 2, Alex Konadu paints the real picture of a family in proverb 2.

2. *Abusua te se kwaeε, wowε akhiri a. εbε mu tuu. Wopini ho a, na wohunu se dua biara wε ne siberε.*

'A family is like a forest, when you are afar it is one unit. If you get closer to it, you see that each tree has its position.'

The truncated form of the proverb is *Abusua te se kwaeε*, 'a family is like a forest'. There is a simile where the marker *te se*, 'like' is between *abusua*, 'family', and *kwaeε*, 'forest' and compares the similarities of the two. In Akan extended family system, an outsider may think that it is well-knit, and all the members are together, however, a closer look indicates that there are covert cleavages. The same happens with a forest where from afar all the trees are presumably together. This analogy is shifted to the death of the beloved one. Konadu noted that until his mother's death; there were a lot of things that he took for granted, thinking that he had a united family. He foregrounded the extent of loneliness in proverb 3 above, which can belong to the themes of death and family.

There are parallel proverbs on the role of the mother and the predicaments of orphans. Parallel proverbs are two or three proverbs that are syntactically or semantically repeated in a certain way for an effect. Examples of such parallel proverbs are 4, 5, and 6 below that portray the realities of family life.

4. *εbaatan nna awianna* 'A nursing mother doesn't have afternoon nap.'

5. *Obi aberewa beyε wo yie a, εnte se w'aberewatia,*

'If somebody's old lady will treat you well, it will not be like your own mother.'

The proverbs highlight the caring nature of biological mothers who ensure that their children are well-fed. The situation becomes precarious when any of her children is sick. Mothers are always alert to ensure that they are not overtaken by events. Proverb 4 categorically indicates that nursing mothers do not take nap and if one does, then she is irresponsible.

Proverb 5 emphasises the role of the mother; there is nobody who can treat you better than your mother. Undoubtedly, no matter how bad you presume your mother is, she cannot be compared to another woman, this is marked by the negative simile marker, *n- te se*, 'it is not like'. There is a semantic contrast between biological and surrogate mothers. The proverb is further strengthened by adding a parallel proverb indicating that mothers are biological and natural, and endowed with good deeds from God. Parents are unlike man-made tools that can be carved and polished at the smithy by blacksmiths.

6. *Eni nso yεmmε no tunsuo mu.* 'Mothers are not created from the smithy.'

Agya nso yεmmε no tunsuo mu. 'Fathers are not created from the smithy.'

These proverbs are forms of indirection that draw attention to orphans' experiences.

In furtherance to the problems orphans go through, Konadu indicates how orphans are starved while those, whose parents are alive, eat and fill their bellies and leave some extra. In effect, there is the need to have your mother alive; this proverb can also fall under the theme of death. The appropriate proverb is:

8. *Agyankaba wo yam kεm te se aboaba.*

'What can feed the orphan is like that for a small insect.'

There is a truism indicated by the simile marker, *te se*, 'it is like' that compares an orphan's stomach to that of a tiny insect. People think that something small should be enough for the orphan. Sometimes he is even forgotten during the dishing out of the food. This is captured in proverb 9 as:

9. *Aduane a yεbema wo bi adie nso no, yεbε wo din wε waduro ase.*

'If you would be given some food to eat, your name is mentioned under the mortar.'

When they are dishing the local Akan dish called *fufuo*, they always mention the stakeholders and get their eating bowls ready, and know the quantity to be given to each of them based on age, intimacy, gender and status. If you are an orphan, the possibility of being forgotten at this stage of sharing is very high, hence proverb 9. All these proverbs bother on the intricacies of the Akan family system.

We have seen clearly that there is strong interrelationship between the individual proverbs. Proverb 6 talks about motherhood and 7–9 are about the predicaments of the orphan. They depict Konadu's communicative competence and mastery of Akan stylistic devices, especially proverbial parallelism (see Agyekum, 2005, 2016).

4.3. Proverbs on disobedience and self-affliction

There are series of proverbs, especially in Song 3 in the Appendix, that are used as a politeness strategy to address the youth and admonish them from disobedience and unplanned behaviour. The proverbs comment on the self-imposed burden the youth encounter by refusing to adhere to adult and sociocultural advice. The title of song 3 is *me ara masoa biribi a mentumi* 'I myself have carried a burdensome load', which is synonymous to the English proverbs, 'Cut your coat according to your size', or 'Do not bite more than you can chew.' The proverbs advise the youth to tread cautiously in life.

The composer uses the 1st person singular *me*, 'I' or the 2nd person singular *wo*, 'you' and sometimes a 3rd person impersonal noun *akwadaa*, 'child' or an entity Y such as *awaduwa*, 'a small mortar', and *anomaa*, 'bird' to represent the youth.

Most of the proverbs in the four songs, 1, 2, 5, 7b, 10–15 as well as 22 have the same syntactic structures. They are captured in conditional subordinate clauses followed by the main clauses to indicate that the presence of the entity X calls for Y and vice versa. They are marked by the split conjunction (*s*)...*a*, which can denote the concept of conditionality (**if**) and temporality (**when**); both are expressed by identical lexical and syntactic forms in Akan.⁵ The first part (*s*) is optional but the second part, ...*a*, is obligatory and it is always followed by a comma to mark the clausal boundary between the subordinate conditional clause and the main clause (see Agyekum, 2017: 30). The proverbs supporting the theme of disobedience and self-affliction are below.

10. (*Se*) *awaduwa kyinkyin a, anya abe wo.*

'If the small mortar roams about, it gets palm nut to pound.'

Proverb 10 implies that even though the small mortar is meant for pounding palm nut, corn or herbs, it is always stationary in the owner's house because it is not used daily and can rest. On the contrary, if it decides to roam about, it will definitely find palm nut to pound in other vicinities, and therefore overburdens itself. This is followed by a semantic parallel proverb drawing attention to self-inflicted harm, not from external sources.

11. (*Se*) *akwadaa se ɔrepɛ ade kɔkɔ ahwe nso a, yede dameram ahahan na kyere no.*

'If a child wants to see a red item, we show him a scarlet leaf.'

Akan children were scared of extremely red colours and preferred yellow flowers and bright colours. If a child strives to be like an adult and thinks it is not afraid of red colours, it is exposed to scarlet leaves that are scary. In that case, it is the child's preference, and needs no sympathy. Proverbs 10 and 11 are forms of indirection that are politely used to comment on foolhardiness of the youth without being offensive. The next parallel proverb is on disobedience.

12. (*Se*) *yesoma wo na se woante nso a, yede wo kɔ Anteade.*

'When we send you and you don't pay heed to, we send you to Anteade.'

In Akan culture, children are to be obedient and respectful to adults. As a communal society, children could be sent by any adult and should listen to the instructions and act accordingly. If children decide to be disobedient, they pay for the resultant price. The notion of an errand is conceptually extended to an advice; if children refuse to pay heed to pieces of advice from elders they suffer the consequences (see Agyekum, 2019). The place for their punishment is the proverbial town Anteade, a punishment zone (prison). Anteade is a histo-pragmatic allusion to a very severe punishment. The next proverb is on alertness.

13. (*Se*) *anomaa kyere soro a, ɔgye boɔ.*

'When a bird stays longer on a tree, it is hit by a stone.'

When birds perch on trees they are always alert for security reasons; any small hint makes them fly away to perch on other trees for safety. If a bird decides to be adamant, feels more comfortable, and perches on the same branch for a longer time as if life is cool, it will be stoned. This proverb enjoins the youth not to be complacent and feel that there is absolute comfort everywhere. They should be alert and note that danger can ensue from any corner at any time. They should be adventurous

⁵ In Akan, temporality can be also expressed by the conjunction (*bere a*) ...*no*, 'when' to refer to past or perfect time, while (*se*) ...*a*, refers to present, habitual or stative. The first part is optional and the second is mandatory.

and explore other avenues to safeguard themselves since life is full of uncertainties, and alertness is a very significant safeguarding tool.

14. (*Berε a*) *asesa rebɔ me no, na mese benim nante.*
'When I was getting restless, I thought I knew how to walk.'

Proverb 14 is an advice that encourages people to be engaged in fruitful ventures. The adage “the devil finds work for the idle hands” is apt here. When you are idle, the propensity to roam about aimlessly is very high and nothing fruitful might be achieved, apart from parading yourself as a good walker.

15. *Kwaku Ananta twene, wobɔ mu a, wo se awu; woammɔ mu nso a, wo ni awu.*
'Kwaku Ananta's drum, when you beat it, you father dies, if you don't beat it, your mother dies.'

Proverb 15 highlights the enigmatic situations in life represented by the legendary Kwaku Ananta's drum; (a conundrum). The drum is so melodious and tempting that one is inclined to play it. The consequences for any of the choices made are problematic. If you play the drum, your father dies, if you decline, your mother dies. This conundrum is marked by the obligatory “if/when” marker *a*, in both the positive and negative clauses. It is difficult for you to choose to lose any of your parents. This agrees with the title of song 3 that sometimes we are the causes of unbearable situations. It is therefore ideal not to come anywhere near the drum, because when certain problems come on your way, you may not find a solution. Konadu looks at such situation in proverb 15 above.

The semantic parallelism highlights the main theme of the song, that “we have created problems for ourselves.” Sometimes we bite more than we can chew. If the problems become insurmountable then we are at cross roads. The song employs various images and expressions of one carrying an unbearable heavy load but cannot download it, and this calls for proper planning.

(a) Me ara masoa,	I, myself have carried
Me ara masoa biribi a mentumi 2X	I have carried a burdensome load 2X
Yeakyekeyere asoa me	They have uploaded it unto me
εda me kɔn ho aduonu	When it is hanging on my neck it is 20
Megyae to hɔ nso a aduosia	When I down load it, it is 60 ⁶

One of the major themes of song 3 is “disobedience”; it is the source of all the problems the young man encountered. The youth are admonished to pay heed to advice from the experienced elders. These are expressed by the lines below.

Ebuo ee! yekae na mantie	Ebuo, ee! I was advised but I did not listen
Pambɔɔ ee! magye m'ani so o	Pambour, I have really suffered
Yaa e! aware korɔ yi mu	Yaa e, in this single marriage
Yekaa se menkɔ fie hɔ	I was told not to enter into that house
Nnemmafɔɔ atufɔɔ-antie	The youth do not listen to advice

The expression *magye m'ani so*, metaphorically refers to self-affliction of a severe punishment, something that could have been absolutely avoided. The expression *yekae*, ‘we said it’ has the Akan exclusive **we** 1PL, 1st person plural that can include the speaker or refer exclusively to the entire society and implies 3rd person plural ‘they’. *Yekae* thus means that the people told me but I disobeyed their advice.

The song further attributes the youth's predicaments as self-afflicted. In one of the lines, the composer says that the person has bought a pet that is putting him into bankruptcy. The metaphorical pet refers to a highly-demanding girl friend who can drink many bottles of alcohol as found below:

<u>Me ne matɔɔ atɔɔ yi ara</u>	I and my impulsive buying
<u>Makɔɔ aboa bi, Kɔɔbɔka</u>	I have bought a bankrupt animal
ɔtumi nom nnan,	It can drink four
ɔnom nnwɔtwe	It drinks eight
Mereye abɔ fam	I am almost bankrupt

In the linguistic analysis of the above, the expression *atɔɔ atɔɔ* is a reduplication and pragmatically encode multiple actions, events, diverse locations, as well as intensity. The expression *kɔɔbɔka* is made up of *kɔ* + *tɔ*, ‘go buy’ and *bɔ* + *ka*, ‘to incur

⁶

(a) Ate agu me kɔn mu	It has fallen unto my neck
Na memfa ngu hɔ anaa?	Should I put it there?
Anaase mensoa m'adee?	Or should I carry it?
Meye ho hwee a, enye yie	There is nothing I can do about it.

a debt'; it implies improper planning before buying something and finally making a loss. The self-afflicted issues are stylistically foregrounded in the constant repetition of the lines below to emphasise the theme of the song, stated in every stanza.

Me ara masoa, I, myself, have carried
Me ara masoa biribi a mentumi 2X I, myself, have carried a burdensome load 2X

The reflexive marker *ara*, 'self' indicates that it is the preceding agentive NP of the action.⁷ The subject is pragmatically emphasised, hence *me*, 'I' is immediately repeated after the *ara* in (*me* + *asoa*) *masoa*, 'I have carried.' The load was not forced on him, but he decided to carry it and the consequences are suffering, hardships, toiling, and finally dying. Each of the stanzas ends with;

Ao! merewu oo obi ba 'Ao! I am dying, somebody's child.'⁸

If you look at the above predicaments caused by the SELF, then the didactic value of the song teaches the youth to be circumspect in all their undertakings, else they will eventually die. All these are captured using related proverbs for emphasis and illocutionary effect on the listeners. Let us now turn to our final theme.

4.4. Proverbs on opportunistic behaviour

The data in the appendix has proverbs that comment on opportunistic behaviours in the Akan community and how people want the downfall of others. Most of such proverbs are captured in song 4 entitled *Nea mope nie mo nsa aka bi*. There are 10 proverbs that comment about people who seek the downfall of others and thereby jubilate. The song opens with these two proverbs:

16. *Asommurofi adwo ama okraman anya dabere*
'The hearth has cooled down for the dog to have a sleeping place.'

17. *Moakum dehyee ama donko adi adee*
'You have killed the royal for the slave to inherit the throne.'

Traditionally, Akans prepared their food using firewood in the hearth as the energy source. During nights, when the hearth has cooled down, there is no fire; dogs preferred to sleep in the hearth to warm and protect themselves from pests. My informants confirmed that in life, people can afflict some harm on you when you fall into certain precarious situations that open the punitive gates for them. Proverb 16 is tied to 17 where the royal has been beheaded after a war, and a slave has usurped the throne. The two proverbs have some pragmatic symbiotic relations to amplify the import of the expressions.

The next three proverbs confirm the consequences when positive situations are suddenly turned negative. People who are not of your status now grow horns and think that they are your peers because there is a new opportunity for them. Proverbs 18 and 19 allude to this.

18. *Onyinto ye ya o.* 'Catching up with the elderly is painful.'
19. *otwea yonko ne prako?* 'Is the dog comparable to the pig?'

Proverb 19 implies that never deceive yourself that due to the ensuing problems, we are equal. Remember that no matter how high a dog rates itself, in the eyes of the Akan, it will be lower since we will usually eat pork, but not dog meat (a taboo item).

20. *Ka hyen koduru na mma sum nto wo kwan mu.*
'Drive in brightness to your destination, do not let darkness befall you on the road.'
21. *Wo mmɔborɔ a woye me, wokyen taa wisie.*
'You are more pitiful to me than tobacco smoke.'

⁷ Downing and Locke (2006, 413) remark that reflexive pronouns; *myself*, *yourself*, *himself*, *herself*, *itself*, *ourselves*, *yourselves*, *themselves* have three functions: (a) co-reference with the subject; (b) an emphatic use, and (3) a requirement by the verb.

⁸

Merewuo o	I am dying
Me kɔn mu rebu o	My neck is being broken
Obi nsoe me oo	Somebody should download it for me
Merebre oo	I am being tired
Mereye atiti o	I am in danger
Mentumi oo	I cannot bear it
Me ho reye akyere me	I am pressurised
Ahokyere mu ara na mewo o	I am in hardships
Ao merewu oo obi ba	Ao! I am dying, somebody's child

22. *Osuo betɔ a, na ɛde mframa adi kan.*
 'When it wants to rain, it starts with the wind.'

The Akans believe that no situation is permanent, and every opportunity has its end gate. The poor person can become rich and the well-to-do could become a pauper in future. The advice to the wealthy person is in proverb 20, where good times are symbolised by brightness, and bitter times by darkness. The boastful person is threatened and advised to pray that darkness should not befall him. The imperative mood pragmatically sends some stronger signals to listeners about the realities of the world. Since it is impossible to enjoy good tidings throughout life, the composer sympathises with the wealthy person in proverb 21 by comparing him to the tobacco smoke which easily evaporates into the thin atmosphere.

In proverb 22, the composer draws the attention of the wealthy person to the impending dangers that cast their own shadows, for rains normally start with heavy winds. He further warned those with power to slow down, for they can bully some people but not everybody. This is manifested in proverb 23.

23. *Woahyia aboa, na ɔkyena nso wobehyia nnipa.*
 'You have met a beast, and tomorrow you will meet a human being.'

In proverb 23, there is a contrast in syntactic aspect between *woahyia*, 'you have met', *wo*, 'you' + *a-* 'have' (perfect prefix) + *hyia*, 'to meet', in the first main clause, and the second *wobehyia* i.e. *wo*, 'you' + *be-* 'will' (future prefix marker) + *hyia*, 'to meet' that refers to a posterior time. They are connected with *na*, 'and' to indicate an extension of the first to depict the reality in life. The contrast means that the perfect that is known, is more comfortable than the unknown future, which is full of uncertainties.

We can always maltreat, kill and finally eat animals, and let them serve us in our homes and fields because they do not have freedom. Such maltreatment cannot be extended fully to all human beings who can complain, challenge and even fight back. The proverb can be expanded to imply that today you have met a weaker person, tomorrow you may meet somebody stronger than yourself. Proverb 24 talks about toiling in vain for somebody to enjoy the fruits.

24. *Madɔ ama obi adi.* 'I have weeded for somebody to eat.'
Mabrɛ ama obi abɛfa. 'I have toiled for someone to take.'

The expressions *madɔ ama obi adi*, *mabrɛ ama obi abɛfa* are transformed from the proverb *mahuu ama obi akeka*. 'I have cooled the hot food for somebody to bite/eat it.' In proverb 24, I have weeded for somebody to eat, I have toiled and my toils are rather enjoyed by somebody else, implies fruitless labour. The final proverb signals the danger ahead of people who always want fame and think that they are good and others are bad.

25. *Ananwoma, e! wo na woyɛ.* 'Ananwoma, you are good.
Fa me pɛ nim. Use me for cheap fame.
Na deɛ ɔnim wɔ do. The knowledgeable one is afar.'

Attached to this proverb is the danger of using people to gain undeserved favour in the presence of others (opportunism). The villain and defrauding people are referred to as *Ananwoma*. The warning to them is marked by the vocative with an exclamation *Ananwoma e!* They are warned that there are more knowledgeable and powerful people ahead who would not allow them to have their own way; they will face them directly.

5. Conclusion

The paper has noted that proverbs are indispensable in Akan oratory and thus form part of speakers' creativity and communicative competence. They serve as pragmatic tools in Akan politeness systems for handling delicate and face threatening acts. Alex Konadu employs proverbs in his highlife songs as forms of indirection. This serves as an escape valve that gives him the opportunity to comment politely and freely on sociocultural and political and delicate issues without incurring the displeasure of his addressees. This is manifested in the songs that advise the youth and opportunists.

The proverbs in the songs were categorised under four major themes, namely, death, family, disobedience and opportunism; the family theme also encompassed aspects of death. Akan renowned highlife musicians like Konadu spice their songs with proverbs that enrich the stylistics of the language. Some of the proverbs indicate factual events in life while others are based on conditions using subordinate and main clauses.

The use of the proverbs in highlife lyrics helps the listeners to know the cultural beliefs, perception, and philosophy, worldview, oral traditions and social structures of the Akan. This paper depicted that the Akans are highly linked with their proverbs. It has further confirmed that "proverbs are the analytic tools of thought, when thought is lost; it is proverbs that are used to search for it". We agreed with Finnegan's (2012: 380), assertion that "In many African cultures a feeling for language, for imagery, and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology comes out particularly clearly in proverbs."

This paper has shown that Ghanaian highlife lyrics serve as a storage device for the documentation of some of our proverbs. The Akans think that proverb usage via highlife songs gets to the masses more than through films since the songs can be played on radio and TV for the grass-root for free. Meanwhile, proverbs in films are not accessible to many even with

social media and modern technology. The paper employed ethnomusicology that studies the people's highlife lyrics from anthropological and ethnopragmatic standpoints that encompass the people's culture. It is based upon this that the various proverbs were appropriately crafted into the songs.

We finally state that Akan highlife composers of the current generation do not employ proverbs as efficiently as seen in the lyrics of Konadu, Nana Ampadu, Ampofo Agyei and their compatriots. The reason is that the current highlife composers are not very versatile and communicatively competent in the Akan language and culture like Konadu whose work is discussed in this paper. To keep the rich oratory and pragmatic markers in highlife through the use of proverbs, the current generation should make conscious efforts to master the Akan language and culture. They should try to avoid the use of vulgar language in their compositions. The fear is that if this trend goes on, Akan ethnomusicology will suffer, so we need to rejuvenate pragmatics and traditional values into the contemporary highlife lyrics. This can be done by infusing the lyrics with proverbs, one of the best ethno-pragmatic tools that embodies Akan culture, philosophy, worldview and effective communication. Apart from proverbs, they should employ other stylistic devices.

Appendix

Titles and Texts of the four songs analysed in this paper.

Song 1: Me buroni aka asuogya

Ao hmm! ao hmmm!
Mensu o, na meresu maye den ni?
Owuo aye me bi e
1. Owuo kura adee a,
Nkwa ntumi nnye
Oburoni na aden ni?
Mante wo yaree
Mpo na mate wo wuo
Ama Gyamfiaa e,
Owuo ben na yewu no sei?
Wo wuo yi afu me mu
2. Abusua te se kwae,
Wowo akyiri a, ebɔ mu tuu
Wopini ho a,
Na wohunu se dua biara wo ne siberɛ.
Me maame anwu a,
Anka mennim
3. Owuo na de baako ba
Agya me awerɛhoɔ, agya me osu.

My beloved is left at the bank of the river

Ao hmm! Ao hmm!
I will not cry, and why should I cry?
Death has done something bad to me
When death takes hold of something
life cannot snatch it
My beloved, and what is this?
I did not hear of your sickness
Let alone your death
Ama Gyamfiaa e,
What kind of death is this?
Your death has taken me by surprise
A family is like a forest
When you are afar it is one unit
If you get closer to it
Then you see that each tree has its position
If my mother had not died
I would not have realised it
It is death that brings about loneliness
It has left me with sorrow and weeping

Song 2. Eno Abenaa/ɔbaatan Nna Awia

(a). Eno Abenaa adee reyɛ akye
Maame Ama e, wokɔɛ akye
Refrain
Eno Abenaa e, sɔre o
Na wo mma benum
4. ɔbaatan nna awianna 3X
(b) Me maame nso dae akye Amoakoaa e
Maame Agyeiwaa woreha wo mma yi
5. Obi aberewa beye wo yie a,
ente se w'aberewatia
6. Eni nso yemmɔ no tunsuo mu.
Agya nso yemmɔ no tunsuo mu.
(c) 7. Adeɛ nsae,
Nso woama nkwantaa ayera
Eno Abenaa adee reyɛ akye
Maame Ama e, wokɔɛ akye
Refrain
(d) 8. Agyankaba wo yam kɔm te se aboaba
Agyanka biara wo yam kɔm te se aboaba
9. Aduane a yebema wo bi adie nso no
Yebɔ wo din wo waduro ase
Refrain

'Mad. Abenaa, Mothers do not have Nap

Mad. Abenaa it is almost dawn
Mad. Ama e, you have gone for too long
Mad. Abenaa wake up
Your children will breast feed
A nursing mother doesn't have a nap
My mother has slept for far too long Amoakoaa
Mad Agyeiwaa, you are worrying your children
If somebody's old lady will treat you well
It will not be like your own mother
Mothers are not created from the smithy
Fathers are not created from the smithy
It is not yet dusk
But you have made us miss the junction
Mad. Abenaa it is almost dawn
Mad. Ama e, you have gone for too long
The orphan's starving stomach is like that of a small insect
What can feed the orphan is like a small insect
If you would be given some food to eat,
Your name is mentioned under the mortar

Song 3: Me ne Mepɛ: Me ara Masoa Biribi a Mentumi

1. Me ara masoa, Me ara masoa biribi a mentumi 2X Yeakyekeyere asoa me ɛda me kɔn ho aduonu Megyae to hɔ nso a, aduosia Me ara masoa, Me ara masoa biribi a mentumi 2X Ao merewu oo obi ba	I, myself have carried I have carried a burdensome load 3X They have uploaded it on me When it is hung on my neck, it is 20 When I download it, it is 60 I, myself, have carried I, myself, have carried a burdensome load 2X Ao, I am dying somebody's child
2. Ebuo ee yekae na mantie Pambɔɔ ee magye m'ani so o Yaa e! aware korɔ yi mu Yekaa se menkɔ fie hɔ Nnemmafoɔ atufɔɔ-antie <u>10. Awaduwa kyinkyin a,</u> <u>ɔnya abe wɔ</u> <u>11. Akwadaa se ɔrepɛ ade kɔkɔɔ ahwe nso a,</u> <u>Yede dameram ahahan na kyere no.</u> Awo Nyaako e! enne dee wo na wo bɔɔ nie.	Ebuo, ee, I was advised but I did not listen Pambour, I have really suffered Yaa e!, in this single marriage I was told not to enter into that house The youth do not listen to advice <u>If the small mortar roams about</u> <u>It gets palm nut to pound</u> <u>If a child wants to see a red item</u> <u>We show him a scarlet leaf</u> Awo Nyarko e!, today you are vindicated
<u>12. Yesoma wo</u> Na se woante nso a, <u>Yede wo kɔ Anteade</u> <u>13. Anomaa kyere soro a,</u> <u>ɔgye bɔɔ</u> <u>14. Asesa rebɔ me no,</u> <u>na mese menim nante</u> Ate agu me kɔn mu Na memfa ngu hɔ anaa? Anaase mensoa m'adee? Meye ho hwee a, ɛnye yie <u>15. Kwaku Ananta twene,</u> <u>Wobɔ mu a, wo se awu</u> <u>Woammɔ mu nso a, wo ni awu</u> Seantie nyɛ o, magye m'ani so o, Yaa e aware korɔ yi mu a	<u>When we send you</u> <u>And you don't pay heed to</u> <u>We send you to Anteade⁹</u> <u>When a bird stays longer on a tree</u> <u>It is hit by a stone</u> <u>When I was getting restless</u> <u>I thought I knew how to walk</u> It has fallen around my neck Should I put it there? Or should I carry it myself? There is nothing I can do about it. <u>Kwaku Ananta's drum</u> <u>When you beat it, you father dies</u> <u>If you don't beat it, your mother dies</u> Disobedience is bad, I have suffered Yaa e, in this single marriage

Song 4: Abene ato Wo- Wakum Dehyee

Nea mopɛ nie mo nsa aka bi <u>16. Asommurofi adwo</u> <u>Ama ɔkraman anya dabere</u> <u>17. Moakum dehyee</u> <u>Ama dɔnko adi adee</u> Abene ato mo o, na monni Nea mopɛ nie mo nsa aka bi <u>18. Onyintɔɔ ye ya o</u> <u>19. ɔtwea yɔnko ne prako?</u> <u>20. Ka hyen kɔduru</u> <u>Na mma sum nto wo kwan mu</u> <u>21. Wo mmɔborɔ a woye me</u> <u>Nso wokyen taa wisie</u> Nea mopɛ nie mo nsa aka bi <u>22. Osuo beɔ a, na ɛde mframa di kan</u> <u>23. Woahyia aboa</u> <u>Na ɔkyena nso wobehyia nnipa</u> Mabrɛ magu Mede ama Onyame <u>24. Madɔ ama obi adi</u> <u>Mabrɛ ama obi abefa</u> <u>25. Ananwoma e, wo na woye</u> Fa me pɛ nim Na deɛ ɔnim wɔ do. Na abene ato mo, na monni	You have got what you wanted You have got what you wanted <u>The hearth has cooled down</u> <u>For the dog to have a sleeping place</u> <u>You have killed the royal</u> <u>For the slave to inherit the throne</u> It is well cooked for you, you should eat You have got what you wanted <u>Catching up with the elderly is painful</u> <u>Is the dog comparable to the pig?</u> <u>Drive through the light to your duration</u> <u>Do not let darkness befall you on the road</u> <u>You are pitiful to me</u> <u>You are worse than tobacco smoke</u> You have got what you wanted <u>When it wants to rain it starts with the wind</u> <u>You have met a beast</u> <u>Tomorrow you will meet a human being</u> I have suffered in vain I have entrusted it into God <u>I have weeded for somebody to enjoy</u> I have toiled for someone to take <u>Ananwoma, you are the better one</u> Use me for cheap fame The knowledgeable one is afar It is well cooked for you, you should eat
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⁹ *Anteade*, is derived from the negative past prefix *an-* + *te*, 'hear' and *ade*, thing', implying that one did not listen. *Anteade* is a small town on the Accra-Cape Coast stretch. Historically, the Fante criminals were kept there as prisoners and highly maltreated in some windowless room.

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