Facing Finality: Cognitive and Cultural Studies in Death and Dying
FACING FINALITY:

COGNITIVE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

ON DEATH AND DYING

Edited by

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Preface

In a Cognitive Linguistics seminar for graduate students at Seisen University in Tokyo, Japan, a student, Aya Maeda, suggested we take up the theme of how Death and Dying are expressed in contemporary discourse from a cognitive metaphor perspective and compare them in English and Japanese. Out of that seminar, the project on studying how contemporary discourse on Death and Dying is shaped by the underlying conceptual/metaphoric patterns grew. Previous seminars had taken up similar themes such as IDEAS (Berendt 1991, 2009) and LEARNING (Berendt 2008). The objective was on each occasion to build up a data base reflecting various repertoires and registers common to the contemporary discourses where we might expect the subjects to talk about Death and Dying and where Death and Dying were the focal points of interaction. The discourse genres which were initially included were news reportage, obituaries, essays, religious writing, medical sources, counseling and psychology, conversations, poetry and fiction. Further we had the objective of doing a cross-cultural study comparing English and Japanese. By comparing the patterns found in English, a European Christian-based culture, with an Asian, Japanese with very different cultural roots, it was hoped that we could gain insight into both culturally specific influences but also shared, universal perspectives about the experience of Death and Dying. To do that the data sources needed to be balanced for genre type and approximate quantity. No mean task. In the end, for various conference presentations and publications we focused our analysis primarily on news reportage, medical and counseling, conversation, and current religious discussions.

The objective of the project was to make a conceptual metaphoric pattern analysis following the work of George Lakoff (Lakoff, et al. 1980, 1987, Gibbs 1994, Goatly 1997), that not only meant analyzing the data for the cognitive metaphors but also examining the cross-cultural features which might be a significant part of the patterns in each language. This led not only to analytical issues of how broad or inclusive a pattern might be but what the salient semantic and cultural features within a pattern might be. Working within one language has been difficult enough but making systematic comparisons is much more complex as each language may focus on its own cultural experiences creating divergent images about what a pattern represents. Some basic experiential patterns, such as JOURNEY/PATH, CONTAINER, and ENTITY have been readily recognized, but culturally specific patterns do exist, rooted in each culture. FIGHTING as a domain of experience can be manifested in many different forms and affect the nature of how death occurs and how we understand its significance. For a discussion of these issues please refer to Berendt 2008 and 2009.

The seminar gradually enlarged into a research study group and resulted in a number of conference presentations and journal publications. The first symposium held on this research was at the 9th International Cognitive Linguistics Conference held at Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea 2005. Papers were presented on the underlying conceptual patterns found in the discourse of Death and Dying in the following genre types: counseling, interactive discourse/conversation, medical works, poetry, current news, religious writing. Six broad semantic typologies were found necessary to compare the conceptual metaphoric patterns in English and Japanese, and I would like to give credit especially to Keiko Tanita for working
these out. The papers at Seoul, Korea are the basis of Part II in this volume. Two papers from that conference were published in 2008 respectively by Berendt and Tanita.

Further work focusing on the narrower social issues of abortion, suicide, and capital punishment were presented as a symposium “The Right to Kill; the Right to Die” in August 2006 at the 12th International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies (IAICS), San Antonio, Texas. These presentations were subsequently published as a special issue in the journal Intercultural Communication Studies XVI (3) in 2007. The papers form the basis of Part III of this volume. Joint papers on cross-cultural analytical issues were also presented by Berendt, Maeda and Tanita at the 10th International Cognitive Linguistics conference held in Krakow, Poland in July 2007. The goals of all the research have been: (1) to make data-based studies of contemporary discourses of how Death and Dying are expressed through cognitive metaphoric patterns; (2) to make cross-cultural comparisons of the ideation of Death and Dying initially of English and Japanese; (3) to examine implications which cognitive metaphors may have for understanding basic contemporary cultures of life and death experiences; (4) to examine critically how language use shapes our perceptions and values as seen in metaphoric representations of our experiences; and (5) to contribute to the development of cognitive metaphor theory through cross-cultural issues both commonalities and divergences of perspective.

The project members (originally Berendt, Tanita, Maeda and Akimoto) continued to meet and after 2008 expanded beyond the first interests of making a cross-cultural, data-based study of English and Japanese. The result has been the preparation of this volume with the inclusion of broader social and cultural topics with the significant contributions of Kei I. Yamanaka and Soliman Alaaeldin. The opportunity to work with members of Assumption University in Bangkok and University of Cairo, Egypt provided the volume with the wider cultural papers and perspectives in Part IV.

The results of the studies are presented in four sections: Part I, an introduction looking at the contemporary discussions about Death and Afterlife from broad historical and cultural points of view with a survey of the basic vocabulary in English and Japanese on Death and Dying. Part II introduces the original project on the contemporary discourse of Death and Dying in English and Japanese, the data base development, the analysis into conceptual metaphoric patterns and the need for cross-culturally considered semantic categories. Part III focuses on the three issues of abortion, suicide and capital punishment current in English and Japanese. A fourth was considered, euthanasia, but data for an adequate comparison could not be had. Part IV takes up a diverse number of papers dealing with various cultural and cognitive issues about Death and Dying, not only in English and Japanese but also in Arabic and Thai contexts. Literary, religious, views of “the other world” as well as translating culturally specific perspectives are discussed.

The experience of Death is probably the most powerful stimulant to human thinking, requiring an expansion of our conceptualization from what we experience in the here and now to what we can only hope and dream about, trying to give us reassurance that life has
significance and may continue beyond our immediate circumstances. Life in nature springs from nowhere with no consciousness of being prior to birth to go through the vegetative and animated cycles we see around us. Mankind is no exception to nature’s birth, death and generation anew. But humankind also has the power of consciousness, one of the great mysteries of our existence. Death may be seen as an end-point to life or it may be the stimulus to seek broader dimensions about living. The Judeo-Christian-Islamic linear view of life and time with its beginnings and ends is vastly different to the traditions of the Buddhist East where life and death are polychronic, constantly impinging on one another. Hope springs eternal that there is significance in all this. Culture creates complex rituals to govern our behavior and expand our mental horizons. So the memories of the past inform the present. What this volume tries to do is to see how our pivotal experiences of death are shaped in contemporary communication about it. The key to that is to look beyond the vocabulary to dig into the automatic patterns of language seen in conceptual metaphors, especially underlying cognitive metaphors. How this is realized in diverse cultures can inform us of our global humanity, something all people of all places or all times face. How we face our finality is seen in this volume as a very powerful creative stance of the human mind.

My deepest appreciation goes to Gaston Petit, O.P., a well-known Canadian artist who prepared the cover for this volume. The cover is a powerful representation of the intermingling of life and death we all experience. It was a pleasure to work with him as always. Working with the members of the research-study group on Death and Dying over quite some years of ups and downs provided encouraging support and was a great learning experience through sharing our varied knowledge. My thanks, in particular, go to Keiko Tanita for her work and support. It was always a convivial occasion when the group was all together. My thanks too go to Steve Conlon and Kasia Ancuta at Assumption University for joining the group and making their refreshing contributions. Finally, this project would not have reached its published form without the support of Robert St. Clair and Margaret D'Silva at the University of Louisville. Many thanks for their support.

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Part I

On the Background and Basic Vocabulary of Death and Dying
1. Facing Finality and Creating Alternatives: An Introduction

Erich A. Berendt

Prelude

A recent Thai stage production, entitled in English “Dear Death,” focuses on welcoming the God of Death *Yern Phra Yom* into our lives and the import of that (a play by Punnasak Sukee performed at the Aksara Theater, Bangkok, March 28-29, 2009). The songs, dances and recitatives of mantras are a blend of the modern idioms of music and dance with the traditional, giving a surreal feeling about death in life. The objective is to represent the Buddhist realization of the effervescence of life and the necessary fact of death. Phra Yom (God of Death) is welcomed as a part of or member of the family. Death is not only personified but is seen as someone who belongs to the family. By using the classical religious language of Pali with contemporary musical media, a feeling of removal from this mundane world to an other-worldly context is created, so the vital relations in the family are seen in a new and welcoming light. The fact of death raises questions about who we are, our fundamental bonds in the family, our consciousness as beings and the sense of connecting to a continuity of living beyond a prescribed time and place. There is an interplay between our experiences of life and death, our memories of them and thus the orders we create in cultures to give coherence to them. Death and Life impinge on each other, but how that is realized is represented in our thinking and cultures of life and death.

In contrast to such an ethereally created atmosphere of welcoming death as a natural part of living, a survey of the cultural archives on Death and Dying sees Death more often than not as a threatening entity. “The fear of death is common to all peoples at all times.” (Long 1986:50) But there is a Muslim saying which encompasses this seeming dichotomy of fear and favor about death. “When the Angel of Death approaches he is terrible. When it reaches you, it is bliss.” (Campbell 1988: 222) In this seemingly simple dichotomy, various relations intermingle in how our fear of the loss of life and the fact of death in the midst of our life experiences are intertwined. No greater experience of living and how we sense the value of it can be made than that it also ends in death, the finality of it all. Death then in effect highlights how we conceive life, the valuation of it as well as the mirror images of it in concepts about death and dying.

Carl Jung has argued “Those who have to learn to face death may have to relearn the old message that tells us that death is a mystery for which we must prepare ourselves in the same spirit of submission and humility to prepare ourselves for life.” (Jung 1964:145-6)
The roots of how we represent our experiences in our contemporary cultures are, of course, linked to the conceptual threads that bind us to our pasts through our memories and our shared cultural legacies. Our ways of thinking are riddled with metaphoric language from which our cultural icons and symbols have grown. By looking at humankind’s coping with Death and Dying, we discover a rich world of ideas, of conceptualizations which have evolved.

To discuss how we as human beings have learned to cope with the finality of death raises questions about our anthropology (how we conceive humankind), cosmologies (the ways we have structured our worlds, tangible and intangible), philosophy (the values we have of life, our longing for an idealized or pure life with conceptions of “paradise” or “heaven”) and the theologies to deal with the import of living and dying. Necessarily we need to survey briefly the roots of various historical concepts about death and how mirror images from life are incorporated into the conceptual worlds we have created to cope with it. This introduction will then survey various conceptualizations about death and dying in a variety of cultures from an historical perspective which have informed our contemporary thinking and beliefs about death and dying. Aspects of pertinent features in anthropology, cosmology and philosophy will be highlighted.

The Grave

There is the famous tomb inscription from the Roman Empire days “nf fns nc” (non fui, fui, non sum, non curo) which reads as “I was not, I was, I am no more, I don’t care”. This nihilistic attitude about life and death, in which all continuity of consciousness and possibility of life (before and after our time of living) is denied, is belied by the history of grave making whether from the then contemporary Roman graves or the earliest evidence of human culture. Tomb and grave cultures have been rich resources for insight into consciousness about life and dreams for some afterlife in their epitaphs. Archeologists have noted that the first evidence of humankind having awareness of mythological thought or consciousness about life is evidence from the graves of the Neanderthals. Joseph Campbell has argued that our fundamental experiences in life shape our conceptualizations about life, the ground work of the mythologies we create to make meaning in life and these impinge upon what we believe occurs in death. One of such basic mythologies has to do with the fact and experience of birth and how it is revealed in early grave burials.

“Neanderthal skeletons have been found interred with supplies (suggesting the idea of another life), accompanied by animal sacrifice (wild ox, bison, and wild goat), with attention to an east-west axis (the path of the sun, which is reborn from the same earth in which the dead are placed), in flexed position (as though within the womb), or in a sleeping posture—in one case with a pillow of chips of flint. Sleep and death, awakening and resurrection, the grave as a return to the mother for rebirth; but whether Homo neanderthalensis thought the next awakening would be here again or in some world to come (or even both together) we do not know.” (Campbell 1959:67)
These burials suggest the idea of the continued life as well as an invisible plane supporting the visible one. The burial of people was for rebirth. Links between birth and death with the cycles experienced in living whether the passage of the day and sleep with the passage of the sun and seasons, the progression of life itself through time—childhood, maturity, age and death become themes shaping the cosmologies and philosophies of life and death.

A basic Western truth about death is represented in the Riddle of the Sphinx as given in the story of Oedipus. The Sphinx in Oedipus, not the Egyptian sphinx, is a female form with the wings of a bird, the body of an animal and the breasts and face of a woman. What she represents is the destiny of all life. She challenges the hero (in order to remove the threat of a plague) with the riddle, “What is it that walks on four legs, then on two legs, and then on three?” The answer is mankind as the child creeps about on four legs, the adult walks on two, and the aged walk with a cane. This riddle is the image of life itself through time. But when we have faced and accepted the riddle of the Sphinx without fear then death has no further hold on us and the curse of the Sphinx disappears. Overcoming the fear of death is presumed to be the recovery of the joy of living, and the conquest of fear allows the courage of life.

Joseph Campbell has argued from his study of mythology that stories from mythologies help us to understand death. “You don’t understand death, you learn to acquiesce in death. I would say that the story of Christ assuming the form of a human servant, even to death on the cross, is the principal lesson for us of the acceptance of death. … One can experience an unconditional affirmation of life only when one has accepted death, not as contrary to life but as an aspect of life. Life in its becoming is always shedding death, and on the point of death.” (Campbell 1988:151-2)

Asian Traditions

An Asian version of a nihilistic approach to death can be seen in a quote from a contemporary Chinese, Huang. “After death there is nothing. I believe only in knowledge.” (Thuborn 2007:36) This is reminiscent of a philosophy of present consciousness as being the totality of our egos, much like the ancient Roman. In Buddhism there is the belief that “after death, your family cannot follow you.” While Buddhism has a cosmology of rebirth, heaven and hell, rebirth is into a new family with new relationships. In Buddhist thought to remember is to sense the passing of time, the foreboding of the “end.” Thus to choose forgetfulness is to choose life and a realization of transcending the momentary experiences of time. (Thuborn 2007:58) The Tao (way or path) in Tao Te Ching sees the present life as a passage, a way to be realized in living, but death is metaphorically, euphemistically expressed as disappearing into the West: the West in Chinese mythology representing the place beyond civilization where life cannot be fully lived. It is geographically represented as the vast area beyond the Great Wall in which barbarians and lesser creatures inhabit, a place of outcasts, those beyond the pale of death. Here removal from “civilized life” is metaphorically seen as an equivalent to dying.
From an “otherwhere” the place of death has evolved into an “other world”. The possible “other worlds” become defined by values of life, the good and the bad, leading to rewards for the good (if not in this world then in another) or punishment for those deemed bad. Linking the good and bad deeds of persons with rewards and punishment undoubtedly reinforces the moral needs of preserving livelihood for the group as much as the individual. This development of other worlds which are gradually linked to present world deeds and social needs is not limited to the Asian continent but found in all cultures.

The Asian traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism have highly elaborated cosmologies of life, hierarchies of being. The vegetative metaphor of life coming forth as a sprouting plant, growing to fruition and then passing into decay can be seen in Hindu reincarnation, continuing rebirth with links to rewards and punishment, but interestingly the soul does not continue from previous conscious states, even though cycles of rebirth are the norm and escape into oblivion from the perpetual trials of life is seen as an ultimate blessing. Why? Because death as a metaphorical sleep is a release from life’s suffering cycles and bliss as removable from the complex cosmologies of creation. The Hindu gods of destruction and creation and the need to appease the forces in the great battles of existence are seen as heavy burdens from which release to a Nirvana is the ultimate good.

Greco-Roman Concepts of Death

The pre-Christian beliefs about death and life ranged from the completely nihilistic denial of any afterlife, through a vague sense of a ghostly experience of souls, to a concept of the individual’s soul’s survival as well as of personal survival in a recognizable form. These judgment on the virtues and misdeeds of the life which had been lived with attendant rewards or punishments.

From the fourth century BCE until the first CE Romans mainly cremated their dead, but after the first century, burial became increasingly common. During the early centuries of the empire both practices co-existed with the practice of inscribing tombstones becoming very popular. These epitaphs show that from the first century BCE onward, some Romans envisioned individual existence after death. Romans tended to the dead, even feeding them, not too unlike Asian concerns about appeasing ancestral spirits or “hungry ghosts”. The Romans buried their dead with items that might make their afterlife resemble their earthly life. There were two major festivals devoted to commemorating the dead. One, the Parentalia, had the relatives gather at the graveside and have elaborate feasts. Improper attention to the dead could result in adverse circumstances for the living. If fear of reprisals by the dead on the living survivors was not enough, there was the custom to will funds to the local communities to provide annual banquets in their name or public memorials that overtly highlighted their generosity and gave them a sort of immortality.

Roman religious beliefs varied a great deal and there was no one single dominant orthodoxy. Polytheism and a sense that all things animated had a “spirit” was supplemented by inventive, philosophical speculations and by individual sects, such as Stoicism, Mithraism,
Judaism and later Christianity. In contrast to many classical philosophers, Christians were optimistic about life after death. “The hope of eternal salvation was likely to appeal to Romans who… honored their dead, worried about their fate and were preoccupied by the prospect of their own imminent death.” (Beard et al. 1998, Vol.1:89) According to Beard, North and Price in their two volume study of *Religions of Rome* religion in Rome focused primarily on this life. Though the Roman state encouraged honoring the dead and participating in memorial services such as the Parentalia, the official state cult did not particularly emphasize the fate of the individual after death, or urge a particular view of the afterlife. The state cult had primarily to do with maintaining loyalty to Rome (or the emperor) and ameliorating the conditions of living.

Historians of early Christianity frequently make comparisons with the ancient mystery cults, which tended to express interest in achieving immortality. The most famous cult, the Eleusian mysteries, centered on the story of Demeter and Persephone and primarily reflected the agricultural cycle. This is also true of other cults such as Adonis, Aphrodite’s lover. The Dionysian cult was famous for the celebration of the Bacchae and their orgiastic parties. There are hints of the notion of a dying and rising god as in the cult of Magna Mater (also known as Cybele). The cyclic experience of the seasons and the death and renewal of the plant world provide the mythic source for these philosophies. Such pre-Christian myths were contained in cyclical views of time and agricultural cycles of birth, death and rebirth.

The two most important mystery religions which influenced Christianity are the cult of Isis from Egypt and Mithraism in the Near East. The great myth of Isis and Osiris is a foundation for the understanding of rebirth and a promised blessed life as well as life after death through the dying and rising god, Osiris. But there is no sense of rebirth for eternity. Egyptian religion was quite death-centered and Egyptians considered the body as essential in the afterlife, as shown by their massive tombs and the practice of embalming. The goal of the body with its soul in the afterlife was to be reunited with the god, suggesting different planes of existence. “Osiris is the god who died and was resurrected and in his eternal aspect will sit as judge of the dead for rewards and punishment. Mummification was to prepare the person to face the god, not for some personal resurrection. But an interesting thing in Egypt is that the person going to the god is to recognize his identity with the god. In the Christian tradition, that’s not allowed. …But when you realize that heaven is a beholding of the beatific image of God—that would be a timeless moment. Time explodes, … eternity is not something everlasting.” (Campbell 1988:226)

Mithraism, which was restricted to men and popular among Roman soldiers, enjoyed wide popularity. Mithraism contributed a new concept of time insofar as it rejected typical Roman cyclical time and instead imagined an imminent apocalyptic battle in which eternity would have a starting point in human affairs. Mithraic time is not only apocalyptic but male. The god Mithras serves as an intermediary between the god of light and human beings. Followers of Mithras believed they were in a select community bonded to achieve an eternal life after death. Rituals of being baptized in blood to enter an elect community in preparation for the cataclysmic end of time laid groundwork for aspects of Christian thinking about eschatology.
The development of a myth of an eschaton, a cataclysmic destruction of the world with the future entering the present was conflated with concepts of the arrival of a grand judgment day with judgment, sentencing and determination of the good and the bad, resurrection of souls often with the body, a gathering together of an select community, often with an overlap of the present and the future. For communities and persons under great stress and suffering, such a promised eschaton held out hope for them.

This leads us to a consideration of concepts of heaven and hell in the cosmologies of the Near East and the Greco-Roman worlds as well as concepts of the soul.

**After Death and Afterlife**

There is no clear notion of an afterlife in the early Old Testament writings of the Bible, even though the idea is not totally absent. What is important in the Old Testament is that a person is seen as a unified subject whether in life or death. No part of the person is different in its existence (ontology). When the Old Testament does envision some sort of life after death, the wicked and righteous alike endure a shadowy, unenviable, dark existence in Sheol. Sheol or “the pit” is synonymous with the grave (Ps. 16:10, Gen. 37:35). A person who dies descends to Sheol (translated in the Septuagint as “Hades”), regardless of one’s moral behavior. Its inhabitants do not think of the living (Job 21:21) or of God (Ps. 88). “Good and bad—Sheol received them all.” (Ps. 89:49)

It is only later in the postexilic period (after the 5th century BCE) that the good and bad are moved to different compartments in Sheol. In the second century BCE, Sheol is supplemented by Gehenna, the fiery valley south of Jerusalem. Gehenna which represented the place where children had been sacrificed (Jer. 7:32) eventually became the iconic place where sinners were to be judged. By the time of Jesus and the dominant thinking at that time of the Pharisees in Judaism, the souls of the dead, both the good and the bad, were placed in the underworld, but the unjust were assigned to Hades and the righteous to heaven until a final resurrection. In the older view there was no concept of an apocalyptic moral judgment by God on a designated day followed by some consignment to respective eternities.

New Testament writings of Christianity share concepts of heaven with both the Jewish parent tradition as well as Greco-Roman ideas. Both early Jewish and Greek notions included the view that all the dead entered a land of shadowy existence (Sheol or Hades). Distinctions were later made with the virtuous receiving rewards and even later the virtuous dead ascending to another place, leaving behind those deserving punishment either on earth or in Hades.

For the ancient Israelites, death was viewed as “gathering” or “collecting” people to their ancestors—literally placing them in the family tomb with previously deceased relatives. The Old Testament frequently refers to death as SLEEP (1 Kgs. 2:10, 16:28; 2 Kgs. 20:21). This metaphorically concept of death is also common in the New Testament. For the Israelites the family was more important than the individual, so no coffins or individual grave markers can
be found. Those for individuals only arise later under the influence of the Greeks, Persians and Romans. The dominant Old Testament attitude toward death is fear. (Ps. 88:4-5) Some Israelites practiced the cult of the dead, worshipping them, sacrificing to them and asking them to foretell the future or heal, as well as feeding them. (Ps. 106:28) Such ancestor worship was practiced throughout the Near East and was common to Israel’s neighbors: Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt. However, it was considered a threat to Israel’s monotheism as well as potentially threatening the political unity of the king’s power as it focused loyalties on family and tribe.

All discussions of Mesopotamian views on death and the afterlife begin with the Epic of Gilgamesh. Themes in chapter three of the Genesis stories of a flood, a serpent and immortality are linked to those in the Epic. The shadowy underworlds of Mesopotamian civilizations are in common with the Old Testament where everyone in dying shares equally the horrors of that world. This underworld of the dead is located beneath the earth, a place of dust. Roads lead there and gates are at the entrance. Ereshkigal is the queen of the Mesopotamian underworld. But she is not evil nor are other deities of the dead in the Near East such as Motu (or Mot) in Ugarit.

The origins of the concepts about hell and the devil can be traced to Canaanite elements which pre-dated the Israelites and the Persians. The dualism of Persian Zoroastrianism, which originated from the late sixth century to the fourth century BCE, heavily influenced Judaism. In that world-view the benevolent God of Light is Ahura Mazda. He is opposed by Angra Mainyu, the Lord of Lies, who symbolizes darkness and death. According to Zoroastrian beliefs, this duality will come to a climax in a final cosmic battle between good and evil, in which the souls of human beings will hang in the balance. In the end, evil will be vanquished, the dead will be resurrected and the kingdom of heaven on earth will begin. Souls are judged posthumously. If a soul is deemed good, it goes to the House of Song. If bad, it is sent to hell, which is ruled not by Angra Mainyu but by the first man ever to lie. The Jewish Pharisees embraced Zoroastrian ideas of death, afterlife, judgment, angels and demons laying the cultural groundwork and concepts of Christianity in many ways.

The language of heaven is in general incorporated by Christian writers and most directly derived from the writings of the Greeks as well as influenced by Egyptian and Near Eastern traditions, the cultural neighbors of the early Christian communities. The ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead shows a movement from its earliest versions of the Old Kingdom (2686-2160 BCE) through the Middle Kingdom (2040-1633 BCE) and the New Kingdom (1558-1085 BCE) from the idea of the Pharaoh alone ascending to dwell with the gods in a celestial place to a more democratized afterlife in which commoners could also participate. There are a number of views in the Book of the Dead of where this heavenly place might be. At times it is seen as celestial and others terrestrial such as the “Field of Rushes” or a mystical place far away but still on earth. The Book of the Dead was a kind of self-help manual which offered ancient Egyptians a step-by-step guide to the journey from this life to the next. Egyptians rather than being obsessed with death, more likely were obsessed with life. Since most people in those times rarely lived to be more than 35, the desire to continue the qualities of a good life can be seen motivating the elaboration of the tombs and need for guidance to meet the gods.
The somewhat earlier civilization of the Sumer (fourth millennium to 2050 BCE) saw the afterlife as far gloomier than the Egyptians. Sumerian cosmology was tripartite with the high gods inhabiting heaven, humans inhabiting the earth and dead humans along with the gods associated with death dwelling in an underworld. Generally, the celestial realm was only for the gods’ habitation and assumed that all humans descended to the underworld on death, where an enervated version of earthly life continued. Punishment was applied only during the earthly life. There are hints that some persons could enter a paradise called Dilmun, located somewhere on earth. (Wright 2000:30)

The image of heaven in the Hebrew Bible, the foundation for subsequent Judaism and Christianity, is multi-faceted. Even though there is the strictly monotheistic or exclusive view of loyalty which Yahweh asked for that dominates the Bible, there is abundant archaeological and textual evidence to show that, for some of the people of ancient Israel, and for their neighbors as well, heaven was populated by a myriad of gods and goddesses. Judaism and Christianity and ultimately Islam inherited one of the models of an exclusive god (Yahweh/Allah); other views were largely suppressed by the biblical editors and nearly lost. That was the heaven of the poly-Yahwists, the people who worshipped Yahweh and the other gods. For them Yahweh was just one of the gods or perhaps chief among the gods. The dominant view of the biblical image of heaven represents the views of the editors who curated the biblical materials into what became their canonical shape. This was the monotheistic conception of heaven that was inherited by later Judaism, Christianity and subsequently Islam, and that in the course of time would become normative, a single, exclusive god-head. The voices of those whose views differed were marginalized, discredited, or otherwise silenced in the course of the Persian and Hellenistic periods, to what was later to become “normative” Judaism began to emerge.

The ancient Israelites, like their Near Eastern neighbors, imagined the cosmos as a tripartite structure: heaven, earth, and netherworld. Also like their contemporaries, the Israelites believed that heaven was for the gods, earth for humans, and the netherworld for the mortuary gods and deceased humans. Humans shared the same, inescapable fate—death and the netherworld. The netherworld (Sheol) was not a place for terrible punishments, at least not yet; it was simply a dark, dusty place where one continues in a shadowy form of one’s life on earth. Heaven was not the post-mortem destiny of humans. Heaven was for the gods, and humans were not welcome. As Daniel 12:1-3, the latest book of the Hebrew Bible, suggests, however, this idea underwent a dramatic change as the Jews began to interact more intimately with the Persians and Greeks. (Wright 2000:95-97)

Death was not thought to have any moral significance in the Mesopotamian and early Hebrew traditions but not so in ancient Egypt. In the middle of the second millennium BCE, the Egyptians already had the notion of “moral death.” The dead were morally judged on their behavior and then rewarded or punished. This later informed ancient Greek ideas through the Greek colonies in Sicily and is said to have influenced Pythagoras, the mathematician and mystic. The notion of “mere death” where one simply dies and ceases to exist was not popular in ancient Egypt. Such mere death would exclude the possibility of hell. In the Egyptian
tombs the dead live in an underworld called Tuat, which is situated by a river with surrounding fields. The iconic scale as a tool for assessing a person’s moral life can be found in the tombs. The Book of the Dead was written to help people through the process of the judgment after death. Judgment in the underworld led to various zones according to the deceased’s perceived devotion to the gods in his life time. But judgments were not absolute but could be ameliorated through spells.

In the conceptual repertory of the ancient world before the first millennium BCE there was a morally neutral storehouse of the dead which was subdivided and generally zoned according to some ethical principles, so that places of rest, celestial bliss and consignment in pits and fire were being elaborated. In the Greek Odyssey, the soul survives death, but dead souls reside greatly removed from the living. The place of the dead is described as being far away, beyond the edge of the earth, as well as down below. There are two sets of consequences regarding activity in Hades. One is that superhuman characters such as Sisyphus and Tantalus, received punishment for insubordination of the gods. However, death for all humans is morally neutral with social distinctions, memories, aspirations continuing on.

Plato in his *Phaedrus* writes extensively about post-death fate in which he presents a succession of incarnations. When a person dies, the soul separates from the body. For Plato the body is a tomb, *souma seima*. The soul is then judged and assigned an appropriate place. The underworld is a complex topography with rivers, holes, seas consisting of hot and cold water and mud. The center of this realm is Tartarus which serves as a channel to other places. Berstein (1993:33) lists four potential fates for the dead in Plato: (1) The holy immediately ascend into the ether to dwell with the gods. (2) Those whose moral status is “indeterminate” proceed to the Acherusian Lake and live there until the soul is purified, paying penalties for infractions and receiving rewards for any good actions. (3) Those guilty of “curable” sins are annually washed out of Tartarus through the rivers, seeking forgiveness from those they have offended. (If denied, they return to Tartarus for another year.) (4) The hopelessly wicked receive eternal punishment by being cast into Tartarus, never to escape. The point of the judgment, reward and punishment was to encourage behavior for a good orderly society. For Plato the soul was immortal and it is judged for the character it acquires during its life in the body as it can be rewarded or punished after death. But Plato appears to be “the earliest author to state categorically that the fate of the extremely wicked is eternal punishment.” (Berstein 1993:61) The concept of heaven thus relates to ethics: reward and punishment based on deeds for Plato.

**The Soul**

The Greek philosopher Pythagoras was interested in the immortal soul and reincarnation in his philosophy. In 530 BCE he left Samos and went to southern Italy where he died around 515, and is regarded as the source for Platos’ later belief in the immortality of the soul. Pythagoras appears to have been influenced by Orphism, a common religion originating in
southern Sicily. The followers of Orphism were wealthy and a considerable number were women. As an upper-class movement it was much concerned with survival and salvation in a happy afterlife for the individual as is revealed in the tombs. From the fifth century BCE Plato and other philosophers represented the afterlife with eternal sunlight or beautiful meadows, and the separation of the good, who are blessed in the afterlife, from the bad, who wallow in the mud of Hades. The transmigration or reincarnation of souls was taught which implies that the soul was quite different from the body. The earlier Homeric idea of the soul had only to do with the living, but in Orphism the human soul was upgraded to the divine, leading to Plato’s *souma seima* (the body is the tomb of the soul). Pythagoras’s contribution was to see that the task of human life is to divorce oneself from the body. Those who are too attached to the body are doomed to be reincarnated so that they can try again. But without the development of the concept of psyche as a person’s “self”, immortality and reincarnation would not have happened. “The rise of the soul, then, was the fruit of a combination of political and psychological developments not in India or Egypt, but in Greece itself.” (Bremmer 2002:26)

The development of what can be termed the relationship between spirit, soul and body originated in the Greek philosophers gradual delineation of distinctions about the terms *psyche*, *pneuma*, *souma*, and *sarx*, thus creating a multifaceted view of person, in contrast to the older Near Eastern unified view. *Pneuma* and *psyche* are interchangeable in some writers and separate in others, resulting in the continuing confusion in Western languages between ‘spirit’ and ‘soul’. Russell argues that Christian anthropology is thus also confused. In Paul, for example, the use of *pneuma* (spirit) and *psyche* (soul) both occur, but with *pneuma* being superior to *psyche* and *sarx* (flesh) inferior to both. This later led to controversy about the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul in Christian teaching in which the “idea of the immortality of the soul came eventually to be identified with the Biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the body, a doctrine one of whose original polemical targets was the immortality of the soul.” (Russell 1997: 14)

After Homer the meaning of *psyche* expands. With Socrates, *psyche* becomes the center of a person’s inner life. But by the time of Plato the soul becomes a tripartite notion (*pneuma, psyche, souma*) with the preexistence and survival of the soul after death as central to Platonic doctrines. The Stoics introduced the principle that the real nature of a person was his ability for rational discourse, one’s *logos*. The Socratic notions that knowledge and goodness go together were also influential. A good person is wise and a bad person is ignorant. From knowledge right action follows but the greatest evil is the bad condition of the soul.

Stoicism, while one of the many philosophies of life during the Greco-Roman period, had perhaps greater impact on subsequent European thinking through its influence on Christian thought. Zeno, the founder of Stoicism was born about 335 BCE and came to Athens in 311 and died about 263 BCE. Zeno borrowed the crucial principle that the real nature (*physis*) of persons was his rationality or logos. Stoicism not only borrowed from other philosophies but was heavily intellectual, displaying a strong interest in ordered thinking, logic, grammar and ethics. It thrived in Athens, Rome and throughout the Mediterranean cities. Stoics divided philosophy into logic, physics and ethics. A key concept in the original Stoic canon was the analysis of human action, *hormei*. Additional concepts prominently dealt with are *phroneisis*
As a summary, six modes of understanding the experience of death and the creation of various cultures of the afterlife can be discerned.

(1) Life is viewed nihilistically; there is nothing before birth nor after death. The future of a person’s life is in the continuation of the clan/family which shapes the identity of the individual, so that the continuity of life is seen through one’s descendants, not as an individual. The iconic archetype of this view is in the promise to Abraham, that his descendants would be like the stars in the sky, in Genesis chapters 11-25 of the Bible.

(2) Life is viewed as having a cyclical nature, derived from the cycles of seasons, the moon, the rising and setting of the sun as well as the agricultural cycles in plants as being “born” in the soil, coming to fruit, die and then “rebirth” of the plants again through seeding the soil. The observable animal life cycles complement these. Continuities and change are recognized as an important part of life, birth, death and dying. Cyclical Time predominates in most traditional views of the interdependence between life and death. But the concept of time is also impacted with the idea that time is linear with a beginning and an end, a concept which sees through the creation of eschatologies that there is a final end to the “earthly realm” of cyclical mundane experience, and also an end to Time.

(3) An awareness of the celestial realm as an iconic symbol of another world. It was initially thought of as a far away place, beyond the physical bounds of experience but became closely associated with the sky and sun as well as the night time firmament of stars and moon. This is usually viewed as the abode of the gods (not necessarily of people), a heavenly place of bliss which introduced a consciousness of several planes to existence: earth as the abode of people, the underground as the abode of the dead and the celestial world of the gods. The development of mathematical calculations of seasons as in astrology and astronomy through a study of the movement of the stars as otherworldly entities provided a means to insight into the affairs and fortune of human beings. But the increased knowledge of the universe of planets, galaxies, nebulae, etc. has gradually made the symbol of heaven an internal psychological or spiritual state rather than a physiological place.

(4) Destinations shape our paths in living. Life is a journey with destinations but it also has obstacles, opportunities, discovery, learning and growing, etc. Multiple planes of existence, both seen and invisible, are posited in our culturally defined experiences about the journey of living. These journey destinations may be to a celestial realm.
and/or from discoveries of what lies beyond the direct knowledge of experience. The idea of linear time which impacts the cyclical one leads to an idea of eternity and transcendent realms in our imagination. Destinations in the afterlife are often elaborated into concepts of “heaven” and “hell.” “Heaven” as the abode of gods (not initially for humans) is democratized later for all people with elaboration of zones for the good and the bad (“hell”). This makes the destinations conditioned on the rewards and punishments incurred from the present life.

(5) The consciousness of the physical body in the flesh and psychic awareness embodied in it led to issues of spirit, soul the individual state and personality. These issues relate to the question of a “moral” death as opposed to a “neutral” death. Moral virtue as an attribute of human beings relates to their obligations in society but is usually expressed in terms of devotion to the god(s) traditionally. The differentiation in the view of persons as having several distinctive components (body, flesh, spirit and soul) has led to a dualistic view of person. The self and its realization (development of rationality or “logos”) is the groundwork for a sense of individualism as well as the accountability of actions in this life for post-mortem judgment. Not all cultures have created a dichotomous view of person. The focus of all mental (emotional and rational) with the social relationships in a unitary functioning human being can be seen in Asian cultures. Such a unity of “personhood” is paralleled with a unity of the interdependence of all existence.

(6) The symbolic idealization of the human state as a mirror of this world in time leads to iconic places such as the Kingdom of God, the Pure Land, and Paradise. And we may add here the realization of existence as release into the state of Nirvana. These concepts have a moral role in the world of the living but through idealization and a transcendent concept (eschatology) of time can be the places where eternity is conceived. We want it to be what we think it ought to be. Immortality thus is concomitant on the idealization of personhood, and an escape from the Finality of Death.

These six modes of knowledge are in a sense expanding circles of understanding as they are elaborated and transformed in various cultures. The evolvement of the metaphoric use of language to give coherent meaning to our experiences as reflected in the icons about Death and Dying and the concomitant views about Life are powerful expressions of the human mind and its creative potential. The role of metaphoric thought in expressing experiences and the creation of realities derived from them is a foundation for the icons of our life and the symbols mysterious capability of humankind may be our consciousness. Through the expanding circles of knowledge, we expand our awareness and create new understandings. The power to make these mental worlds lies, it can be argued, in the powers of myth and metaphor.

As Joseph Campbell (1988:230 has said, “The myth is the foundation of life, the timeless schema, the pious formula into which life flows when it reproduces its traits out of the unconscious”. Campbell (1988:61) also has argued in his monumental cross-cultural studies of
myths that all things are metaphors. “Our thinking today is largely discursive, verbal, linear. There is more reality in an image than in a word.”

Death asks us the question: “What is humankind?” By facing the finality of the life we conceive we are in, the ends for which people strive for are heightened. The ancient Indian (and Hindu) world sees the path of mankind’s life goals as four: (1) karma (sex, pleasure and progeny), (2) art-ha (social cohesion, power, aggrandizement), (3) dharma (sense of duty, laws or virtue) and (4) marga (the path or way to psychological metamorphosis). Whatever we strive for is framed by the expectation and experience of Death and Dying.

References

2. What English Vocabulary Tells us about Death and Dying

Erich A. Berendt

Some topics are hyper sensitive in any society. Talking about death or sex all too often causes us to react in embarrassment or act in a skittish manner, forcing us to try to avoid what is understood and we feel should not be put into words. But in time social reactions and feelings do change, allowing delicate or forbidden topics to be talked about under particular circumstances. One way to do that is take a clinical attitude as though we are observing something without emotion or personal involvement. The prospect of death does frighten most of us. When it is about a loved one or something we personally face, we often shrink from talking about what may be inevitable. At the deathbed when our loved one is at death’s door, we do all we can to be cheerful and avoid any suggestion of finality.

A reading of any current English newspaper will be filled with stories of death and dying, all clinically described, with an impersonal distance about the persons or events involved. Such newspaper talk provides the reader information with gruesome detail. The fact of a killing, or about an untimely death will focus on how it happened. As we read we may state shock, surprise, disgust or vindication but the death is received as information at arm’s length. Death stories may be reports of a natural end of lives, or may be that they have died from an unexpected illness or killed in some action. To be killed in action implies that the person probably has died for something. The prepositions “from” and “for” shift a passive recipient to an active goal about the nature of the death.

The English vocabulary of death and other key words such as dead and die in any standard dictionary will classify the meaning first as a negative description of life. That is, there is a lack of breathing, of movement of any sensation. A physical body remains but without any apparent animate characteristics. From this description of the physical state, we get a second usage: we get psychological descriptions of persons who are either unconscious or not fully responsive in what a normal person should be like. Death/dead/die are used in comparison to what we visually and emotionally see as something full of life.

Dead can mean “numb” <My leg is dead.> or “exhausted” <She is dead tired.> Deadbeat means someone who lacks social sensibilities or responsibilities. Deadpan as in <His expression was deadpan> meaning “expressionless” or “blank” face. We speak of deadlock meaning there is no movement either physically as in traffic congestion or in a discussion of opposing ideas. The verb deaden is used to express the need to suppress, soften or quieten noise and emotions with antonyms of “revitalize/invigorate/enliven”. The adjective deadly may be used either to express the threat of something leading to death <a deadly explosion> or a situation in which one’s emotions are reduced (boring) or taken away <a deadly speech>.  

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There is a wealth of idiomatic expressions which extend these types of usages of (1) physical destruction (the end of life), which leads to various metaphoric applications about death as (2) the lack of movement either mobility or facial expression, (3) lack of emotional expression, intelligence, or consciousness, (4) lack of social responsibility and (5) the lack of light or sound. In other words, the perceived lack or loss of what are regarded as signs of life.

Common idioms in category (1) we have *days are numbered* (the finality of death is approaching); *dead and gone* (someone who has died and has been buried); In category (2) *dead drunk* (so drunk that there is no physical control or social responsibility; *dead end* meaning no escape or movement is possible. It may also be related to category (3) and (4); *dead letter* (usually meaning a letter which cannot be delivered; *dead still* which can mean there is no movement or no sound; *dead to the world* can mean to be in a deep sleep or unconscious; *dead weight* refers to something difficult to move or carry, but also be used in a social responsibility sense to, that a person has no value to society.

In category (3) there are expressions such as *dead certain* meaning completely or absolutely sure of something, implying that no change or movement of ideas is possible; *dead simple/easy* meaning something is not only easy but requires little intelligence; *dead from the neck up* means someone is stupid; *deadpan* is someone shows no facial expression or emotion. These imply the loss or lack of the content of life. In category (4) a *deadbeat* is someone who takes no social responsibility; a *dead duck* is used to refer to a plan which is sure to fail; *dead loss* means that there is no profit or benefit in doing something; *dead wood* refers to people who are not useful in society or to a group. Social responsibility is seen as a vital activity of life. In category (5) we have expressions such as in the *dead of the night* meaning the darkest time of night. As light is associated with life, so darkness is metaphorically often used to refer to death or death-like situations. There is also *dead still* referred to above as either meaning “no sound” or “no movement”.

As death is often laden with such emotions as fear and anxiety and seen as a threat, the euphemisms for death have led to a rich variety of metaphors. Death is seen as a journey, either a final journey or going to another world. The simplest expression is just to leave the field of vision as in *pass away, be no more, disappear, be gone, leave this world, departure, exit*. Expressions such as *go to heaven, go to one’s resting place, go to one’s last home, go west* have some destination to the journey of dying. Interestingly, the latter has roots which we can trace back to ancient Egypt and China, where “the west,” the abode of the setting sun, was also that of the land of the dead, a place of no life or civilization. *Death/to die* is often seen as losing an entity which is linked to being alive, so we say *lose one’s life, lay down one’s life, give up the ghost*. Death may be personified as *meet death, the angel of death or the grim reaper* as well as various gods of death in classical mythologies.

A conceptual metaphoric analysis of how Shakespeare expresses death can lead to a deeper appreciation of how we conceptualize our experiences, emotions, and attitudes about
death. Utilizing the underlying conceptual analysis of Lakoff, et al. (1980) the quotations are followed by the underlying conceptual patterns given in capital letters.

Death that dark spirit. (Coriolanus 2.1.160)
<DEATH IS DARKNESS. DEATH IS AN ENTITY.>

Finish, good lady. The bright day is done.
And we are for the dark. (Antony and Cleopatra 5.2.192-3)
<DAY/LIGHT IS LIFE. DARKNESS IS DEATH.>

Is this the promised end? (King Lear 5.3.261)
<DEATH IS A DESTINATION>

Men must endure
Their going hence even as their coming hither. (King Lear 5.2.9-11)
<DEATH IS A JOURNEY>

An empty casket, where the jewel of life
By some damned hand was robbed and ta’en away. (King John 5.1.40-1)
<DEATH IS THE LOSS OF A PRECIOUS ENTITY>

Barren rage of death’s eternal cold. (Sonnet 13)
<DEATH IS COLDNESS>

I put my hand into the bed and felt them, and they were as cold as any stone. Then I felt to his knees, and so up’ard, and up’ard, and all was as cold as any stone. 
(Henry V 2.3.12-25)
<DEATH IS COLDNESS>

Death lies on her like an untimely frost
Upon the sweetest flower of all the field. (Romeo and Juliet 4.5.28-9)
<DEATH IS COLDNESS>

This sight of death is as a bell
That warns my old age to a sepulcher. (Romeo and Juliet 5.3.206-7)
As dead as a doornail. (2 Henry VI 4.10.39)

The ripest fruit first falls, and so doth he;  
His time is spent, our pilgrimage must be. (Richard II 2.1.153-4)

This world’s a city full of straying streets,  
And death’s the market-place where each one meets. (Two Noble Kinsmen 1.5.15-16)

So part we sadly in this troublesome world,  
To meet with joy in sweet Jerusalem. (3 Henry VI 5.5.7-8)

Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;  
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot; (Measure for Measure 3.1.117)

Kings and mightiest potentates must die,  
For that’s the end of human misery. (1 Henry VI 3.2.134-5)

Th’ sure physician, Death. (Cymbeline 5.4.7)

He that dies pays all debts. (Tempest 3.2.132)

A man can die but once, we owe God a death. (2 Henry IV 3.2.233-4)
Here burns my candle out. (3 Henry VI 2.6.1)
<LIFE IS LIGHT. DEATH IS DARKNESS.>

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
…To die—to sleep,
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to: ‘tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep;
To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there’s the rub:
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come… (Hamlet 3.1.56-83)
<DEATH IS SLEEP. DEATH IS A DREAM.>

The long day’s task is done
And we must sleep. (Antony and Cleopatra 4.14.35-6)
<DEATH IS SLEEP.>

The significance of these underlying conceptual patterns is that they provide a base from which rich varieties of expressions develop. To what extent these patterns are culturally bound, peculiar to a particular mind-set or have shared universal aspects across languages and cultures is goal of the studies in this volume of Facing Finality. It is interesting to note that basic patterns of Death as darkness, coldness, lack of animation, a journey often without a destination, sleep and dreaming are commonly repeated. The afterlife as a destination is infrequent. Death is seen as an entity often personified. But the personification of Death is not always one with foreboding. There is also the more culturally specific view of death as a transaction in which payment for failures in life is made. Life viewed as burdensome and filled with suffering leads to Death as breaking those bonds and providing freedom from travail, a theme which Christianity has made much of in terms of the life and death of Christ. But this is not a theme much found in Shakespeare’s works.

References

3. Parables of Death: What Words Tell Us about the Concepts of Life and Death in Japanese

Kei I. Yamanaka

Fragile life,
like bubbles on the water:
I live with the prayer
that even it may be as long
as mulberry rope
a thousand armfuls long.

– The Ten Thousand Leaves, v. 902

Words

It will be superfluous to cite various forms of funereal rituals around the world to corroborate the fact that our outlook on life and death is heavily dependent on culture. There really are various prescribed behaviors when we are brought face-to-face with the fact of death, be it one’s own or of others. In addition, there are many forms of ‘non-standard’ deaths in Japan like the notorious seppuku, loyal martyrdom, suicide with its several variations, suttee and so on – some of them are now long extinct though – which make it appear quite intriguing and appropriate to attempt a conceptual analysis. Our first concern, therefore, will be to examine how our vernacular copes with these basic conceptualizations and whether or not there is a perceptible nexus between ideation and cultural idiosyncrasies, and if there is, what is its exact nature and how it is linguistically structured to make up our belief system. Because all the data have been taken from a thesaurus, however, which strives to be exhaustive at the expense of stylistic and historical variations, some of the generalizations and conclusions here proposed are necessarily constrained in their scope.

Let us start with linguistic givens. The basic words for existence and its termination are $iki=ru$ ‘to live’ and $sin=u$ ‘to die’ in Japanese but the vagaries of language already begin here. Owing to the historical fact that the Japanese language had ceded at a very early stage of its development nearly all the functions of word-formation to the lexical items of Chinese origin, it has to rely on the etymologically unrelated Sino-Japanese equivalents $seimei$ ‘life’ or $si$ ‘death’ to productively nominalize or form compounds, much in the same way as in English in which native and Latinate derivational series (e.g. $die$ – $death$ – $deadly$, etc. vs. $mortal$ – $immortal$ – $mortality$, etc.) occupy their respective functional niches. Sino-Japanese stems, either primary,
bimorphemic or sometimes trimorphemic, function basically as nouns and any further syntactic utility is a matter of their latent function and internal structure. *Seimei*, for instance, cannot be converted into a verb or an adjective. *Tanzyoo* or *seitan* ‘birth’, a compound stem from *ian* ‘birth’ and allomorphic *sei/syoo* ‘life’ in reverse orders, on the other hand, functions as a noun in itself, as a verb when affixed with *suru* ‘do’ but never as an adjective. *Sessyoo* ‘taking a life’ has both an adjectival and verbal forms (i.e. *sessyoo-na* ‘cruel, slaughterous’ and *sessyoo suru* ‘to take a life’), whereas *hisan* ‘misery’ takes an adjectival suffix only (*hisan-na* ‘miserable, wretched’) supposedly conditioned by the potentially adjectival *hi* ‘sad’. Common usage often wavers between the verbal compound *N-suru* ‘to ~’ and phrasal *N o suru* ‘to do a ~ing’ as in *sessyoo suru* versus *sessyoo o suru*.

Word formation in native Japanese generally goes in the opposite direction: participial forms, viz., zero stem suffix in weak verbs (e.g. *iki=ø* from *iki=ru* ‘to live’, *wakare=ø* from *wakare=ru* ‘to part with’) and -i- stem suffix in strong verbs (e.g. *sin=i-* from *sin=ur’i*) can function as nominal bases by default. As non-predicative forms of the verb they occur normally in suspended clauses (e.g. *sake o nomi, uta o utau* ‘drink wine, and sing songs’) or in conjunction with other lexical items entering into compounds of various types (e.g. *iki-kata* ‘a way of life’, *iki-gami* ‘a live god’; *sini-isogu* ‘be prone to self-destruction’, *muda-zini* ‘death in vain’, *waka-zini* ‘early death’, etc. All verbs can be employed conjunctively, but not all of them have established uses as nouns. Even when they do, the resultant nouns tend to vary in their semantic categories without turning uniformly into action nouns. The situation is quite similar to such deverbal nouns in English as *kill, catch, hunt* etc. where nominal uses tend to bifurcate either into action nouns or into nouns signifying the patient, often extremely specific, of the activities identified by respective verbs. Accordingly, the nominal form *iki* (zero accent or *iki*) is employed only in very specialized senses, (i) the “living” state of a group of stones in the go game, (ii) an instruction to recover deleted items in proof reading, (iii) fresh appearance of market fish, etc. Similarly, use of the de-verbal noun *sini* as an action noun is a theoretical possibility but in reality it again functions only as a formative base but not as an independent noun except technically for a captured deployment of stones in the game of go.

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1. Japanese verbs and adjectivals change their forms according to their syntactic environments. It is not declension, however, in the proper sense of the word but alteration of stem suffix depending on the functional classes of the following element, very roughly as (1) *-i=ø* before negatives, (2) *et/et* before the suppositional particle *ba*, (3) *-i=ø* before predicatives, (4) *o* before the optative particle *o*, and (5) *u/ru* before zero (citation form) or nominals:

   (1)(2)(3)(4)(5)Consonant stem *sin=a-sin=e-sin=i-sin=o-sin=ur-Vowel Stem* *iki=eki=eki=iko=ru.

In default of a following predicator, the form (3) either functions as suspended predication or as a noun. The two types of “declension” above are sometimes collapsed theoretically by hypothesizing an intrusive *-i* for consonant stem verbs as in *sin=ru* on the assumption that the hypothetical element is to be deleted by a general phonological rule in Japanese that prohibits consonant clusters. This is a very strong claim unifying the superficial differences between the so-called strong verbs like *sin=ur* and *koros=ur* and weak verbs like *iki=ru* and *umare=ru* ‘be born’ and between such doublets as *are/-are* ‘passive suffix’ and *ase/-ase* ‘causative suffix’. This solution, however, necessitates several additional rules somewhere at a lower level of grammar to take care of over-generalizations in weak verbs like *‘iki=ra*’ *‘iki=ri* instead of *iki=ru*. In discussing morphological aspect of verbs we will continue to use traditional terms and morpho-phonological transcription.

2. It is often suggested on comparative grounds that the verb *iki* is derived the other way round from *iki* ‘breath’. Denominal verb formation is a historic possibility attested with such verbs as *kumoru=ur* ‘becloud’ from *kumo* ‘cloud’ and *kager=ur* ‘overshadow’ from *kage* ‘shadow’ and some verbs are coined this way even in present-day Japanese but this is not a general rule of productive derivation.
More precisely, however, compounds like naga-iki ‘longevity’, muda-zini, etc. ending with participial nouns have the internal structure adjunct + head noun and therefore has a definite order in their derivation; verb – nominalization – suru periphrasis as with sini-isog=ru – sini-isogi – sini-isogi suru ‘to hasten to one’s doom, to ask for death’. Compound verb (e.g. sini-isog=ru) and periphrastic re-verbalization (e.g. sini-isogi suru) do not seem to differ much in their meaning. Another complicating morphological feature in this process is that su=ru converts freely into causative sase=ru, adversative/passive rare=ru, and causative passive saserare=ru, thereby blurring categorical distinctions between various facets of dying and killing. By dint of this derivational process, sinase=ru ‘cause/let sb to die’ is synonymous with indirect killing and korosare=ru ‘be killed’ with dying.

Naturally, word meanings are on their own grounds. Sinu, for example, is lexicographically treated as an equivalent of die but this verb is more strongly constrained by animacy than its counterpart in English so that it cannot collocate with plants, fires, machines or sounds, apparently because the possibility is preempted by other verbs such as kare=ru ‘die’ for plants and yam=u ‘cease’ for natural phenomena. Moreover, this lexical division apparently crucially conditions whether a certain collocation is construed as a metaphorical extension in one language but not in another: literal translations of the echo died or the connection died into Japanese would sound simply ill-formed and vacuous even though they structurally satisfy the necessary syntactic condition for metaphors. Moreover, its use at times approaches volitional verbs – a fact which underlies subtle discrepancies in translation as follows:

(1) Sinde yaru! ‘I shall die.’ i.e. ‘I shall kill myself.’
(2) Ani wa sensoo de sinda. ‘My brother died in battle.’ i.e. ‘was killed in battle.’
(3) Kare wa tama ni atatte sinda. ‘He hit the bullet and died’ i.e. ‘A bullet killed him.’

These kinds of lexico-semantic particulars abound, often tempting us to make extrapolations onto the cultural domain. Lest we should fall into trivialism, however, it is necessary to have a broader perspective on how life and death are conceptualized and what their coding structures are in languages in general and in Japanese by contrast. Thanks to the logical antinomy between life and death, and their compulsory confinement to a bounded domain of “life-time”, the underlying distribution of coding points for living organisms is likely to be structurally similar (cf. Givón 1984:38ff.). Coding points may vary depending on the inventory of grammatical and semantic categories and supposedly on the extent of multiple taxonomy in a language but it will be possible to identify Process, Event and Causativity on a very abstract and rudimentary level of coding. In other words, coding structure in a language is supposed to comprise the following set of primitives to be further articulated as to State, Manner, etc., and eventually into an indefinite number of lexemes for life stages variously to be encoded in a specific language:
Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) a. &lt;birth, process&gt;</td>
<td>umareru, tanzyoo suru</td>
<td>be born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. &lt;birth, event&gt;</td>
<td>tanzyoo, syussyoo</td>
<td>birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) a. &lt;life, process&gt;</td>
<td>ikiru</td>
<td>live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. &lt;life, event&gt;</td>
<td>sei(mei)</td>
<td>life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) a. &lt;killing, event&gt;</td>
<td>korosu</td>
<td>kill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. &lt;killing, process&gt;</td>
<td>satuzin, hito-gorosi</td>
<td>murder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) a. &lt;death, process&gt;</td>
<td>sinu, si(boo) suru</td>
<td>die</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. &lt;death, event&gt;</td>
<td>si(boo)</td>
<td>death</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It must be noted in the first place that such linguistic implementation is not confined to a single linguistic level, most notably of lexemes, but ranges over compounds and phrasal expressions and shades into figurative elaborations. Especially cumbersome is the morphological processes mentioned above which almost nullify the distinction between word classes and semantic opposition between killing and dying. Secondly, even within a language, there is a great imbalance in the extent of articulation among the categories given above. For example, the vocabulary relating to birth (1) in Japanese, with its nominal and verbal classes of forms taken together, does not exceed a dozen in number, while coded forms relating to death (4) amount to one hundred and seventy (approximately 110 nouns and 60 verbs) and the words related to killing (3) come in next in density by one hundred and ten (60 nouns and 50 verbs). Life (2) has meager variations of about half a dozen. Considering that both nouns and verbs have a morphological means to convert from one to the other as was mentioned above, these figures, based on the word stems in a thesaurus (Yamaguti ed. 2003), can have a limited statistic significance. On a secondary, derivational level, for instance, almost all the nouns falling under (4b) can be verbalized, sometimes unpredictably as with takai ‘another world’ – takai suru ‘to pass into another world’, which almost triples the number of (4a). Exceptions are a few such nouns as tisi ‘fatality’, gisi ‘feigned death’, songensi ‘death with dignity’, anarakusi ‘euthanasia’, noosi ‘brain death’, etc. that do not normally verbalize. Moreover, membership of this class tends to shift faster than in other classes. Recent additions are powa (suru) (from
Tibetan *phowa* ‘to discard physical existence’, i.e. to kill) which came into popularity after the crimes by the cult group Aum in the 90s, *noosi* legally defined in 1997 and amended in 2009, and *karooosi* (*suru*) ‘death/die from overwork’ legally defined as a type of work-related death in 2001. In consequence, the only but mandatory conclusion we can draw from the overcoding of deathly domain is that death, be it caused by the other or not, is a marked category that has demanded our special concern in history.

On the morpho-syntactic level, however, Japanese has an added complexity arising from the behavior of the modal auxiliaries *-sase=ru* and *-rare=ru*, commonly called causative and passive auxiliaries respectively. The causative auxiliary does not much differ from its equivalent in other languages either in its function or in its syntactic behaviors, but *rare=ru* is peculiar in that it applies indiscriminately to transitive and intransitive verbs and, less peculiarly, passivization has direct passives and indirect passives:

(4) *Keikan ga ani o korosita.* ‘A policeman killed my elder brother.’

Policeman-TOP my elder brother-ACC killed

(5) *Ani ga keikan ni korosareta.* ‘My elder brother was killed by a policeman.’

My elder brother-TOP a policeman-DAT was-killed

(6) *Watasi ga ani o keikan ni korosareta.* ‘I had my brother killed by a policeman.’

I-TOP my elder brother-ACC a policeman-DAT was killed.

(7) *Watasi ga ani ni sinareta.* ‘My elder brother died on me/us.’

I-TOP my elder brother-DAT died.

In the so-called adversative passives (6 and 7), the topic occurs as an extra argument that cannot be traced back to its counterpart in active sentences. At least two generalizations are possible from this: (i) applications of *-rare=ru* are made on implicational rather than on syntactic grounds, and (ii) any event, be it identified by a transitive verb or by an intransitive verb, is syntactically codifiable in Japanese with added information as to its personal affect. Affectedness, furthermore, finds a syntactic expression: by the auxiliary use of grammaticalized deictic verbs of transfer *yar=u*, *kure=ru*, and *mora=u* (‘centrifugal give’, ‘centripetal give’, and nondescript ‘receive’) events are habitually interpreted in terms of benefactive relations, often replacing the explicit identification of participants within a message. The situation comes out most clearly when the utterance is based on the speaker-hearer relation as in the following examples:

(8) *Sinde yaru! [=1] ‘(I) give (it to you) to die’, i.e. ‘I’ll kill myself (to your detriment).’

(9) *Sinde kure! ‘(you) give (me) to die’, i.e. ‘Will you die (for me)!’

(10) *Korosite yaru! ‘(I) give (it to you) to kill’, i.e. ‘I’ll kill you.’

(11) *Korosite kure! ‘(you) give (me) to kill’, i.e. ‘I beseech you to kill me.’
Kare o korosite morau. ‘(I) receive (it from you) to kill him’, i.e. ‘I order you to kill him.’

In order to avoid crowding the page with numerous and mostly unfamiliar words, however, only a few basic and general features of the vocabulary will be pointed out here. The coding pattern relating to life (1a,b and 2a,b) has nothing extraordinary, except for the fact that umare=ru ‘be born’ makes, just as in English or Russian, a rare instance of a passivized form virtually functioning as a root (i.e. it is apparently derived from <úm=u ‘to bear’) along with the active doublet tanzyoo suru. This is evidently a compromise between non-volitional nature of birth for a baby and transitivity of giving a birth. Other lexical members in these categories are mostly compounds and periphrastic variations all reducible to the borrowed roots from Sino-Japanese sei ‘life’, san ‘procreation’, tan ‘birth’. Archaic aras=u ‘to bear’ and arema-su ‘be born’ are apparently derivations from the existential verb ar=u ‘to exist’ together with nar=u ‘to become, to come into fruit’. Relative frequency of the passivized causative ikasare=ru ‘to be sustained’ and its stative variant ikasarete aru ‘to be allowed to live on’ is rising very rapidly owing to the recent eco-conscious life style.

Kill/murder category (3a, b), in contrast, shows an extreme overcoding in comparison with birth and life. This lexical plethora and the transitivity of the act itself as opposed to other categories, however, make it possible to describe both coding types and derivational patterns in a principled way. There are a few general terms, e.g. the native koros=u, its emphatic form buti-koros=u and literary ayame=ru ‘to destroy a person’ or gai suru ‘to harm’ along with the borrowed satugai suru ‘to murder’ and distinctly Buddhist sessyoo (o) suru ‘to take a life’ with the incorporated object (syoo).

There is also a class of circumlocutions of various types, morphological: sinase=ru ‘to let sb die’, composite uti-tor=u ‘to kill the enemy’, si-tome=ru ‘to make a kill’, phrasal: inoti o tor=u/uba=u ‘to take sb’s life’, iki no ne o tome=ru ‘to put an end to’, te ni kake=ru ‘to lay violent hands on’, timaturi ni age=ru ‘to make a blood sacrifice of’, etc. Metaphorical expressions, both lexical and phrasal but always suggestive of their respective source domains, make a class by themselves: taos-u ‘to fell’, nemurase=ru ‘to put sb to sleep’, damarase=ru ‘to make sb silent’, kes=u ‘to annihilate’, kataduke=ru ‘to put sb away’, syobun suru ‘to get rid of’, ryoori suru ‘to cook’, baras=u ‘to slaughter’, hohur=u ‘to butcher’, yar=u ‘to do away with’, todome o sas=u ‘to deliver the coup de grace to’, etc.

The largest amount of vocabulary on this level, however, are the compounds ending either with native head morphemes -koros=u and -ut=u or with loan -satu suru. Most of such compounds are preceded by modifiers identifying the manners of killing: sasi-koros=u ‘to stab to death’, kiri-koros=u ‘to slash sb to death’, noroi-koros=u ‘to curse sb to death’; doku-satu suru ‘to poison sb to death’, boku-satu suru ‘to club sb to death’, sya-satu suru ‘to shoot sb dead’, etc. Their nominal counterparts are -koros=i/-goros=i or -ut=i and -satu respectively. Chinese bimorphemic stems, whatever their combination patterns are, all function as nouns by themselves, but native Japanese stems and the mixture between the two are very complex in
their derivational structure and semantics, and a phonological alternation in addition is sometimes crucially involved.

Because the -i/-ø stem suffix wavers between noun and verb in its function, Japanese compound verbs have the combination patterns V-V, and N-V, while their nominal counterparts are able to have the patterns A-vN, V-vN, and N-vN (where, vN represents deverbal nouns with the -i/-ø stem suffix). Accordingly, derivation of the latter from the former is only a theoretical possibility and asymmetry characterizes the actual usage: ‘to curse sb to death’ is an established combination but its nominalized form *noroi-korosi is non-existent, home-gorosi ‘mock praise’ is an everyday word but it is impossible to say *home-goros=u or *home-koros=u, whereas both sasi-tigae= ru/sasi-tigae ‘cross-stabbing, i.e. (to commit) a double suicide by stabbing each other’ are in common use. Voicing of the initial stop consonant in the second member usually indicates the tightness of constructs (cf. yamagawa ‘mountain brooks’ vs. yamá-kawa ‘hills and brooks’) and appears to block the verbalization, but this is not a general rule either (e.g. yuki-dumar=u/yukidumari ‘coming to a dead end’). The only possible generalization, therefore, will be to consider that the derivation is unidirectional but compound nouns with the -i/-ø stem suffix can be formed independently from antecedent verbal bases. In most cases, the terminal element in V-V compounds is a head and the initial element is a modifier, but the structure is reversed with a group of aspectual verbs such as kaes=u ‘to return’, hazime=ru ‘to begin’, oe-ru ‘to finish’, aw-u ‘to reciprocate’ as in (iki o) huki-kaes=u ‘to come to life again’, korosi-hazime=ru ‘to start killing’, etc.

Suicide constitutes an ambivalent category codifiable either as a type of killing as in English, zisatu ‘sui-cide’, or as a type of death zisi ‘voluntary death’. Because killing oneself used to be perceived not as a sin but as the ultimate form of protest or defense of honor, suicide

3. A few compound nouns like sibari-kubi ‘death by hanging’ and utoi-kubi ‘decapitation’, however, have the VO order just as their Sino-Japanese counterparts zansyu and koosyu. It appears that inalienable possessions behave differently in compounding, but samples are too few to corroborate if it is really the case.
used to be very frequent in Japan. Especially among the warrior class during the feudal era and among soldiers in the interwar years, readiness to throw out one’s life for the sake of their overlord or for the country was counted among the worthiest of virtues; the name thus earned was considered more valuable than the life lost. This tendency has spawned unusual number of words relating to suicide. The notorious seppuku (or kappuku, hara-kiri ‘disembowelment’ or hara o kir[u] ‘to commit suicide by disembowelment’ lie at the root of hyponym formations as in oi-bara ‘harakiri out of compassion for the dead’, tomo-bara ‘harakiri through fidelity towards one’s friend’, tume-bara ‘coerced harakiri’. Other more explicit hyponyms of zisatu are zigai ‘self-inflicted death’, zihun ‘cutting one’s own throat’, ziketu ‘self-determination’, zisai ‘self-punishment’, zizin ‘applying a blade to oneself’ with a shade of militarist undertone. It is possible to regard all of these as “honor suicide” but the so-called “honor killing” (meiyo (no) satuzin, sometimes translated as humeiyo no zatuzin ‘dishonor killing’) did not exist as a social code nor was it lexicalized until quite recently. Zyunsi “suicide through fidelity” would also fall into this category, although it is lexicalized as a form of death rather than killing.

Less heroic cases are zyoosi ‘love suicide’ and sinzyuu ‘double suicide’ committed as a consummation of prohibited love or its extension ikka sinzyuu ‘family suicide’ as a final solution to impoverished life and muri-sinzyuu in which coercion from one of the perpetrators is involved. The word sinzyuu originally meant less serious gestures of love, all painful though they are, like tattooing or inflicting upon oneself the same injury between lovers but gradually took on the meaning of committing suicide together. A variation of this deed is ato-oi zisatu ‘(lit.) following-up suicide’, i.e. killing oneself out of despair from the death of the dearest person, which has factually existed in the western culture also, taken up as a literary motif since Greek mythology, but presumably has remained unnamed there.

Cognition

The tremendous amount of vocabulary relating to dying and death testifies to the fact that, on the one hand, they are by far the most dreaded topics in our life, and on the other that a more general and more powerful approach than a simplistic lexico-semantic analysis is required to cope with the ideation patterns underlying the vast vocabulary. The term circumlocution, for instance, has been necessary to refer to codification on the phrasal level, and various cases of stylistic variation seem to defy the naïve “segmentation of reality” model. For instance, Japanese used to reserve hoogyo for the emperor’s or empress’s demise, kookyo for a member of the royal family, sokkyo for a peer, senge for a high priest, seikyo for any respectable personage, and sikyo for the ordinary. Words are different and therefore each of them has a distinctive semantic structure but all of them identify the same event or ‘reality’. Even if the perception of the event may differ for each case, the difference is more of a colloquial nature than segmentational, and it is also possible to attempt at stylistic variations by employing toka ‘(lit.) to go up into the cloud’ or an honorific form o-kakure ni naru (from kakure=ru ‘to hide oneself’) in referring to the emperor’s death or of the empress. These are distinctions for the sake of distinction.
It is reasonable, then, to consider that such excessive vocabulary results not solely from segmentation but also from multiple coding of one and the same entity. As we have seen, segmentation into more precise terms can be conceived of as accretion of manner features on the basic concept, most often by linking discrete words. Multiple coding, on the other hand, proceeds by inventing and adding alternative ways of naming the same thing. The reasons may be various: pre-scientific mentality fears to utter the names of the dreaded entity lest the act should invoke the dread; indirection is chosen out of consideration for the bereaved, and it is usually a sign of genteelism to avoid crude reference to unpleasant topics. Taboo in the real sense of the word used to exist before the Restoration (1868) on using the names of the dead (and of the sovereigns). Accordingly, it was customary for a warrior class male to receive an imina ‘posthumous name’ on the occasion of his rite of initiation. The profusion of indirect references to death and dying, therefore, is supposed to result from topic avoidance as with using heteronyms for blood, beasts and other targets of horror, uttering the names of which was feared to incur the detested incidence upon the utterer.

Coded words on death and dying are numerous but major coding patterns fall into three: literal description, circumlocution and figurative wording. Roughly about one third (approximately 70 thesaurus entries) are nominal compounds describing the manner of death like rekisi ‘runover death’, suisi ‘death by drowning’, etc. which readily convert into verbs with -saru suffixation. The rest consists of various types of literal and figurative naming although defining what is literal is not an easy task. Although non-metaphor can be identified by a simple criterion whether or not a lexical item is understood “on its own terms without making use of structure imported from a completely different conceptual domain” (Lakoff & Turner 1987: 57), there are other types of ideation and wording that defy easy definition. The very common, polite expression naku naru ‘to cease to be’ and some such variations on it as naki kazu ni hairu ‘to join among the number of those who are no more’, naki hito to naru ‘to be a person no more’ appear to be referentially true except for the lingering sense of opacity arising probably from the fact that they do not call a spade a spade – or, more technically, owing to the violation of the principle of “pre-emption by synonymy” (Clark & Clark 1979). What enables us to use the term “circumlocution” is collateral presence of a well-established and straightforward lexeme sinu ‘die’ in such cases – in other words, our categorizing ability itself.

There are some more complex cases. Ordinary descriptive phrases like me o toziru ‘to close one’s eyes’, iki o hikitoru ‘to breathe one’s last’, myaku ga agaru ‘the pulse fails’, tumetaku naru ‘to turn cold’, hai ni naru ‘to turn into ashes’, kusaba no kage ni kakureru ‘to be buried in rank weeds’, etc. are frequently put to use in their non-literal sense of ‘death’ either as a process or as a state. Traditional rhetoric would regard all such expressions as euphonyms but they can be euphonyms (by means of partonyms or metalepses) only on condition that they are observationally false. In addition, this constraint should not work over such intrinsically pleonastic expressions as, for example, unmu ni magiru ‘to mingle with the cloud’, kusaba no tuyu to naru ‘to turn into dew on the grass’, haka ni hairu ‘to enter into one’s grave’, tuyu to kieru ‘to disappear like dew’, etc. all characterized by their poetic artifices. It is apparent that the effective devices employed (similes, metaphors, metonyms, poetic symbols, etc.) have helped to perpetuate their use as set phrases. The memorable expression kutinasi no sono ni iru ‘to step into the flowery expanse of gardenia’ dating back to “Laments” in the XIth century
which artfully exploits, as traditional Japanese poetry was wont to do, the dormant double entendre ‘gardenia’ and the meaning of ‘the speechless’ in the floral name *kutinasi*.

As can be expected, by far the most pervasive device of all is metaphor. First of all, we can see that a majority of metaphors conceptualizing life events are cross-linguistic, often overriding the boundaries between respective events, and ignoring coding levels within a language. In view of the generality of this conceptual apparatus, let us first formulate the entire system of ideation observable in the Japanese lexicon. Conceptual metaphors are classified as A and metonymies (or more exactly metalepses) as B.

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIFE</th>
<th>DEATH</th>
<th>AFTERLIFE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIVING IS A JOURNEY</td>
<td>→DYING IS A DEPARTURE (for another place, separation)</td>
<td>→ARRIVAL AT THE DESTINATION (PURE LAND)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life is a journey</td>
<td>→Death is freezing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life is a dream/phantom</td>
<td>→Death is extinction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life is a droplet of water</td>
<td>→DEATH IS A LOSS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFE IS FIRE (→heat, flame)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LIFE IS A POSSESSION</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEATH IS A FALL</td>
<td>→REBIRTH IS RISING UP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEATH IS REST (sleep, silence)</td>
<td>→ANOTHER LIFE IN TRANQUILITY</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>DEATH IS A PERSON</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living is breathing</td>
<td>Death is to stop breathing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birth is opening your eyes</td>
<td>Death is closing one’s eyes</td>
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We can point out that some metaphors work on the conceptual level but some others only on the level of specific realia. LIFE IS A FALL, for example, can be realized as a star shooting, a tree falling down, a craggy height or a mountain ridge crumbling, but *yume* ‘a dream’ or *maborosi* ‘a phantom’ seems to work by itself. A Buddhist monk likened man’s life to an incessant trickle of water finally to freeze (*tekisui*, *tekitoo*), but the image, just like the crafted
pun on *kutinasi*, stays in the language as a proverbial figure. A data-based analysis would come up with a richer version, but this table – deduced from registered items in a lexicon – will suffice to make several important generalizations: (1) probably all the conceptualization patterns easily translate into other languages, (2) coding of death and dying is understandably more fully developed than with life, (3) part of death metaphors is a logical consequence of life metaphors, and (4) projections from death metaphors can create belief systems.

We have already seen that a number of words signifying death end in *-kyo* ‘going away’, but in fact the notions COMING (*kuru*) and GOING (*yuku*), together with the aforementioned pair of directionality UP and DOWN (or ultimately the images of heaven and underworld), are basic to a far larger number of registered words and set phrases. A person COMES into being (*umare-kuru*) and GOES away (*sini-yuku*). Coming and going naturally call for the notions of origin and destination, which, however, are commonly conceptualized in terms of vertical directionality; people go up to heaven or down to the netherworld. The origin of life is seldom envisioned in locational terms but the phrases *ten ni kaeru/kaesu* ‘to return to heaven’ and *tuti ni kaeru* ‘to return to the soil’ imply that man has first come down and finally goes under. In this respect, Indian religious traditions appear to be exceptional in setting either the pure land in the remote west myriads of miles away or imagining this life as a stage in a sequence of related lives (cf. the series of borrowings *zenze* ‘past life’, *gense* ‘present life’, *raise* ‘future life’ and *zensyoo* ‘former life’, *konzyoo* ‘this life’, *tasyoo* ‘another life’).

More specifically a JOURNEY makes an all-purpose concept to structure life events; a person leaves home, passes the gateway, sets on a long journey, follows the passage to death, and finally enters another world. A belief system could be born if a parable is created to make the destination no less meaningful than the worldly satisfaction. Buddhism sets the vision of incandescent pure lands infinite miles away in the west and regards death as *oozyoo* ‘departing and starting another life’ and preached rebirth. Nirvana, in contrast, can be regarded as a sublimated rest in peace as epitomized by the word *zyoobutu* ‘transcending worldly cares and becoming a Buddha’. A set of such expressions as *kamu-agaru/noboru* ‘to rank among the gods’, *ame-sirasu* ‘to reign the heaven’ or *taka-sirasu* ‘to reign up high’, *syooten* (*suru*), *ten ni noboru* ‘to ascend to heaven’ and *ten ni mesareru* ‘be drawn up to heaven’, on the other hand, are apparently a merger between this idea of apotheosis and orientational UP. The first three items derive from Japanese myth and the following three are apparently Christian, but both groups are somewhat difficult to categorize as they refer, on the one hand, to the fact of death but, on the other, mention the transcendental existence after death. One may add a classical Chinese loan word *uka toosen* ‘to metamorphose into a divine existence above’. Basically, then, these euphonyms are paralleled with non-orientational, change of state expression *zyoobutu suru* together with several other synonyms like *hotoke/osyaka/odabutu ni naru* ‘to become a Buddha’ or calling the dead simply as *hotoke* ‘a Buddha’. As we shall see later, Shinto adheres to yet another parable.

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4. Contextually, for example, *She gave him peace*; *She sent him away*; *She put him to sleep* can all mean ‘She killed him’, but it will be unwarranted to register the specific sense to each of these expressions.

5. The word *hotoke* bears little phonetic similarity with *Buddha* and looks like an indigenous term but actually it is a word “whose journeyings consist of many stages” (Chamberlain 1973: lxxx). Two possible
Metaphoric language is prone to construct a different version of parables. The act of death can be figuratively verbalized in manifold ways as departing, disappearing, sleeping, hiding, sinking, etc. on the metaphorical level with innumerable extensions on the respective theme. In addition to this, life events and processes readily hypostatize into fictive entities as a life, murder and death, and by a further process of concretization, it is natural that life, an intrinsic state of being alive, should be envisaged as a possession and inevitable death as an outer force or a fearful agent. Such parables normally occur with three major participants: person as an experiencer, his or her life, and hypostatized death in the forms of a person or a limit of lifetime. The fact of dying, therefore, can be scripted in various ways with varying degrees of dramatization: a person dies, a person meets his death, a person loses his life, a person’s life comes to an end, death approaches, comes to a person, death assaults a person, death takes away a person’s life, etc. Dramatized aspects of life such as these are likely to produce their own vocabulary.

**Beliefs**

Death might be a sleep and oblivion for the dying (Osler, quoted in Hinohara 2007), but the conceptualization and belief system on after-life determines our outlook on life and death even more strongly than the dreaded death itself. Our imaginings on what would become of the dead, the corpse, or the soul of the dead are as actual as our living experiences and memories. The outlook cannot be unitary and its verbal and non-verbal traits are overwhelming in their variety and multitude but the readiest lexical clue will be the attributive formative i-/yui- ‘remaining’ that occurs in dozens of combinations: itai ‘the body of the deceased’, ikottu ‘bones of the dead’, yuigon ‘a will’, ikun ‘testaments’, izoku ‘the bereaved’, itoku ‘beneficial influence’, and others. The modified nouns classify into the body, works (including words, images, good deeds, and estate), and the people left behind. The dead body, however, has three disparate aspects for the living, which appear to define the distinctly animistic belief structures of the Japanese: the substance soon to decay and mix with the soil, such durable parts of the body as bones, teeth, nails and hair that stay in the earth as long as those who are left behind can confirm, and the imputed essence of his or her existence which lives on in memory for generations. These three motifs first appear in the funerary service and build into our cultural mindset toward death and the dead.

Death (or the corpse) has been traditionally regarded as the direst of impurity (kegare) that defiles the air and threatens family weal – a major reason why a series of funerary steps from lip-wetting, pillow adjustment (makura-kazari), reporting of the baleful event to the

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6. I am writing this as a traditional Shintoist, which, however, has nothing to do with my religious or moral beliefs. It is simply a family tradition prescribing our choice and behaviors on ceremonial occasions. This is supposed to apply equally to more than ninety estimated percent of marriage and funerary ceremonies performed in the Buddhist style today.
ancestral spirits, placing the remains in the casket, to the concluding overnight wake, ought to be performed at the homestead of the deceased or at a funeral home but never at a sanctuary like temples or shrines. During the process every care is taken to carry on specific services in an unusual manner to sharply distinguish and “defamiliarize” them from their daily counterparts; quotidian oughtn’ts turn into prescriptions. The head of the deceased must be set toward the north – a posture any living person would hesitate to assume in her bedroom, *huton* coverlet is spread over the body upside down (this applies also to the crested *haori* to be spread over the coverlet or to a folding picture screen if there is any available). The first sign of the durability motif appears in furnishing the casket; close kin make their last tribute with their nail clippings and wisps of cut hair enfolded in a sheet of white paper, an exact obverse of the quotidian inhibition placed on burning them.

When the wake and viewing are over, the casket is moved outdoors for the coffin rite officiated by a Shinto priest. Contrary to daily practice, it is customary for pall-bearers to put on their straw footgear in the room, and tie their laces in a vertical knot. A square lot is staked off in the yard with four fresh poles of bamboo, enclosed with a rope of twisted rice straw and festooned with paper trappings called *side*.

Formerly, it was usual to sound the string of a bamboo bow toward four directions to sanctify the enclosure. A long session of invocations and formulaic prayers follow but the essence of the coffin rite is to separate the spirit of the dead (*mitama-utusui; mitama* is an honorific form for *tama* ‘spirit, soul’) so that it can survive the physical body for ever after cremation. Through this rite, the spirit is finally transferred to a symbolic tablet called *mitama-siro* (or *reizi*) and reposes there until the end of fifty days’ mourning.

There is not much to say about the succeeding funeral rite and incineration but the remaining ashes and bone fragments are not to be lightly pulverized and cast away. The all-too realistic process concludes with a memorable ceremony called *kotu-age* (‘bone-picking’). Close relatives of the dead collect several pieces of bones out of the ashes and transfer them into a small urn using a long pair of chopsticks, not directly but, according to the funereal manner, always supported or relayed by another’s chopsticks. At some point in this process, the operator of the furnace is certain to identify a whitened Adam’s apple (*nodo-botoke*) to be collected. This act comes so natural and solacing to the bereaved because the word contains in it the name Buddha (*hotoke*) and this bone itself is shaped somewhat like the image of Buddha sitting in the lotus position. The urn is finally to be housed in the crypt under the tombstone.

7. They are a usual emblem for a purified place or an object in Shintoism. They are made out of a square white paper by folding it into oblong halves, cutting interchangeingly from the open side and the folded side and hung by one end of the fold in a zig zag fashion.

8. The Adam’s apple, however, melts away in the heat and anatomically the bone in question is known to be the axis (=C2). This is a Buddhist custom originally practiced in the True Pure Land sect (*Zyoodo sinsyuui*) but subsequently taken up by most crematoriums evidently by virtue of its emotional value.
On the surface Buddhist funerary services and memorial ceremonies are completely different from the Shinto ones described above but the two religious systems had a fundamental feature in common, viz., the view that the spirit is separable from the body and continues to live on after death. This belief has led to parallel practices in the two religious systems such as renaming the dead for their afterlife, divided memorial sites between the grave and the altar, and special ritualized occasions in subsequent years for welcoming the spirit home. Attaching exceptional importance to the bones of the dead is also characteristic of both affiliations. It is often suggested that Buddhism is responsible for this, which has a long tradition of relic worship (Skt. śarīra), but this does not explain the importance that common people attach to the bones of their family members nor does it apply to the similar fixation in Shinto. The answer evidently lies in the naïve logic that, without physical remains, or in the last analysis bone fragments as with the innumerable cases of the war dead, no rite can be performed to separate the spirit from the body and ensure an eternal life. For believers in the life after death, it is more dreadful than real death to be doubly dead without a proper separation rite or by the neglect of commemorative rites by their descendants.

Given this common core of belief, it is no wonder that there have been a mutual compromise and syncretism between Shinto and Buddhism: the former adopted, for example, the rites of pillow adjustment, bone picking, and halved its one hundredth day commemorative rite in concession to forty nine days of the latter. Buddhism in its turn had no difficulty in incorporating purification and food offerings to the altar (kuzen) into its practice. Today, it is no contradiction for the Japanese to practice daily offering to the altar where, according to Shinto, ancestral spirits are supposed to be ever present as guardians of the family and, on the other hand, to make a nation-wide return home during the o-bon season in August to observe the rite of welcoming the spirits back from the pure land according to the Buddhist style.

Conclusion

From the foregoing sketches, it will be possible to make some generalizations on the relation between language, cognition, and belief structures. Firstly, it is clear that a relativistic view of language is trivially true; language with its unique vocabulary, grammatical apparatus, and cognitive patterns do reflect its socio-cultural background. Coding density and the inventory of grammatical categories, however, have a limited theoretical import because they are, in the first place, (i) a purely comparative, relativistic notion most often without proper tertium comparationis, (ii) there are multiple levels of coding in a language and lack of lexation can be compensated for on other levels or by means of other grammatical categories, (iii) coded words and cognitive patterns are a historical product with layers of foregone ideas as well as currently significant notions, (iv) synchronically, they comprise not only putative key terms but also their contraries and opposites at the same time, and simple imaginings and cultural translations leave their mark on the vocabulary. Therefore, only the coding idiosyncrasy as

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9. The extent of this attachment can be testified by occasional stealing of the bones of celebrities for ransom or by the fact that the first agenda in Japanese diplomacy, after resuming its relations with neighboring countries after the World War II, was to reach an agreement with them to dispatch delegations to collect the bones of the war dead in their territories.
evinced by the untranslatable in a language turn out to be a viable clue to the mentality and behaviors of its users.

Or, it might be argued this way: what lies at the root of both Shinto and Buddhist conceptions of death is clearly the belief that the spirit is separable from the body. There certainly are several vocables like tama-sizume ‘spirit appeasement’, tama-okuri ‘a farewell ceremony for the spirit’, tama-mukae ‘a welcome ceremony for the spirit’, ara-tama ‘a raging spirit’, tama-siro ‘a seat of the spirit’, etc. which directly bears on this belief, but they are all religious terms confined to the Shinto initiates, and furthermore the belief was explicitly identified with the term yuuri-kon ‘a departed spirit’ (in opposition to the animistic spirit inherent in an object) only in the recent past, and an attempt is still being made to attain to a more precise understanding of the notion on a philological and sociological basis (cf. Tutihasi 1994).

This belief, however, seems to be nothing special. It lies apparently at a deeper layer of the human mind not just in a tiny cross-section of culture. The hapless heroine in Ambrose Bierce’s short story “Beyond the Wall”, for instance, dies, exerting her failing will to restore a broken connection with the narrator, but her spirit stays around after her death and repeatedly visits him at night:

‘What reparation could I make? Are there masses that can be said for the repose of souls that are abroad such nights as this – spirits “blown about by the viewless winds” – coming in the storm and darkness with signs and portents, hints of memory and presages of doom? ’ –A. Bierce, “Beyond the Wall”, (1909).

The narrator is depicted in the following paragraph as subscribing to the notion of “fatal triad” propounded by a pagan mystic, but it is interesting to observe that a writer’s imagination could entertain such a conceit at all; all the more so because he could address it to the Christian readership. The narrator asks if there could be masses to be said for the repose of aggrieved souls. Nothing could be more appropriate as an introductory piece of catechism to Shinto. Shinto started with the conviction that there can be such masses and devised a system of rituals to appease and pacify the dead spirit by invoking the helping power of the previously dead. It will be reasonable, then, to think that human beliefs, ideas and imaginings have perfect freedom in their own sphere, and what goes by the name of culture is a superstructure built on just one of many hypotheses and firmly institutionalized in time. It might be stubborn but it need not be unitary or unalterable.

We may conclude that practice is more articulate than words in defining a culture. Lexical data can certainly give a glimpse of cultural patterns and their dynamism through time, but it is also certain that the lexical data alone are not sufficient to pinpoint the key term(s) that underlie a belief structure. The code of customary behavior in its turn is often shrouded in inscrutable mist but it is actually there with interpretive clues to it in the language of the community, perhaps naturally so, because language is reflective of social experiences and life styles but does not create them in its own right.
References


Part II

The Language of Farewell:

Concepts of Death and Dying

in English and Japanese Contemporary Discourse
4. An Introduction to the Death and Dying Project: A Comparative Study of the Conceptualization Patterns in English and Japanese Contemporary Discourse

Erich A. Berndt, Aya Maeda & Keiko Tanita

Given the universal fact of death in all human experience, the investigation of how death and dying are conceived should shed light on the possibilities of relative cultural perspectives that shape our human understanding. Attitudes about death and dying will of course be shaped by the expression about the values of life. The framing of life by birth and death necessarily means that any discussion in society of death will inevitably reflect values about life.

In order to research the conceptualization patterns, which are used in contemporary discourses, the approach to underlying conceptual metaphors developed by George Lakoff, et al. (Lakoff 1980, 1987, Gibbs 1994, Goatly 1997) are followed to analyze and compare the different communicative genres. A classic example of what this entails can be seen in the following common pattern: TIME IS MONEY. In English we commonly use these expressions: (Lakoff 1980: 71)

You’re wasting my time.

Can you give me a few minutes.

How do you spend your time?

We are running out of time.

Is that worth your time?

Examining the vocabulary used to talk about TIME, we find “waste”, “give”, “spend”, “run out of” and “worth” share a common conceptual pattern. Time is seen as an entity, a commodity which has value, which can be accumulated, used in exchange, but also may be a limited resource. As Lakoff and Johnson have argued, metaphors are “pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action.”(Lakoff & Johnson 1980:3) Metaphors, as Black (1962:37) has argued, are “cognitive instruments”. They are regarded as not just a matter of words but how our thoughts and actions are shaped. This means that metaphoric language is not just a way of expressing ideas but also a way of thinking about our experiences and
provides the basis from which the vocabulary, idioms and linguistic metaphors develop their coherence in our communication.

As the focus of this study is on contemporary discourse, a data base of significant genre types in which issues related to death and dying would be discussed were collated. Further each data source had to be balanced against each language: English and Japanese with relatively similar genre types with similar social goals in communication to make comparative analysis of the metaphoric patterns found. The genres selected as particularly relevant included medical and counseling sources, religious writing and poetry, current news reportage and obituaries as well as extended conversations focusing on death and dying issues. Within in genre/discourse type an approximate balance of sources and quantity was sought. The cross-cultural analysis and formulation of underlying conceptual patterns has also been informed by the work of Berendt (2008, 2009).

The following six semantic categories were set up, each with several conceptual patterns to provide frames for analyzing all the data: 1. DEATH IS AN ACTION/EVENT. 2. LIFE IS A CONTAINER/DEATH IS THE LOSS OF ITS CONTENT. 3. DEATH IS AN ENTITY. 4. DEATH/DYING IS A JOURNEY (<Death is Departure, Death is leaving the visible field, Death is going to another place) 5. DEATH IS A CHANGE OF STATUS. (Sleep, Silence, Rest, Separation, Falling). 6. TIME concepts (A Lifetime is a Year/Day: Death is Winter/Night)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 1: Metaphors of Death &amp; Dying</th>
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<tr>
<td>Semantic Category</td>
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<tr>
<td>A. ACTION/EVENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. CONTAINER</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. ENTITY</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. JOURNEY</td>
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<tr>
<td>S. STATE</td>
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<tr>
<td>T. TIME</td>
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To achieve an exhaustive analysis of the data (as opposed to some selective process), analytical issues related to determining conceptual patterns and the nature of metaphoric language, the impact of etymologies in the token expressions and the semantic roles of the Chinese logographic writing posed challenges. The distinction between describing Death as an Event, and the Feelings about the Event was found to be significant across genre as well as within language areas. As the discourses on Death and Dying are often expressed as polar concepts to those in Life and Time, Death is often a negative of life or even an annihilation of the features of Life. Many Death issues such as what the Afterlife might be like are also reflections of idealizations of the good and bad in Life.

The data reveal particular dichotomies between reporting about Death as an Event or Action in contrast to feelings and attitudes about Death. Significant variation between English and Japanese within various genres is notable. The English data not only showed a higher frequency of metaphoric and figurative language use but also higher frequency of tokens within some patterns. Some conceptualization patterns, such as a JOURNEY, were common in both languages and the absence of others, such as DEATH AS SEPARATION which did not occur in the Japanese data, may reflect the discourse audience of the genre as much as a general cultural divergence. Finally, the cultural avoidance or role of taboo aspects of talking about Death and the Dead needed to be taken into account.

Conceptualization Patterns of Death in Counseling

Each genre source analyzed here had a similar number of token expressions: 152 in Japanese and 159 in the English data. The highest ratio is found in the pattern DEATH IS AN ACTION/EVENT in each language of about 20%. This probably indicates that a lot of talk about death and dying is done as mere facts, trying to avoid emotional attitudes as much as possible. Another similarity in both languages (each 13%) is of discussing the conditions surrounding the death or dying. The JOURNEY pattern is also significantly common in both languages: 14% in Japanese and 11% in English of the data. Though the general perspectives on Life and Death in English and Japanese often seem contrastive, the JOURNEY metaphors appear to be useful in counseling in both languages.

Twelve of the framing patterns had no tokens in either language, mainly in the CONTAINER and TIME semantic categories. This may be a result of an avoidance of speaking in negative polarities about Life in the counseling process. Divergence is seen in 18 patterns of which ten are significant. DEATH AS AN INANIMATE ENTITY/OBJECT is notable with 24% occurrence in Japanese versus 8% in English. The divergence between English and Japanese can be seen in the pattern DEATH IS AN ACTION with English 11% and Japanese 5%. The JOURNEY pattern is found more often in English (24%) than Japanese (18%), although they rank second in each language. In Japanese DEATH IS DEPARTURE is only 3% occurrence and no occurrence for DEATH AS A JOURNEY. English occurrences for these patterns are 8% and 4% respectively. In all, 19 patterns are found in the English data and 18 in Japanese. Despite the differences in frequency 14 patterns are in common. Within this
specific genre, the high degree of commonality suggests the common spirit and technique of counseling in these two languages.

Conceptualization Patterns of Death in Interactive Discourse

The data sources for the interactive discourse here consisted of two screenplays and one drama for Japanese, and one screenplay and one drama for English. There were 81 token expressions related to Death and Dying in each language. Among the 36 underlying conceptualization frame patterns five were fairly common. DEATH AS AN ACTION (in point of time and at a place), the negation of LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION, and DEATH IS DEPARTURE had 33% in English and 27% in Japanese. “How one dies of what” can be discerned as an important focus in conversations: 11% in English and 15% in Japanese. Other universal conceptual patterns were LIFE IS A VALUABLE ENTITY (4%) and DEATH IS DEPARTURE/LEAVING THIS WORLD (5%).

Eleven frame patterns, however, had no occurrence in either language; these were in the CONTAINER, DEATH AS A PERSON and TIME groups, suggesting a lack of more figurative expression or the use of euphemism in both English and Japanese conversation. Among the 20 divergent patterns, eleven are significant. English had more tokens in five and Japanese in six patterns. The Japanese occurrence of DEATH AS CHANGE OF STATUS seems to reflect the Buddhist belief and custom of posthumous naming. In all, of the fifteen patterns used in Japanese and seventeen used in English only seven are common to both languages, suggesting considerable divergence in conceptualization in this genre.

Conceptualization Patterns of Death in Medical Books

The data for the medical discourse was taken from a medical guide book and a collection of medical papers in each language. In neither data do any CONTAINER metaphors occur. Approximately half of the expressions on Death and Dying are in the non-emotive DEATH AS AN ACTION group: 46% in English and 59% in Japanese. Among these descriptive type of expressions, non-figurative expressions of die/death without any additional expressions was high (33% in English and 36% in Japanese). DEATH AS AN INANIMATE OBJECT with 15% in English and 17% in Japanese also reflects the neutral, impersonal descriptive nature of the medical discourse. Only the English data deals with emotional issues and funerals with 21% of the data in the pattern DEATH IS SEPARATION/LOSS. This reflects the fact that one of the English sources is intended for family use and deals with how to cope with separation or loss of loved ones at funerals rather than only for an audience of professionals. The Japanese data shows a preference for the JOURNEY metaphors with 11% compared to the English of 1%, consisting of mainly two conceptual patterns: DEATH IS THE END OF A JOURNEY and DYING IS LEAVING THE VISIBLE FIELD. The medical genre clearly shows a cleavage between the reportage or descriptive attitude of DEATH AS AN EVENT and the FEELINGS which may be associated to that event.
Conceptualization Patterns of Death in Poetry

The Japanese data consisted of three song lyrics and one war poem, whereas the English included nine song lyrics and one war poem. The token expressions totaled 59 in English and 26 in Japanese. The imbalance is related to the difficulty of finding contemporary poetry dealing with Death, perhaps reflecting an avoidance of directly expressing feelings about death in recent years. Three CONTAINER metaphors are found in the Japanese data but none occurred in the English. None of the STATUS group metaphors occurred in Japanese but there were 8 tokens in English. As would be expected, poetic genre should prefer figurative language rather than un-emotive descriptive expressions related to DEATH IS AN ACTION/EVENT. Forty-seven percent of the English and 27% of the Japanese expressions are based on the JOURNEY patterns. In addition, the use of various underlying patterns with the JOURNEY group is notable. Three out of six possibilities in Japanese occur and five out of six in English. Interestingly the expression “Back where she came from.” reflects a combination of two underlying patterns: DEATH IS DEPARTURE and DEATH IS GOING TO ANOTHER PLACE. In the larger context of a piece of writing, more than one underlying pattern may be being utilized to create a more complex expression.

Conceptualization Patterns of Death in Current News

Two aspects of current news reportage were examined: (1) news stories focusing on murder and unexpected deaths, and (2) the obituaries. In the obituaries what is most striking is the lack of emotive language, the simple reporting of DEATH AS AN EVENT. The Death is just a fact with time and place mainly given. The cause of death is usually added. This is true of both languages. While English had a limited use of the euphemistic pass away as DEATH IS LEAVING THE VISIBLE FIELD, the Japanese data was notable for the lack of any such metaphoric use. In the news coverage again DEATH IS AN EVENT predominates in both languages. News reportage consistently describes the EVENT and the MANNER of the event. Limited emotive and figurative language occurs, except in some highly charged stories. There is a repetitive pass away and She is an angel now. News reportage thus reflects the discourse style of medical and counseling discourse in trying to maintain a non-emotive attitude in its information.

Conceptualization Patterns of Death in Religious Writing

As would be expected, contemporary religious discourse is the most highly emotive and metaphoric in its use of language among the various genre groups examined. It deals with a highly imaginative interpretations relating to DEATH and LIFE and TIME. The data show not so much in the use or non-use of particular underlying conceptual patterns, but the rich diversity in the discourses. There are five data sources which included for English Biblical
passages, the psychology of religious experiences, the theology and ethics of religious culture. For Japanese, Buddhist writings on death and life, essays on Buddhist philosophy were collated.

In both languages the occurrence of DEATH AS AN EVENT is low, but the focus on the emotive aspects is high. The travails of this LIFE JOURNEY lead to DEATH IS A GATE/DOORWAY to another WORLD/PLACE/LIFE. This OTHER WORLD is most often described as something promised or is associated with happy expectations. Death, on the one hand, is a negation, a loss with the concomitant feeling of fear. On the other hand, there is the feeling of being welcomed, DEATH AS THE FRIENDLY PERSON. In the English (Christian) data the concept of Death of Death is remarkable with the idea of resurrection (rebirth), a new life in an afterlife in another place. The Buddhist discourse takes the JOURNEY beyond death to a continuation of life in another place, too. The parallels between English and Japanese conceptualization are notable.

Death is seen as a negative polarity in the CONTAINER group. In the ENTITY group both negative fear and the positive feeling of promises are associated with Death. The metaphors of sleep, rest, silence, falling, separation are all linked to the CHANGES OF STATUS semantic category in both languages. The JOURNEY underlying concept as in LIFE IS A JOURNEY continues in the afterlife metaphors. Death as well as Dying can also be viewed as journeys. The parallel imagery in the occurrence of these patterns in both Japanese and English suggest the great and predominant power of humankind’s experience of LIFE as the core metaphoric polarity in any conceptualization of Death and Dying.

References

5. The Language of Farewell in the Interactive Discourse

Keiko Tanita

Death silences people. Facing the absolute fact of death, they lose words. And then, they start to talk. Not about death, but about the life of the dead. And finally, sometimes reluctantly, they utter the words of farewell, the words to send the dead off. To where? We never know. But most languages have the words of farewell, death being universal. Though the place for the dead to go is highly cultural-specific, it seems fairly common that the survivors talk about their dead having gone somewhere or transformed into some existence alien to human being: star, angel, god or The Buddha. For example, they would say to an orphan, “your mother has gone to the heaven” or “became that star watching you from the sky,” or the bereaved family at a funeral it told to “place a coin beside the Buddha as the ferry fare across the Sanzu River (which separates this world and the underworld).” The analysis of such language will shed light upon the similarity and the difference between English- and Japanese-speaking peoples in metaphorical conception.

The previous chapter in Part II of “Facing Finality” presents the research by various genre and the genre of this paper focuses on conversation in more detail. So it gives the analysis of such words and phrases in English and Japanese as used in daily life by the people who talk about the death of someone they know. The theme of death & dying is very closely related with religion, as can be seen from the above examples. The expressions such as “angel” and “gone to heaven” may be used in the context of Christianity, “Buddha (enlightened one)” and “the Sanzu River” are specific to Japanese Buddhist culture, while “became a star” may be found in both cultures. The categorization of such expressions into the metaphorical conceptualization patterns, as illustrated in the introduction and based upon the classification first established by George Lakoff et al (1980), is an attempt to either examine our intuitive belief about the nature of two languages and the peoples on death and dying.

The data used for this analysis were extracted from drama and movie scripts in order to get as close to the dialogues in real life as possible, since it is hardly possible to acquire them from the actual scenes of death. The English sources are: “Death of the Salesman,” a famous drama by Arthur Miller (1949), and “Tuesday with Morrie,” a movie based on a non-fiction novel by Mitch Albom who chronicles the lessons about life he learns from his professor, who is dying from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (1997). The Japanese sources are: “The Pandora’s Bell,” a fantasy drama by Hideki Noda, with its setting in the eve of the World War II and in ancient times, the protagonist of which had experienced the atomic bomb in his childhood before blown off to the past to become an undertaker in an ancient kingdom (1999); “Funeral,” a tragic-comic film by Juzo Itami, which describes the confusion and embarrassment of the bereaved family, relatives, and friends at the funeral, based on his own experience of being the chief mourner at the funeral of his father-in-law (1984); and “A Will in the Afternoon,” also a movie by Kaneto Shindo with a former actress as its protagonist, who is spending her old age in
a hill resort where she encounters several cases of life, death and love and contemplates her own death (1995). They were chosen at random from the scripts which are likely to contain a large number of the death-and-dying-related expressions. The imbalance in the number of the sources in English and Japanese is due to the attempt to keep the total amount of the data in good balance in these two languages in order to make a comparative analysis. Consequently, altogether 76 and 79 death-and-dying-related expressions were found in English and Japanese respectively. By classifying those data into the conceptual patterns, I expect to shed some light upon the different conceptualization in English and Japanese in order to reveal more about how our minds are shaped by the language we use without being aware of the fact, and vice versa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic Category</th>
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<tr>
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<td>2= DYING IS A PROCESS</td>
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<td>CONTAINER</td>
<td>1= DEATH IS DESTROYING A CONTAINER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2= DEATH IS LOSS OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>2= b/c/d/f: LIQUID/HEAT/FIRE/FLAME/BREATHE</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3= DEATH IS A CONTAINER</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENTITY</td>
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<td>2= a: AN ANNOYING ENTITY</td>
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<td>3= DEATH IS LOSING AN ENTITY</td>
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<td>3= a: STEALING AN ENTITY</td>
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<td>JOURNEY</td>
<td>1= DEATH IS DEPARTURE (with NO RETURN)</td>
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<td>STATUS/ STATE</td>
<td>1= a/b: SLEEP/REST/SILENCE</td>
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<td>2= DEATH IS LACK OF SENSIBILITY</td>
<td>2= DEATH IS SADNESS</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>2= a: DEATH IS SADNESS</td>
<td>2= b: DEATH IS SADNESS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3= DEATH IS DISSAPPEARANCE</td>
<td>3= a: SEPARATION/LOSS</td>
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<td>5= DEATH IS TRANSFORMATION</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>6= DEATH IS DARKNESS</td>
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<td>LIFE</td>
<td>1= DEATH IS A PHASE OF LIFE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1= a: SLEEP/REST/SILENCE</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarity and Diversion in Metaphorical Categories

The similarity and the diversion shown in the results indicate two aspects of death: its universality and cultural specificity. Let me go through the overall similarity before analyzing each category for more details.
First of all, out of the 20 patterns in 6 categories, 4 patterns had no token either in English or Japanese, which are C-1 DEATH IS A CONTAINER, C-2 DEATH IS DESTROYING A CONTAINER, S-6 DEATH IS BONDAGE and T-1 DEATH IS A PHASE OF LIFE, the only pattern in the category TIME.

In the category of CONTAINER, the sub-patterns, C-2-a,b,c,d DEATH IS LOSS OF CONTENTS, with CONTENTS being LIQUID, HEAT, FIRE and FLAME, has no token, and in the category of ENTITY, E-1 DEATH IS A PERSON and its sub-pattern E-1-b DEATH IS A FEARFUL PERSON, E-2-a DEATH IS A MOVING ENTITY, E-2-c DEATH IS A HEAVY ENTITY and the three sub-patterns of E-3 DEATH IS LOSING AN ENTITY have no tokens either.

In the category of JOURNEY, many tokens are found, except in the sub-patterns J-2-a DEATH IS RELIEF FROM BURDEN/STRUGGLE and J-3-b DEATH IS AN ESCAPE ROUTE, indicating that death as a means of relief or rescue but does not occur, even though there are 2 tokens in English in S-4 DEATH IS FREEDOM, which, though belonging to a different category, implies a similar state of mind. In the STATUS category, S-6 DEATH IS BONDAGE has no tokens either in English or Japanese.

Graph 1: Comparison of English and Japanese by Category (%)

![Graph 1: Comparison of English and Japanese by Category (%)](image)

**ACTION/EVENT**

Just looking at the ratio among the categories shown in Graph 1 above, an interesting similarity between English and Japanese is found. Both in English and in Japanese, the category with the biggest number of tokens is ACTION/EVENT which states the straightforward facts. It accounts for 63.2% in English and 58.2% in Japanese, both over half the data, revealing that people do not use so much metaphorical expressions in their daily conversation in either language. The ratio among the patterns in this category also shows the similarity. A-1, in which death and dying are stated as nothing more than a plain fact with some emphasis on time and/or place of its occurrence, accounts for 32.9% in English, 34.2% in Japanese. While A-2 DYING IS A PROCESS accounts for 23.7% in English and 21.5% in Japanese, and A-3 DEATH IS ANNIHILATION, 6.6% in English and 2.5% in Japanese. It is
generally assumed in many English teaching materials in Japan that the English-speaking people, especially Americans from whose dialogues these scripts were chosen, prefer the usage of more straightforward language than the Japanese-speaking people. However, the result of this analysis shows that, as far as death and dying at the metaphoric level are concerned, both peoples tend to talk about it more as a fact of occurrence. This is the biggest similarity between the two languages found in this genre, and points out the danger of stereotyping and misapprehension often caused unwittingly by teaching materials as well as public media.

Graph 2: Ratio of Patterns in ACTION/EVENT (%)

CONTAINER

The category of CONTAINER has only two tokens (2.5%) in Japanese: one in C-2 DEATH IS LOSS OF CONTENT and the other in its subcategory C-2-e with LIFE as BREATH. The former is 壇(sikabane),

meaning “dead body”, which could be classified in the category of ACTION/EVENT as stating a mere object. However, its Chinese character signifies “the body from which the soul is lost,” for which death can be interpreted as a loss of content. This categorization presents an important issue of how to deal with the Chinese characters, one of the three difficult challenges that this research has faced. In other words, the problem of how deeply we should go into the layers of underlying metaphors needs to be examined and defined. The latter expression

息を引き取る(ikiwo hikitoru),

meaning “take back breath/draw the last breath,” is a Japanese euphemism for “to die” which is very common both in literary and oral communications, and it is rather surprising that only one token is found in the database. It presents another difficult issue of database selection.
Graph 3: Ratio of Patterns in CONTAINER (%)

ENTITY

The category of ENTITY shows an interesting contrast between English and Japanese. In English, this category has eight tokens, covering 10.5%, while it has no token in Japanese. The English examples are:

“He (referring death) was a force.” (E-1), which is followed by, “He made a difference.” It means death is a living creature with some power. Therefore, it can be categorized in E-1

“a bird on the shoulder” (E-1), with a reference to a Buddhist saying that we have a little bird on the shoulder to remind us of death. Here, the bird is a symbol of death.

“This (death) is what is real.” (E-2), followed by, “I accept it.”

“Then I detach (from death)” (E-2), following “I rage, I mourn.”

“scared of death,” “fear of death,” and “afraid of death” (all E-2-b), none of them having any personal or animate quality in the context for death to be referred as person. And

“to save his life” (E-3), implying that life is an entity and losing it means death. The English language seems more vivid and varied when talking about death as PERSON and/or OBJECT. At least in the interactive data at hand.

Graph 4: Ratio of Patterns in ENTITY (%)

ENTITY
In the JOURNEY category of metaphors, which are second in the number of tokens in both languages, the difference between English and Japanese ratios, 18.4% and 22.8% respectively, is not so great, yet the patterns show the diversion as well as the similarity. Among its four patterns, J-1 DEATH IS DEPARTURE has 5 tokens in English and 8 in Japanese covering the ratios of 6.6% and 10.1% respectively, with the examples as

“to say good-bye” in English,

where the dying Dr. Morrie and Mitch Albom, the author of the original book and one of the main characters in the movie, bid farewell to each other, and

別れを告げる(wakarewo tegeru),

meaning “say good-bye/bid farewell” as used in “Ring the bells to bid farewell to the queen!” and

永のお別れ(nagano owakare),

which means “taking leave forever” as the master of ceremony said, “Thus, he must take an eternal leave of us all” in his speech at the funeral. As can be seen, J-1 DEATH IS DEPARTURE is used from the view point of both the dying and the survivors in both languages.

The other patterns, especially J-2 DEATH IS AN END OF JOURNEY and J-3 DEATH IS GOING TO ANOTHER PLACE show a presumably culture-specific contrast. J-2 accounts for 9.2% in English and 5.0% in Japanese, while J-3 accounts for 8.9% in Japanese but no token is found in English. Even though the amount of data is not statistically significant to state that English-speaking people prefer to see death as an end while the Japanese consider it as going somewhere else, this is an interesting result, as far as this analysis is concerned.

END OF JOURNEY metaphors are used as follows: In English,

“Death ends a life, not a relationship”, says Dr. Morrie to the grieving author, and in Japanese, もう、これまで (mou kore made), “This is the end”, was written on the back of an advertising handbill used as a will of the old man who committed suicide at 86.

For J-3, another place to go in the Japanese context are:

死者の国(sisyano kuni),

“the land of dead” as in “Sing the song for the journey to the land of dead!”,

来世 (raise), and 彼岸 (higan),

meaning “the next world” and “the other shore” respectively, used together “to cross to the other shore to the next world”,

あの世 (anoyo), “the other world” as in, “when grampa’s gone to the other world and meets the demons...” (actually, “anoyo ni iku” (to go to the other world) is quite a popular expression for dying used in daily conversation), and

三途の川を渡る(sanzuno kawawo wataru),

JOURNEY
“to cross the Sanzu River”, as used in, “Now he can cross the Sanzu River with no problem (since he has the money to pay the boat fare).

All except the first one are Japanese Buddhist terms.

J-4 DYING IS A JOURNEY is seen only in the English movie, referred to as “last great journey” and “my final course”, both to be taken by Dr. Morrie.

The contrast between J-2, J-3 and J-4 reflects the different characters of the English and Japanese movies. In the English movie, the protagonist Prof. Morrie is described as a positive and forward-looking man who not only regards his life as one journey coming to an end, but also his death as another new experience, a new journey, while the dead in both Japanese movies are old men tired of life, the fact which tends to lead the survivors sentiments on their death toward Buddhist faith, much more than in the case of the death of young ones. Thus, the personality of the dead or the dying seems to have a great impact on the language used to describe their death in both languages.

Graph 5: Ratio of Patterns in JOURNEY(%)}

![Graph 5](image)

STATUS

The STATUS category metaphors are a category which poses a fairly sharp contrast between English and Japanese. In English, it accounts for 7.9% (6 tokens), while it accounts for 16.5% (12 tokens) in Japanese. The patterns in the category are contrastive, too. While S-1 DEATH IS DOWN, a typical Lakoffian metaphor, shows the similar ratio, 2.6% in English and 3.8% in Japanese, the contrast among the rest of the patterns are interesting.

The sub-pattern “a” in S-2 DEATH IS LACK OF MOVEMENT, with death as sleep, has one token in English, which is:

“sleep like a dead one”,

used in “Death of the Salesman”, but no token in the Japanese data. Similarly, S-4 DEATH IS FREEDOM has two tokens in English but no token in Japanese. The expression “be free” is used in “Death of the Salesman”, and Dr. Morrie “suffers from disease” and sees death as deliverance from the suffering.
In contrast, S-3 DEATH IS DISAPPEARANCE and S-5 DEATH IS TRANSFORMATION have tokens only in Japanese (5 and 4 respectively), and their usage is very characteristic of Japanese language and culture. All the tokens in S-3 use the verb 亡くなられる (nakunaranar), This is one of the most widely used honorific expressions of 死ぬ (sinu), “to die”. The Chinese character used for this expression has the meaning of “going out of sight”, hence DISAPPEARANCE. It is another good example of the Chinese characters defining the conceptualization. It is used as follows:

お兄様が亡くなられてまだ49日 (oniisamaga nakun-ararete mada sijuukuniti),
meaning “It’s only 49 days since my elder brother went out of sight.” with the deferential verb form used with an even more honorific suffix rareta.

亡き王の葬式 (naki ou no sousiki)
means “the funereal of the defunct king.” The word “naki” is the adjectival form of nakunaru, modifying ou (king).

The other typical Japanese metaphor found is TRANSFORMATION of the dead. There may be many English expressions referring the dead as something else, such as star, angel, saint, etc. However, they seem to be used more on purpose, probably poetic, religious and/or counseling purpose, than in the case of such Japanese expressions as

故人 (kojin),
“deceased, defunct person”, and
仏 (hotoke),
“Buddha” which is also used outside religious context.

In the former, 故 (ko) of 故人 (kojin) is composed of two parts: 古, its radical, and 文, the main part. The former has the iconic meaning of “hardened skull”, with its meaning “old” being derived from there, and the latter means “verbify”, “do”, or “support”. Hence, they together mean “to make something/someone old”. And 人 means “person”. Therefore, 故人 means “the one who is made old”, etymologically a change of status to a different category of “made-old” men, and can be classified in S-5 DEATH IS TRANSFORMATION. This also shows the decisive impact of Chinese characters on the word’s meaning. The example of its use in the database is:

故人もさぞ喜ぶことと存じます。(kojinmo sazo yorokobu kototo zonjimasu),
which means, “The diseased will be very much pleased, too,” as said by a bereaved family member to an attendee of the funeral.

The latter is one of the key words of Japanese Buddhism. Originally, a Buddha means “awakened or enlightened one”, which does not only indicate Siddhartha Gautama, the progenitor of Buddhism, but also the ones who acquired the state of ultimate truth and wisdom through ascetic training. In Japan, under the syncretic influence of Shintoism, the ancient animistic belief, in which the dead heroes and emperors are easily converted into gods, the dead are considered to be transformed into a Buddha, no matter what his/her state of awakening may be. This is commonly used in daily conversation, not only at the funeral scenes but also as a
police/criminal jargon to suggest a victim of murder, etc., showing the strong and unaware impact of Buddhism in Japanese conversation. It is used in the data as follows:

仏の兄です。 (*hotokeno anidesu*),

which means, “I am the brother of the Buddha?”

この人はまた、仏さんになって、私のところへもどっできてくれた。 (*konohitoh a mata, hotoke-sanni natte, watasino tokorohe modotte kitekureta*),

“He became a Buddha and came back to me again.” Both examples are spoken by a family member of the dead to the attendees of the funeral.

In this category, there is an extra pattern which reflects the view point of survivors. When S-3 DEATH IS DISAPPEARANCE is seen from the family members’ point of view and the friends of the deceased, death becomes separation, loss, or damage. In order to show this, a special column was established which has a pattern SS-3 DEATH IS SEPARATION/LOSS/DAMAGE in parallel with S-3. Both English and Japanese have one token each that fits into this pattern.

“I don’t want you to die.”

said Mitch to Morrie in the English movie. Normally the word “die” is classified into ACTION/EVENT, but in this context, his sense of loss is emphasized enough to be classified into SS-3. This also poses the issue of the degree of depth of underlying metaphor. In other words, whether the key-word (“die” in this case) alone should be considered, or with its context. And if the latter, how wide should the range of context be. The Japanese token shows the point more clearly.

近しい者を亡くした者 (tikasii monowo nakusita mono)

meaning “the one who lost the close relative” Here, the same character as the verb 亡くなる (*nakunaru*) is used, but in this context it loses its euphemistic nature and assumes the sense of loss because 亡くす (*nakusu*) is pronounced the same as 失くす (*nakusu*) which simply means “lose”. Therefore, in this context, the token is classified not in S-3 but in SS-3 from the view of survivors.

Graph 6: Ratio of Patterns in STATUS (%)
Points at Issue

The fact that the popular English expressions, “angel” and “going to heaven” are not found in this database indicates one of the most challenging issues, corpus selection. The above-mentioned expressions do exist in other genres and may be found in other dramas/movies, especially those for or dealing with children. Also, as mentioned in CONTAINER metaphor, it is strange that C-1-d LIFE IS BREATH had only one token in Japanese, as *ikiwo hikitoru* (draw out the last breath) is a common expression in Japanese, though with a rather literary flavor. These cases show that the relative frequency of tokens depends largely on the selected corpus, indicating the challenge of creating an exhaustive database.

Yet another difficulty is how to deal with the tokens with possible multiple conceptualizations. For example, there is a phrase ばったり倒れて棺に入りたい (*battari taorete kanni hairitai*), which means “I want to fall down suddenly and enter into the coffin.”

If only the key phrase is to be considered, which is 棺に入る (*kanni hairu*), “enter into the coffin,” it can be categorized as JOURNEY J-3, because a coffin is symbolically considered as the other place, the place where, etymologically, the soul of the dead is transferred into a bereaved family member, but if ばったり倒れる (*battari taoreru*), “fall down suddenly,” is taken into consideration, it may be in STATUS S-1 DEATH IS DOWN, and furthermore, this phrase as a whole can be interpreted as the way of dying, the dying without prolonged illness or suffering, which falls into A-2 DYING IS A PROCESS in the category of ACTION/EVENT. This example is tentatively classified as JOURNEY J-3 in the present analysis, because in this project we try to limit the unit of our tokens as small as possible so that we don’t have to deal with long phrases and sentences, but this token has much greater potential. It is important to analyze the keywords with proper context, since its range can determine the metaphorical patterns.

When analyzing the Japanese data, we can see the positive impact of Chinese characters as a divergent aspect between the two languages. Chinese characters can and do determine the conceptualization in Japanese, as they are semantic and metaphorical in nature. This means that, as far as interactive discourse is concerned, the Japanese-speaking people are less aware of the etymological implication of the words written in Chinese characters than the English-speaking people are of their Latin, Greek, or medieval European origins written in the alphabet. For example, when English-speaking people use the term “pass away”, they may be more aware of JOURNEY metaphor associated with the word “pass”, than Japanese people when they use 亡くなる (*nakunaru*), its euphemistic equivalent, since in dialogues the etymology of Kanji with its metaphoric image of DISAPPEARANCE hardly comes to mind. Moreover, the
Chinese characters sometimes have several interpretations, so more care needs to be made in determining their underlying conceptual metaphors. Thus, the etymological implication which adds a visual iconic dimension to the analysis makes the analysis more complex, though all aspects of meaning need to be taken into consideration.

These major issues above, namely the corpus selection, the multiple conceptualizations, and the ways to deal with the Chinese characters, have to be addressed together with the other genres in the project with the consecutive reviews of the database and the patterns.

Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from this analysis of the genre of conversational dialogues:

The most outstanding result is the high ratio of descriptive and non-metaphoric expressions, namely those in ACTION/EVENT in both languages. It suggests that both peoples are quite unsubtle in their use of death-and-dying-related expressions in their daily conversations, a fact which could be intuitively anticipated. Whereas the similarity in their ratios seems to disprove our popular belief that Japanese speakers have a tendency to avoid directness and use more of the honorific and/or euphemistic expressions than English speakers especially in the dialogues. The database is too small to negate this belief totally, and it may hold true in the other genres such as the religious and counseling materials, but this result is enough to show the uncertainty of popular notions. Japanese do use direct expressions as much as the English-speaking people, and more than viscerally anticipated.

The fact that JOURNEY is the second largest category both in English and Japanese and covers around one fifth of the tokens suggests that both peoples have a fairly common image of life and death. Life is envisaged as a path to death where a new path begins to somewhere else. Though the emphasis may be different according to cultures and situations, either on before or after death, the general conceptual pattern is shared by both peoples.

Contrasting results of ENTITY and STATUS suggests the tendency of English-speaking people to see death as a tangible and substantial being and that of Japanese to feel it as situation or condition. In English, death as ENTITY, especially as person or object, accounts for nearly 10% of the data, while there was none in the Japanese data. This may reflect the Biblical way of describing death as a “person”, as personified with the capital D plus the Christian painting tradition derived from it, in which skeletons and other forms of Death figures as motif are not rare. In STATUS, S-1 and S-2 are rather unemotional while S-3 with its complementary SS-3 and S-5 seem to reflect more sentiment. The former tokens are found evenly in English and Japanese, while the latter ones are found mostly in Japanese, suggesting Japanese tendency to be emotional toward or about the dead.
The impact of Buddhism and Christianity on the respective vocabulary is another intuitively-anticipated fact, as seen in the names of deceased person, Buddha and angel, and the place they go to after death, heaven and anoyo respectively. In many cases, “to die” is referred as anoyo ni iku (literally, going to the other world) in Japanese and “going to heaven” is often used in English, though neither English expressions are not found in this database. In both cases, Japanese expressions seem to be used with much less sentiment and more spontaneity than the English ones. In other words, Japanese speakers seem to be less aware of metaphoric implication of these expressions as is the case with the Chinese characters.

Reference


Erich A. Berendt

Introduction

While the occurrence of death is universal, the experience of death is cultural in a specific time and place. It is a physical event with deep ramifications for our mental and social understanding. Death together with Birth provide the defining end points of how we look at our lives, and the purposes and values we create from the experiences about them. At Birth we take our first breaths, open our eyes and let out cries; at Death our eyes are closed, we stop breathing and become cold to all life forces.

To understand how our ideas are shaped by the experience of Death and Dying we need to look beyond the surface language of vocabulary and grammar to see what underlying conceptual patterns may be the foundation for our communication and understanding. Joseph Campbell (1988:61) has argued that “Our thinking today is largely discursive, verbal, linear. There is (however) more reality in an image than in a word.” He quotes Goethe (p.230) as saying “All things are metaphors”, that is, everything that’s transitory is but a metaphorical reference. The depth and power of metaphoric patterning of our conceptualization has been a focal point of research in Cognitive Linguistics in recent decades. George Lakoff, et al. (Lakoff 1980, 1987, Gibbs 1994, Goatly 1997) have shown the depth of the cognitive roles of metaphor in all our communication. This study, a part of the larger project on the conceptualization of Death and Dying in contemporary English and Japanese, also will follow the Lakoffian analytical approach and in particular utilize some general semantic categories to do so. See the previous chapters 4 and 5 of this volume.

To analyze and compare the English and Japanese conceptualization patterns in contemporary discourses on Death and Dying a data base of comparable English and Japanese discourses on Death and Dying was built up from a variety of genre. While the original Lakoffian conceptual metaphoric patterns were initially used, some adaptation and development were necessary to make an exhaustive analysis of the data. Six schematic patterns were set up for the general project, each with several conceptual metaphoric patterns to provide frames for analyzing and making cross-cultural comparisons. See Chart 1 for detail.

(1) DEATH AS AN ACTION/EVENT,
(2) LIFE AS A CONTAINER/DEATH IS THE LOSS OF ITS CONTENT,
(3) DEATH AS AN ENTITY,
The data sources for English included Biblical passages on Death, the psychology of religious experience, theological writing and ethics on Death, and religious culture. For Japanese, Buddhist writing on Death and Life as well as Buddhist philosophy were collated. The total number of token expressions in the data was 146 for English and 198 for Japanese. While many conceptual patterns were shared between English and Japanese, culturally preferred aspects of metaphoric patterns were notable in the religious discourse.

To illustrate the characteristics of conceptual metaphoric analysis, let us examine the official Vatican announcement in English of the death of Pope John-Paul II in 2005 which had the following key sentences:

1. The Holy Father has returned to the house of the Father.
2. He (John Paul II) is now where he wanted to be.
3. The Pope is now dead.
4. Death is our definitive passage.
5. To face it (death) with serenity, without regret for what we leave behind.
6. Life is a pilgrimage.
7. Life is God’s to give and to take.

From the perspective of Contemporary Metaphor Theory (CMT) we can relate (1), (2), (4) and (6) to the conceptual metaphoric pattern of DEATH IS A JOURNEY (TO ANOTHER PLACE). However, (3) is simply a descriptive statement of an event: DEATH IS AN ACT/EVENT. (7) implies that DEATH IS AN ENTITY as Life can be given, received and taken away. No. 5 To face death also implies an ENTITY but which is potentially animate and threatening, an adversary. It is notable that only in (6) can we find an example of a literary type of metaphor. Contemporary Metaphor Theory is an analysis of the underlying metaphoric concepts found in the discourse of all types of surface language; ordinary verbs, nouns, prepositions, as well as idioms and figurative expressions must be taken into account.

These underlying patterns are known as “Conceptual Metaphors” as opposed to surface “Conventional Metaphors”. Such “conceptual metaphors” are grounded in our essential experiences, about our bodies, space, movement as well as constructs from those experiences. They act as cognitive instruments in our thinking. (Black 1962:37) An example which Lakoff (1980:14-21) discusses is from our basic experience of orientation such as UP and DOWN from which we create patterns in our language use which give coherence to our thoughts and are grounded in our physical experience. E.g. HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN. “Drooping posture typically goes along with sadness and depression, erect posture with a positive
emotional state.” CONSCIOUS IS UP; UNCONSCIOUS IS DOWN. “Humans and most animals sleep lying down but stand up when they awaken.” (Lakoff 1980:15)

In the news sources on the death of John Paul II, the following sentences were found and are analyzed into the conceptual metaphors added in block letters.

(8) John Paul was close to death.
DEATH IS A DESTINATION.

(9) John Paul’s life was in danger.
DEATH IS A THREATENING ENTITY.

(10) As he lay dying, he held onto life.
DEATH IS THE LOSS OF AN ENTITY.

(11) John Paul is like a star that has suddenly disappeared.
LIFE IS A LIGHT SOURCE/DEATH IS ITS LOSS/DARKNESS.

(12) Our father has left us. The Pope has left us.
DEATH IS LEAVING THE VISIBLE FIELD/ DEATH IS DEPARTURE.

(13) He passed away. The pope’s passing.
DEATH IS LEAVING THE VISIBLE FIELD.

(14) We weep for the departure of John Paul.
DEATH IS A JOURNEY.

(15) We have lost our father.
DEATH IS THE LOSS OF A (PRECIOUS) ENTITY.

(16) Death is a loss to us.
DEATH IS THE LOSS OF A (PRECIOUS) ENTITY.

(17) The world has lost a champion.
DEATH IS THE LOSS OF A (PRECIOUS) ENTITY.

(18) He slipped away.
DEATH IS A JOURNEY /DEPARTURE TO ANOTHER PLACE.

(19) The Virgin Mary welcomed him.
DEATH IS A JOURNEY TO ANOTHER PLACE.

(20) His final journey.
DEATH IS A JOURNEY.

(21) God welcomed him home. God called him home.
DEATH IS A JOURNEY.

(22) He gave up his spirit/gave up the ghost.
DEATH IS THE LOSS OF A PRECIOUS ENTITY.

(23) He faced death.

DEATH IS AN ENTITY.

To summarize the conceptual patterns which occur, we notice the concept of a JOURNEY, including departure or leaving the visible field make up half of the frames; Death as an ENTITY has seven and the metaphor of LIGHT/DARKNESS is only used once. There are also the layers of emotion (sadness and hope, fear and security) added to the basic conceptual patterns.

Research Goals and Data

What is notable in contemporary metaphoric research into the underlying conceptual patterns which shape our discourse is that not only overtly figurative language, such as metaphors, metonyms, similes, etc., need to be analyzed but ordinary descriptive language is also significantly shaped by the underlying concepts. In researching the underlying conceptual patterns used in the English and Japanese contemporary discourse of Death and Dying the following research goals were set:

1. To make an analysis of conceptualization patterns in the domain of Death to examine how our concepts are shaped
2. To make a comparative analysis through collating balanced blocks of data in each language
3. All and every expression in the data would be analyzed into appropriate underlying conceptual patterns to make a profile of the contemporary discourse.
4. To shed light through the conceptual metaphoric patterns on the language-cultural perspectives which are universally shared or divergent.

The data base for each language was first begun by consulting reference works, dictionaries and thesauruses. Systematic collations, however, were made from family oriented medical works on death, counseling books on death and dying, religious writings, Christian in English and Buddhist in Japanese, including English biblical passages, psychology of religious experience, theology and ethics as well as religious essays on death, poetry, general essays and fiction.

Analytical Issues

While representative works were sought and a rough balance between genre types and language were striven for, a strict quantification was not possible. While cross-cultural comparison was a goal, cross-cultural comparisons could only be essentially aimed for. That
is, the data was classified into patterns in the metaphoric conceptualizations similar in form and meaning, similar in form but different in meaning and divergent forms but with similar meaning. Any other expressions, that is, miscellaneous items, would become significant for noting cultural differences. (Berendt 1991: 189; 2009:80)

Etymological meanings of expressions needed to be taken into consideration. In the English verb *decease* < *L. decedere* (de “from” + cedere “go/move”) = “to depart, go away,” we have underlying it the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE/LEAVING THE VISIBLE FIELD. Within lexical items, such embedded etymologies provided a basis for classification (Sweetser 1990).

In Japanese the iconic, logographic nature of writing kanji (Chinese characters) adds an important dimension of meaning. For example the Japanese *rai* 来(come) - *se* 生(world) implies DEATH IS GOING TO ANOTHER PLACE. Hiraga (2005) has examined the significant role that the visual iconic aspects of kanji have in Contemporary Metaphor Theory, arguing for the metaphoric nature of the icons. Thus in analyzing the Japanese data, the meaning of such iconic metaphors were included.

Another issue in analyzing the significant concepts in each sentence frame in the data is that there may be co-occurrences of multiple concepts within the sentence frame. For example, in the sentence *Father lives on in his son*, we have “live in” > CONTAINER pattern as well as > CHANGE OF STATUS of father to son, but this has embedded in it also “live on” > which implies the JOURNEY schema.

Finally the research classification of the patterns clustered into larger schemata and semantic categories. In the final analysis six general or supra semantic categories were established as necessary to analyze the data exhaustively into underlying conceptual patterns. These are ACTION/EVENT, CONTAINER, ENTITY, JOURNEY, STATUS and TIME. See Chart 1 for “Conceptual Patterns of Death”.

Each category was structured in terms of underlying conceptual metaphoric patterns with sub-categories reflecting the features of the entailments. For example in the category of ENTITY, one pattern is DEATH IS A PERSON with sub-features of being positive or friendly and negative or fearful. The pattern under ENTITY of DEATH IS LOSING AN ENTITY includes aspects of COMPENSATION FOR AN ENTITY, DESTROYING AN ENTITY, and STEALING AN ENTITY.

Under the category of STATUS a basic stance is DEATH IS DOWN or falling down compared to LIFE IS UP. DEATH IS LACK OF MOVEMENT (sleep, rest, silence). DEATH IS DISAPPEARANCE, DEATH IS FREEDOM, DEATH IS A TRANSFORMATION, DEATH IS BONDAGE are other sub-patterns occurring.
In the schema pattern of JOURNEY we could find the patterns: DEATH IS DEPARTURE (with no return), DEATH IS END OF A JOURNEY (FINAL DESTINATION), DEATH IS GOING TO ANOTHER PLACE (home, nirvana, paradise, heaven, hell), DYING IS A JOURNEY. The cross-cultural divergences in the concepts about the destination or “other place” are significantly reflected in the Christian versus the Buddhist religious discourse. These are notably contrasted to the LIFE conceptual patterns, such as LIFE IS ARRIVAL, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, LIFE IS A JOURNEY WITH BURDEN or STRUGGLE.

The data analysis and conceptual patterns were also examined in terms of public and private discourse situations. Mass media, books, newspapers are regarded as a form of public communication, whereas internet bulletin board exchanges and conversations reflect a more private type of “off stage” discourse. Significant variation across discourse types and between the two languages was found. English discourse utilized more frequently the descriptive concepts of ACTION/EVENT (45%) than Japanese (32%). Japanese had not only a greater use of figurative conceptual patterns (ENTITY 31%, JOURNEY 22%, STATUS 15%), particularly in the private discourse types, whereas in English these categories were fairly evenly distributed. The Japanese penchant for euphemism and honorific language undoubtedly contributed to this.

In the general semantic categories we can find important features shaping the conceptual patterns. ACTION/EVENT usually had time or place added, process (manner of death) and attitude (feelings) about death. The features of “freedom” and “annihilation” were also often present.

For JOURNEY the basic schema of PATH is important but END OF JOURNEY, GOING TO ANOTHER PLACE (with positive or negative features), and the DEPARTURE on the journey also are common.

ENTITY is frequently animated (that is, a process of personification) but may be inanimate. It may be moving, the loss of it, a change in entity or an end of something. CONTAINER mostly was linked to loss of content which reflects the fact that LIFE can be viewed as a liquid, heat, flame or breath which is lost.

Religious Conceptualizations

The conceptualization patterns in Chart 1 which occurred in the religious data are given here with the Japanese and English frequencies of occurrence in the data base plus some sample expressions.
ACTION/EVENT

A.1 DEATH IS AN ACTION/EVENT (E. 11%; J. 26.2%)
   (J) < si 死, sinu 死ぬ >

A.2 DYING IS A PROCESS (E. 5.5%; J. 11.1%)
   (E) < Quick death. Slow death. Die peacefully. Kill someone >
   (J) < odayakana si 穏やかな死, totuzen si 突然死 >

A.3 DEATH IS ANNIHILATION (E. 4.8%; J. 0.5%)

CONTAINER

C.1 DEATH IS DESTROYING A CONTAINER (E. 1.4%; J. 0%)
   (E) < The body is a prison which the soul is released by death. >

C.2 DEATH IS LOSS OF CONTENTS (E. 0.5%; J. 1%)
   (E) < Breathe one’s last.>
   (J) < ikiwo hikitoru 息を引き取る >

ENTITY

E.1 DEATH IS A PERSON (E. 0.5%; J. 0%)
   (E) < Death knocks at the door. >

E.2 DEATH IS AN ENTITY (E. 28%; J. 17.7%)
   (E) < Death is the last thing. Death hangs like a dark shadow. Break the power of death. Meet death. >
   (J) < siga tikazuku 死が近づく, siwo ukeireru 死を受け入れる >

E.3 DEATH IS THE LOSS OF A (PRECIOUS) ENTITY (E. 5.5%; J. 1.3%)
   (E) < He gave up his spirit. >
JOURNEY

J.1 DEATH IS DEPARTURE. (E. 5.5%; J. 11.6%)
   (E) < Say goodbye. Departed. Passed on. >
   (J) < tabidatu 旅立つ, wakareru 別れる >

J.2 DEATH IS THE END OF A JOURNEY (E. 4.1%; J. 3.5%)
   (E) < Death is the end of life. Death makes an end of sins and voice. >
   (J) < saigo 最期, jinseino owari 人生の終わり >

J.3 DEATH IS GOING TO ANOTHER PLACE (E. 19.9%; J. 16.2%)
   (E) < Gone to heaven. A return journey to God. Join one’s ancestors. Go home. >
   (J) < anoyoe iku あの世へ逝く, syoten 昇天 >

J.4 DYING IS A JOURNEY (E. 4.1%; J. 2.5%)
   (E) < Journey’s end. Go west. >
   (J) < sinu katei 死ぬ過程 >

STATUS/STATE

SS.1 DEATH IS FALLING/DOWN (E. 2.8%; J. 0%)
   (E) < If you’re in bed you’re dead. Drop off. >

SS.2 DEATH IS LACK OF SENSIBILITY (E. 0.7%; J. 1%)
   (E) < Fall asleep. Lifeless. At rest. Asleep in Jesus. >
   (J) < eienn no nemurini tuku 永遠の眠りにつく >

SS.3 DEATH IS DISAPPEARANCE (E. 0.5%; J. 2%)
   (E) < no longer with us >
   (J) < nakunaru 亡くなる >
SS.4 DEATH IS FREEDOM  (E. 0.7%; J. 0%)

(E)  < Death is freedom from sin and suffering. >

SS.5 DEATH IS TRANSFORMATION  (E. 0.7%; J. 5%)

(E)  < She’s become an angel. >

(J)  < jobutu 成仏, tensini naru 天使になる >

SS.6 DEATH IS DARKNESS  (E. 1.4%; J. 0%)

(E)  <All encompassing blackness. Death hangs like a dark shadow. Extinguished by death.>

TIME

T.1 DEATH IS A PHASIS OF TIME.  (E. 3.4%; J. 0.7%)

(E)  < Have one’s time. One days are numbered. One’s hour is out. >

(J)  < jikanganai 時間がない >

As might be expected, the contemporary religious discourse on death and dying is the most highly emotive and metaphoric among the genre groups studied in the Death and Dying project. See chapter 4 of this volume. Religion deals with imaginative projections from our immediate bodily experiences onto interpretations relating to our sense of DEATH and LIFE and TIME. The data show not so much in the use or non-use of particular underlying conceptual patterns but the rich diversity of expression in the discourse. It should be noted that highly technical writing or systematic theological works were not included in the data base. In both languages the occurrence of the descriptive DEATH IS AN EVENT/ACT is relatively low, and the focus on emotive aspects higher.
Some Implications

In considering the universal versus culturally particular patterns and semantic schemata, the semantic category of JOURNEY is central to both languages in the religion genre but the relative ranking in Japanese frequency of use is ACTION<JOURNEY<ENTITY whereas in English the frequency is reversed ENTITY<JOURNEY<ACTION. In general both languages make great use of concepts for The Other Place as the destination of the JOURNEY SCHEMA. The features of “the other place” vary from “heaven concepts” as well as occasionally negative concepts such as “hell”. Death in Christian writing is sometimes conceived of as BIRTH/REBIRTH and the beginning of a NEW LIFE. These are further related to conceptualizations of ENDS, as life is conceived as a journey, the finality of an END as in a path and choices about direction, purpose, quality and destinations lead to conceptualizations of the values of life and mirror reflections on post-life issues of idealized aspects of this Life. Just as we can conceive “cultures of life”, so too the “culture of death” is shaped by our conceptualization processes which the underlying metaphors bring to light.

Two unique concepts were found. In Christian thinking there is the concept of the “Death of Death” in the end purpose of Jesus Christ’s crucifixion, which suggests a “freedom from death” schema. In Buddhism there is the renaming (戒名) of the deceased for a “new life” in the Other Place.
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Part III

The Right to Kill:  The Right to Die
7. The Right to Kill: The Right to Die

Erich A. Berendt

An Introduction

In the previous work in the Death and Dying project, some basic semantic categories and related conceptual metaphoric patterns were delineated. A data base to compare English and Japanese was also developed with a variety of genres. The original genres included medical and counseling, current new reportage, religious writing, essays and poetry as well as conversational or interactional discourse. Six general semantic categories or schemata were found necessary to make an exhaustive, underlying conceptual pattern analysis based on the work of George Lakoff, et al. The main purpose was to shed light on the relative language-cultural perspectives and values that shape understanding of Death and Dying in contemporary English and Japanese.

Table 1. General Semantic Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. ACTION/EVENT</th>
<th>2. CONTAINER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. ENTITY</td>
<td>4. JOURNEY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. STATUS</td>
<td>6. TIME</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Death-related concepts were found to be significantly linked to those of Life, such as in the JOURNEY conceptual patterns, AFTER LIFE concepts and in the negation of LIFE concept. Some English examples are “go to heaven/hell”; “She is with the angels.” “He’s not with us anymore.” “to say goodbye”; “to meet death”; “reborn in eternity”; “to call him home” The Dead in English are described as at rest, in repose, departed, gone home to God, safe in the arms of Jesus and so on. In Japanese a common deferential expression for the Dead is naku-naru (disappear), usinai (to lose), sio mukaeru (to welcome death), ano you e iku (go to the world beyond) and so on. Religious discourse in the domain, with its roots in Christianity in the West and Buddhism in Japanese, did show distinctive, culturally specific aspects in the choice and use of underlying conceptual patterns. See chapter 6 of this volume. Some metaphors specific to each culture were also found. An examination of the data from the perspective of whether it is public or private in nature, revealed a stronger emotive quality in the private and as well as religious discourse. This can be linked to the distinction between logos and mythos discourse. (Armstrong 2005)

In effect Death is the great arbiter of Life. It provides the end point or defining act of all that we consider to be alive, whether in nature or more particularly in the value systems of humankind. That fact has been the frame for the specifics of the discourse in a fundamental way. Death thus makes us face issues about the quality and purposes of living, challenges us with choices and valuates our experiences of Time.
In the present topic-based research on “The Right to Kill and the Right to Die: the six semantic categories have essentially remained but their delineation has been developed. In particular two broad aspects in the discourse data have come to the fore. One is that of the perspective of the survivor which needs to be differentiated from the event itself and the judgment of its significance. Secondly, the data have been expanded to allow for more sources on the three topics of abortion, capital punishment and suicide. The goal was to get more personal, evaluative, emotive discourse, i.e. private discourse, in contrast to the descriptive, informative nature of public discourse. Such personal experiential discourse was difficult to access and faced the barrier of taboo attitudes in regard to discussing the emotionally charged, personal experiences on suicide and abortion, in particular. In order to accommodate the personal attitudes and feelings as well as being informative, the underlying conceptual patterns have several primary patterns within each semantic category as well as sub-patterns which focus on the attitudinal aspects deemed important in the discourses.

The Public Discourse included news reportage, essays and specialized books on the three topics of Suicide, Abortion and Capital Punishment, and the Private Discourse consisted of interviews, diaries, internet message boards, movies, poetry and confessional writing. As the topics varied in each country from time to time, depending on what was currently on the public agenda, or in the private sphere whether a particular topic or aspect of it (e.g. survivors’ feelings about those committing suicide, maintaining a balance of data was difficult. While capital punishment had a strong public debate in the United States, it was hardly a public topic in Japan, where it is legal with no apparent interest about changing that.

In the semantic category of ACTION, the informative purpose of describing some action such as suicide, abortion, capital punishment, or the fact of death itself as an event is mostly found in written public discourse (newspapers, magazines) including the time and place of the circumstances: basic journalistic information. However, even in such a neutral stance, the manner or process of the death is often included as the focus of the discourse. E.g. death by hanging, gunned down, shoot to death, lethal injection, electrocution, die in a horrible, painful way, horrendous death in English. And in Japanese kubi o turu (=hang the neck), gan de sinu (=die of cancer), yasurakuna si (=peaceful death), syokku si (=death by shock/heart attack).

Similarly in the ENTITY category conceptual patterns often had the feature characteristic of “person” but even without the “person feature” or personification, an “entity” usually had features which dwelt on negative feelings such as fear and threat: DEATH AS A THREAT, e.g. The Grim Reaper. The third pattern in the ENTITY category focuses on “loss” and various ramifications of it (destroying, stealing, cutting).

The JOURNEY category was made up of four conceptual patterns. One focused on the beginning of the journey, the departure; one on the end of the journey; one on the destination of going to “another place”; and one in which dying itself was viewed as a journey. These patterns are explicated in the specific topic papers which follow this in Part III.

**Discourse Mode Types**

The research into the discourse on death and dying revealed a significant expressional difference in the language used depending on whether it was meant to be informative and
neutral in description, such as we have in most public discourse and published work, or
whether it deals with the personal experiences in how people value life, their feelings and
atitudes. Karen Armstrong (2005) suggests that there is an essential dichotomy in how people
in their varied cultural experiences represent their understanding of life and its vagaries. She
terms these two types: logos and mythos from the Greek.

“Logos (is) the logical, pragmatic and scientific mode of thought that enabled (people)
to function successfully in the world. Unlike myth, logos must correspond accurately to the
observable, objective facts. It is the mental activity we use when we want to make things
happen in the external world: when we organize our society or develop technology. Unlike
myth, it is essentially pragmatic. Where myth looks back to the imaginary world of the sacred
archetype or to a lost paradise, logos (is) trying to discover something new, to refine old
insights, create(s) startling inventions and achieve(s) a greater control over the environment.
Myth and logos both have their limitations. In the pre-modern world, most people realized that
myth and reason were complementary; each had its separate sphere, each its particular area of
competence, and human beings needed both these modes of thought.” (Armstrong 2005:32)

“Myth tells us what we have to do if we want to become a fully human person. Every
baby… has to leave the safety of the womb, and face the trauma of entry into a terrifying
unfamiliar world. Every mother who gives birth, and who risks death for her child is also
heroic. …there is no ascent to the heights without a prior descent into darkness, no new life
without some form of death. Throughout our lives, we all find ourselves in situations in which
we come face to face with the unknown…. We all have to face the final rite of passage, which
is death.” (Armstrong 2005:38)

The following three chapters in Part III are papers specific to the topics of Abortion, and
Capital Punishment, “The Right to Kill” and the topic of Suicide, “The Right to Die.”

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8. Abortion as an Instance of the Right to Kill

Keiko Tanita

Introduction

For the past decades in North America, in the United States in particular, abortion, artificial termination of pregnancy, has become an important political issue and controversial topic in many regional, state and federal elections, with pro-life and pro-choice activists hotly lobbying their causes. It is a new phenomenon occurring since mid-20th century in which abortion was officially incorporated into medical practice. Thus, abortion has become an issue to be debated openly. However, at first it had been carried out, mostly underground, through all ages and cultures as a means of dealing with unwanted babies, with the implication of “dealing with” varying from culture to culture as well as from time to time. People of any culture at any period have had their own way of talking about abortion, though usually not so openly as now, posing an interesting topic for the analysis of underlying metaphors of language.

What is attempted here is to describe the diverse attitudes of Japanese and English speaking North Americans toward the topic of abortion through their respective use of the language and the conceptual patterns in the related discourse. Since this topic involves a strong sense of values, many rhetorical expressions used to emphasize points were found in the course of the data analysis. However, the interest and focus in this paper is purely linguistic and neutral. The purpose is to serve the ultimate goal of finding distinctive cognitive patterns of English- and Japanese-speaking peoples on death and dying in general. Following is the category chart of cognitive patterns. There are six general semantic categories: A is ACTION/EVENT, where the discourse is simply descriptive and language is referential. C is discourse which utilizes underlying CONTAINER metaphors. E is discourse which observes things as ENTITIES. J is discourse which is structured around the schema of JOURNEY. S expresses the discourse in terms of direction, state or condition, and T has to do with TIME metaphors. In addition to discourse focusing on the dead and dying, there is also the perspective of “survivors”. The category SS signifies STATUS FROM A SURVIVOR’S PERSPECTIVE. Thus SS-3 is SEPARATION/ LOSS/ DAMAGE as given in the column FROM SURVIVOR’S PERSPECTIVE in the following chart.
Definition and Etymology of Abortion in Japanese and English

The English verb form of abortion, abort, means to miscarry, to have a premature delivery of a child, and is extended in use to bring to a premature or fruitless termination of something, to fail to complete a mission, etc. It is also used to mean to terminate a pregnancy both spontaneously and artificially. In the former case, it is more often referred to as miscarriage, and is not within the scope of this analysis, but it is the latter meaning that is dealt with in this paper. Etymologically, the word abort comes from the Latin abori-ri, in which ab means “off” or “away” and ori-ri means “to arise, appear, come into being, etc.”

On the other hand, there are two Japanese terms for abortion; chūzetsu (中絶), which is comprised of chuu (中: middle, center) and zetsu (絶: cut off, sever, discontinue), and datai (墮胎), which is comprised of da (墮: crumbling, sliding, or tumbling down of soil) and...
The English *abortion* has a strong sense of “interfering or preventing something to develop fully or coming into being”, while the underlying pattern of the Japanese *datai* is “crumbling, spilling or dropping an object (= fetus)”. The other more popular expression *chuuzetsu* has the metaphoric pattern of “cutting a line in the middle”, both related to LIFE IS AN ENTITY. In this sense, the English abortion and the Japanese *datai* and *chuuzetsu* have the similar conceptual patterns.

### Data

The data of the analysis for this paper were supposed to be taken from published essays and letters, newspapers and magazine articles and editorials, and the Internet message boards. However, as far as the topic of abortion is concerned, hardly any data have been found in newspapers and magazines in Japanese, because, unlike in North America, this topic is not currently publicized or politicized, at least in the past few years since the data collection started. Therefore, newspaper and magazine articles in English have been disregarded in order to keep balance between the English and Japanese data sources. The data sources represent public and private types of language use, as it was expected that people use different expressions in the formal and official occasions and in the informal and personal chats and dialogues. Even without newspaper and magazine articles, examples of both discourses are found, though the latter has many more instances than the former thanks to the abundant message boards in the Internet.

While searching for the data in the Internet, the difference in North American English and Japanese sites became very clear. For one thing, in English, the distinction between religious and non-religious sites is very difficult to make, since the pro-life movement is strongly connected to the fundamentalist Christian groups. Meanwhile in Japanese, quite a few women who have the experience of abortion themselves host websites in order to relate their own experiences and to invite others to share their experiences for the purpose of mutual healing and/or for helping other women. These sites have no particular religious connection nor is their religion mentioned. However, the sites operated by a few Buddhist temples are found which try to help the after-abortion suffering by answering questions and giving the women consolation and comfort. Such differences in the types of sources themselves show the different degree of intervention of religion in the issue of abortion in North America compared to Japan. For the purpose of consistency between English and Japanese data, the data taken from Japanese religious (temple) sites are included into the private discourse data since it mostly takes the form of one-to-one consultancy/advice similar to that of peer dialogues.

Another noticeable difference in the English and Japanese sites is that, in the latter, there isn’t a contrast between pro-life and pro-choice views as sharply as seen in the former. While the women in the English sites tend to advocate their position of either pro-life or pro-choice, the Japanese women who have experienced abortions may express such emotions as sorrow, grief, regret, and guilty feelings as much as pro-life women in the English data sources.
might do, but their conclusion or reflection on their experiences is not necessarily pro-life. The focus or the aim of these sites is to create and give sympathy and compassion, and their language reflects it. Thus, the difficulty arises in analyzing Japanese language use in terms of pro-life/pro-choice as is easily possible in English data even though English pro-choice data is unsurprisingly very small.

Thus, the data sources themselves reflect the different social values and perspectives on abortion in current discourses in Japan and North America. The data sources are listed in the Appendix at the end.

**Data Analysis**

The data collected from the sources are counted in accordance with the following rubrics:

1. The data are compiled by languages and by the nature of the dialogue: private and public. In the data sources listed in the Appendix, there are collections of essays, personal dialogues and confessions, and each item in a website or a book is treated as an individual source. That is to say, each book and website examined is considered to be composed of multiple sources.

2. The same words and expressions appearing in each source are treated as one instance. In other words, the repetition of words/expressions in the same source is considered irrelevant because such repetition may only reflect the author’s personal preference, language habit and/or extent of vocabulary.

Some examples of words and expressions used in English and Japanese private/public discourses are listed below, with their respective semantic categories.

1. For the ACT of abortion:
   * English public discourse: kill, murder, make it dead, terminate pregnancy (ACTION); take life (ENTITY)
   * English private discourse: murder, terminate, kill, expel the unwanted fetus, have a “procedure” done (ACTION); give up, take life, get rid of (ENTITY); have it go away, end a life (JOURNEY)
   * Japanese public discourse: kill, murder (ACTION); life erased, extinguish, blow off, give up, make a sacrifice of, throw away a life, pick off a life, cut a life, lose a life (ENTITY); gone, disappear, pass away, drive off to (entomb into) the darkness, send to the sky, go back to (called up to) heaven, return to the sky (JOURNEY); flow away (down), shed away, bring down (STATUS); demise, lost, parting, farewell (SS:SURVIVOR’S STATUS)
   * Japanese private discourse: kill, murder (ACTION); life erased, extinguish, blow off, give up, make a sacrifice of, throw away a life, pick off a life, cut a life, lose a life (ENTITY); gone, disappear, pass away, drive off to (entomb into) the darkness, send to the sky, go back to (called up to) heaven, return to the sky (JOURNEY); flow away (down), shed away, bring down (STATUS); demise, lost, parting, farewell (SS:SURVIVOR’S STATUS)

2. For the aborted fetus:
* English public discourse: fetus, aborted child, unborn baby (ACTION); living stuff, created baby (ENTITY); ghost (STATUS)
* English private discourse: child, fetus, victim, baby (ACTION); product of conception (ENTITY); unborn angel (STATUS)
* Japanese public discourse: child, fetus (ACTION); “water child” (STATUS)
* Japanese private discourse: child, baby (ACTION); product of conception (ENTITY); unborn angel (STATUS)

3. For the pregnancy/childbirth:
* English public discourse: carry the pregnancy to term (ACTION); create the baby, give birth to (ENTITY); enter the world, come, and human life begins (JOURNEY)
* English private discourse: bear child, child was born (ACTION); deliver (ENTITY); enter into this world (JOURNEY)
* Japanese public discourse: be born (ACTION); deliver, bear out a life (ENTITY); life indwells (JOURNEY)
* Japanese private discourse: be born, bear (ACTION); deliver, bestow life, give lodging to (ENTITY); come to my tummy, life resides, come into life (JOURNEY)

4. For death/dying:
* English public discourse: die (ACTION); end of life (JOURNEY)
* English private discourse: death, dead, die (ACTION); end of life (JOURNEY); sleep forever (STATUS)
* Japanese public discourse: drop a life, lose life (ENTITY); death, die, dead (ACTION)
* Japanese private discourse: life vanishes, extinguished life, cut a life, lose (ENTITY); cease to exist (live), pass away, gone, go to heaven, go back to the sky, and reach heaven (JOURNEY); sleep, disappear, attain Buddhahood (STATUS)

**Particular Japanese Expressions**

The Japanese expressions above are given in gloss translation, which cannot convey their full meaning and implication. Some religious-related expressions used very frequently in private discourse are explained below with examples from the web sites.

1. **mizuko** (水子): a euphemism for the miscarried and the aborted babies, which literally means “water child”, the child returned to water, which is a symbol of the source of life.

   e.g. 水子とは、母親のお腹の中で亡くなったお子さまの精霊のことです。（mizuko towa hahaoyano onakano nakade nakunatta okosamano seteino kotodesu) = mizuko is the spirit of baby died in the mother’s womb.

2. **meinichi** (命日): literally means “life day”, but refers to the day of the year on which one died, thus it’s actually “the death day” even though called “the life day”.
e.g. 今日は愛するあなたの命日でした。（kyouwa aisuru anatano meinichi deshita）= Today was meinichi for you, my beloved baby.

3. jizou（地蔵）: is a guardian deity of children in the pantheon of Japanese Buddhism. Thus, the expression such as “go to see jizou” is the equivalent to “go to heaven” in English.

   e.g. お地蔵さまにつれられて天国への階段を一歩一歩、上手に登っていかれます。（ojizous amani tsurerarete tengokueno kaidanwo ipoippo jouzuni nobotte ikaremasu）= It (the baby) will go up the stairs to heaven step by step led by jizou.

4. kuyou（供養）: literally means “offer and nurture”, a memorial service usually accompanied by offerings of food, drink, and materials of amusement such as toys for the dead child. In many cases, such offerings are placed in front of jizou, who is supposed to be with the unseen spirit of the mizuko as its guardian.

   e.g. 子供の霊は、かんたんな供養でりっぱに成仏できるのです。（kokomono reiwa kantanna kyoude rippani joubutsu dekironodesu）= The child’s spirit can “become Buddha” (literally, do joubutsu) with a very simple kuyou.

5. joubutsu（成仏）: literally means “to become a Buddha or attain Buddhahood”, a euphemism for dying very often used both in religious and non-religious contexts.

   e.g. 心から冥福を祈り、両手を合わせるだけで...。（kokorokara meifukuwo inori ryoutewo awaserudakede...）= ...only by praying the baby’s meifuku full-heartedly with palms of your hand together.

Implications of the Conceptual Patterns

As seen in the examples in the section on data analysis, Japanese seems to have more variation in euphemism, but the amount of the data is not enough to give it statistical significance. Having said that, still some tendencies can be found in the use of the conceptual patterns in both languages, and the tendency in the Japanese data is strongly connected to the vocabulary described above.

Among the metaphorical conceptual patterns, ACTION/EVENT, ENTITY, JOURNEY and STATUS categories appear in the abortion data in both languages, but CONTAINER and TIME has no instance either in English or in Japanese.

In English, ACTION/EVENT is dominant equally in public and private discourses, and the second most frequent is ENTITY, the third, JOURNEY, and the fourth, STATUS, suggesting the similar vocabulary and conceptual patterns in public and private discourses, which are in a relatively logical, pragmatic and scientific logos mode. Following are examples:
**ACTIONS/EVENTS**

I wish that I could say that she had a peaceful death. (pub.)

I killed my "7.5" to "8" week old fetus. (pvt.)

**ENTITY**

He, who also awaited the death of their babies, …. (pub.)

A death that torments our family even today. (pvt.)

**JOURNEY**

She is now a person living in heaven with her son. (pub.)

There were many witnesses to my entry into this world. (pvt.)

**STATUS**

Her benign "little ghost" would come to her. (pub.)

I wish I could sleep forever. (pvt.)

Graph 1: Frequency of Conceptual Patterns in English (%)

On the other hand, public and private discourses in Japanese show more disparity. ACTION/EVENT in public discourse is about twice as much used as in private discourse, but less than in English public discourse. Meanwhile, the more frequent conceptual categories in private discourse than in ACTION/EVENT are ENTITY and then JOURNEY, followed by STATUS which is much less in public discourse. This clearly shows the use of different types of language in public and private discourses.
Here are some examples of both discourse types.

**ACTION/EVENT**
中絶は人殺しというイメージを与えていている（chuuzetu wa hitogoroshi datoiru ime-ji wo ataeiru）It gives the image that abortion is murder.(pub.)
一緒に死んであげたか（ishoni shinde agetakatta）I wish I could die with it.(pvt.)

**ENTITY**
命をおとさないまでも（inochi wo otosanai mademo）though she did not drop her own life….(pub.)
人に死を与えた自分（hitoni shi wo ataeta jibun）I, who gave death to other….(pvt.)

**JOURNEY**
「あの世」というところは（anoyo toiu tokoro wa）The place called “other world” would be….(pub.)
赤ちゃんがお腹から天国へ帰っていきました。（akachan go onaka kara tengoku e kaette ikimashita）The baby went back from my tummy to the heaven.(pvt.)

**STATUS**
子どもをおろせる薬（kodomo wo oroseru kusuri）the medicine that can bring down the child. (pub.)
水子供養のお願いをした。（mizuko kuyou no onegai wo shita）I asked for the memorial service for my water child. (pvt.)
The order of overall frequency in English is ACTION/EVENT, ENTITY and JOURNEY, while it is ENTITY, JOURNEY and ACTION/EVENT in Japanese, and the frequency of ACTION/EVENT is less than a half of English. In addition, there is no strong dominance of one category in Japanese as seen in English, though ENTITY is the largest category in all private, public and overall discourses. This suggests that Japanese use more euphemism than English-speaking people who tend to use more logos type of language even in private discourse, and also reflects what is believed to be the social character of Japanese preferring indirectness in their language use.

Graph 3: Overall Comparison of English and Japanese Conceptual Patterns (%)

The fourth frequent category, STATUS, has such a small amount of instances in public discourse both in English and Japanese that the comparison of percentage is not very significant, though Japanese private discourse shows quite a high frequency, in fact, very close to that of ACTION/EVENT. This is due particularly to the DEATH IS TRANSFORMATION metaphor being used in the religious context, a characteristic of the Japanese mentality and euphemism brought about by Japanese Buddhism with strong influence of much older and native beliefs regarding death and the dead.

Graph 4: Frequency of Status (%)

Implications of Japanese Compound Verbs

The Japanese language, as well as in many other Asian languages, has compound verbs, consisting of a main verb plus a subsidiary verb. These play an interesting role and require some explanation in terms of the data on death and dying. Though subsidiary verbs only have a grammatical function without their original meaning, they add to the main verbs aspect and modality as well as express the speaker’s relationship from a social hierarchical point of view, such as the use of the subsidiary verb –nasaru, an honorific ending meaning do. For example,
tabe-nasaru, a compound of taberu (eat) and nasaru (do), indicates that the speaker is in a lower status than the agent.

The verbs relevant here have secondary verbs indicating “giving and receiving” relations, which are –yaru, -ageru, -kureru, -kudasaru, -morau, -itadaku attached to the main verb. In current usage, the verbs -ageru and –yaru mean “to give” and –morau, itadaku mean “to receive”. The choice of these in compound terms reflects the hierarchical and in-group/out-group relationships of Japanese society. In other words, with -ageru (from the viewpoint of the giver) and -kureru (from the viewpoint of the receiver), the subject is the benefactor and the object is the beneficiary, while -morau implies the opposite.

In the case of unde-ageru (to give birth), the understood subject “woman” gives the object “fetus” the act of umu, (to produce, deliver, bring it into the world), while with unde-morau, the subject “child” receives such an act from the object “mother”. This usage of compound verbs describes the cognitive relation between mother and child similar to LIFE IS AN ENTITY, even though these compound verbs themselves are classified in ACTION/EVENT, because a metaphorical conceptual pattern of their main verb comes under the category of ACTION/EVENT.

Thus, it can be said that between mother and child (fetus in this topic) the relationship exists of giving and receiving as a prerequisite for the child’s birth. Japanese also recognize that conception occurs by the will of something supernatural, a counterpart of the Judeo-Christian God in English, as seen in the many examples of the metaphoric expression sazukaru, meaning “bestowed, given from a superior” and consider children as “a gift”, but without the giving-receiving relationship between mother and child, a child can never be born.

The child as beneficiary implies it has consciousness, and though it cannot be called a human being yet, it is considered as some kind of life energy with awareness. Therefore, the mother has a guilty feeling for not acting to bring it into this world and make it human, in other words, not giving the act of delivering to the fetus. This results in the frequent usage of words suggesting some kind of spirit entity such as tamashii which means soul or spirit, mizuko, and kuyou, as explained in the section on particular Japanese expressions. They all come under the conceptual pattern of DEATH IS TRANSFORMATION in the category of STATUS.

Overall Picture of Abortion: Similarities

The overall picture of abortion found commonly in the data sources of both North America and Japan is as follows:
1. Among both English- and Japanese-speaking peoples, abortion is considered wrong, and even though pro-choice people especially in English-speaking countries consider it a necessary evil to protect the human rights of women, they don’t actively promote it.
2. Therefore, in both languages, those who strongly oppose abortion tend to voice their views more openly and loudly both in public and private discourses. This is reflected in the much smaller number of pro-choice data sources than those of the pro-life.

3. Whether from the perspective of sin or as a necessary evil, a woman suffers a guilty feeling after abortion and needs some form of reconciliation with herself and life in general.

**Process of Reconciliation: Differences**

However, the process of reconciliation is quite different among English- and Japanese-speaking peoples as far as can be seen from the data taken from North American and Japanese sources. The English data suggests the following formula:

abortion → killing a life → a sin in the light of Christianity → guilty feeling toward God → a reconciliation through the mercy and forgiveness of God/Christ.

While the Japanese data suggests the following:

abortion → returning a potential baby to its source without giving it its birth → guilty feeling toward the aborted fetus → personification of the aborted fetus as spirit → reconciliation by offering and prayer to it (not to God).

These formulas are reflected in the more frequent use of the vocabulary classified as ACTION/EVENT, such as homicide, murder, human life, and personhood, in English both in public and private discourses, and in the Japanese particular vocabulary such as *mizuko*, *kuyou*, and *meifuku*, which are classified as S-5:

DEATH IS TRANSFORMATION.

*MIZUKO-JIZOU*: Guardian of “water child” with placatory offerings to the spirit of the aborted fetus
Conclusion

From their respective language use, it has become clear that English-speaking people prefer a more logical, pragmatic, and scientific type of language even in private discourse than Japanese-speaking people, at least regarding the topic of abortion. The vital issue for them is whether a fetus is a human person with character and individuality or a simple sub-human being without personality such as a cell. Once it is determined, even on an individual basis, the debate can be settled in a logical way, based on the Judeo-Christian ethics: You can kill sub-human creatures but should not kill human beings. This way of settling the issue is based on a logos type of discourse and the English vocabulary on abortion clearly reflects this mentality.

Japanese, however, tend to be more emotional in their private discourse, and use a more mythos type of language, which is quite different from their public discourse. This feature in Japanese private discourse indicates not only Japanese preference for indirectness in the language use, but also how deep-seated the mythic perception of the world is as a root of Japanese culture, even though the Japanese speakers may not be aware of it.

Japanese perceive a fetus, which English-speaking people try to classify logically either as a human person or a simple cell, as a semi-human creature and is converted into a kind of spirit entity after it is killed. This is important in the process of healing and reconciliation of women with abortion experiences. This mentality which is based on mythos creates an ambiguous zone of perception not found in the other topics in Part III, which are capital punishment and suicide. According to Karen Armstrong (2005), modern civilization still depends upon mythological thinking to explore the ultimate meanings and significance in our lives, the inner regions of one’s personality, and the way to alleviate despair. However, the degree of dependence varies according to the culture, and the topic of abortion is one field in which such differences are most clearly shown, because of the ambiguous zone it creates in Japanese mentality.

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9. Capital Punishment: An Instance of the Right to Kill

Erich A. Berendt

While capital punishment is legal in Japan, it is not an issue has received much public debate or discussion. In the public discourse it does not arouse much emotional reaction or interest, in contrast to the United States, where capital punishment is legal in many states and where there is an active debate regarding it, and the United Kingdom, where the topic is hotly debated even though capital punishment is not enforced, and where there is ample public discourse data. This public discourse in turn affects the availability and collection of the data. While public discussions of the topic could be accessed through news reportage, editorials, magazine articles, specialist books and official/government websites, the private discourse showing personal reflection is much more difficult to obtain. In English, there are some interviews available, internet chat sites, and conversations in films and diaries expressing personal attitudes about capital punishment. As often as possible for the public discourse domain, one source in English was balanced by another from the Japanese language. An imbalance was inevitable, given the lack of much public discussion about capital punishment in Japan. Two hundred sixty-eight token expressions were collected in the English sources (230 from public discourse and 38 from private) and 117 were collected in the Japanese public discourse.

Some examples with conceptual patterns (C.P.):

“Do not seek death. Death will find you. But seek the road which makes death a fulfillment.” Dag Hammarskjöld, Markings.
C.P.: DEATH IS AN ENTITY. DEATH IS A JOURNEY.

“The goal of life is death” Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle.
C.P.: DEATH IS THE END OF A JOURNEY

“Death transforms life into a destiny. In a way, death preserves life by giving it the absolute dimension - Death does away with time.” Simone de Beauvoir, The Coming of Age.
C.P.: DEATH IS DESTINATION/ END OF JOURNEY. DEATH IS A TRANSFORMATION. DEATH IS A PHASIS OF LIFE.

“Life and death are but phases of the same thing, the reverse and obverse of the same coin.” Mahatma Gandhi, Young India.
C.P.: DEATH IS AN ENTITY

This paper focuses on the issue of capital punishment and how it is understood from a conceptual perspective in English and Japanese contemporary discourse by analyzing the discourses into underlying conceptual patterns.

In English, the key term capital punishment has a long history of use. Capital is derived from capitellum, the diminutive of caput or head. The term has many linked usages in
architecture (columns), government and leading cities, as well as the financial world. In this larger context of use, the “ultimate punishment” of losing one’s head has long been accepted as a state sanctioned form of the “Right to Kill.” Punish is related to penalty or compensation for perceived crimes committed. This collation of meanings continues to be deep-rooted in the contemporary discourse discussion on the “The Right to Kill” as an issue of power (the right of society to punish), the right to destroy life (conditions of killing), the right to protect life (compassion in life), the value of social penalty in punishments, and the suffering which, sanctioned death may cause (the method and manner of death).

“Homicide is called a virtue when committed by the state.” St. Cyprian, (258AD) Epistulae.
“We are all sentenced to capital punishment for the crime of living.” Oliver W. Holmes, (1890) Over the Teacups.
“Capital punishment is as fundamentally wrong as a cure for crime as charity is wrong as a cure for poverty.” Henry Ford, (1930s) attributed.

In Japanese the basic term is sikei (si= death, kei= penalty). Typical expressions in the Japanese public discourse data are Sikei ni suru = to do penalty death (to execute), sinu = to die, and inoti o ubau = to rob a life (to take a life).

**Conceptualization Patterns**

The vocabulary in the discussions on capital punishment is highly limited to simple descriptive terms of the ACTION of to die/to execute and the EVENT of the death or execution. Emotive language is, however, also present in terms of ENTITY concepts, which have associations with fear, forbidding, burden, and the need for compensation.

Because of the current public debate on capital punishment in the English-speaking world, the public domain is very heavily dominated by simple descriptive language, the goal of which is to give information in a largely neutral, un-emotive manner. Typical vocabulary includes execute, sentence to die, declare dead, convicted of killing, death row, death penalty, condemned man. The manner of the execution is a frequent focus of discussion, such as hanging, but more so the focus is on the question of cruelty or suffering on the part of the condemned person and justification of punishment to the crime.

The Japanese (public) discourse falls largely into two conceptual categories of ACTION/EVENT and ENTITY rather equally (see Table 1), and English conceptualization patterns are predominantly in the same two conceptual categories (see Figure 2). Japanese expressions in the other conceptual patterns are very low. For the English public discourse, 70% of the conceptual patterns fall into the neutral descriptive type of discourse expressed by DEATH IS AN ACTION/EVENT, and 22.2% of the public discourse falls into the DEATH IS AN ENTITY pattern. English public discourse is very much dominated by the impersonal descriptive conceptual patterns related to DEATH IS AN ACTION/EVENT.
The public and private English discourse is quite contrastive in the conceptual patterns that are used. The informative, descriptive ACTION/EVENT category is low (7.9%) in private discourse, and there is a broadly distributed occurrence of the others (28.9% in ENTITY, 26.3% in JOURNEY, 7.9% in CONTAINER, and 18.4% in STATUS). This suggests that the dichotomy between the logos mode of discourse, with its rational, neutral emotive qualities and informative goals as predominant in public discourse, and the mythos mode, which is represented by the human need to express angst and primordial fears about the valuation of life, and requires a more overtly metaphoric and symbolic use of language (see Figures 3 & 4). For a discussion of logos and mythos discourse see chapter 7, the introductory essay to this Part III.

Interestingly, while we had only public discourse available in Japanese, the distribution of the use of the conceptualization patterns is much different from the English public discourse. An examination of the frequently occurring conceptual patterns in the categories of ACTION/EVENT (A-1, A-2) and ENTITY (E-2, E-3) shows interesting differences in the discourses of English and Japanese. Japanese usage is fairly widely distributed, whereas English is heavily skewed to the simple descriptive pattern of A-1 (47%) and less so to A-2 (19%), with declining use of E-3 (12.6%) and E-2 (9.6%).
Graph 3: Overall Comparison of English and Japanese Conceptual Patterns (%)

Graph 4: Frequency of Status (%)

(See Figure 4.) When the private discourse is examined for conceptual pattern use, A-1 is still high at 43%, but A-2 does not occur. E-2 and E-3 are just above 11%. More telling is the discourse mode shift, which can be seen in the English private discourse in other conceptual category use. JOURNEY is 26.3% and STATUS is 18.4% with a lower 7.9% in CONTAINER.

Conclusion

The contemporary discourse on capital punishment in public discourse is dominated by what Karen Armstrong (2005) has termed a logos discourse, which strives to give information through the analysis of issues without emotive representation. The issues discussed are intended as social construction rather than individual perception about one’s life and identity. It avoids anxiety on a personal level. While there is confrontation from the positions taken by pro-life and pro-death groups, which may use heated language to convey their arguments, the public discourse, especially in English, tries to maintain a presentation of factual events and rational analysis. Death is often a taboo subject, and even in personal discourses the ability to express one’s emotions in regard to death, the primordial anxieties that death arouses with questions related to the meaning and purposes/values of one’s life, are undoubtedly difficult. The experience of facing death would suggest the value of a mythos type of discourse, often rooted in our cultural traditions, to deal with the mental boundaries of how we conceive our lives.
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10. How suicide has been conceived in Japan and in the Western World:  
Hara-kiri, Martyrdom and Group Suicide

Aya Maeda

This research compares traditional and contemporary cultural attitudes on suicide in Japan and in the Western world through the key terms of Hara-kiri in Japan, Martyrdom in Western Christianity and group suicide both in Japan and the Western world. Each key term on suicide reflects Japanese and/or Western cultural backgrounds. After each term of suicide is discussed, the similarities and the differences between Japanese and Western cultures are analyzed. This comparative research on suicide will reveal some difference of cultural values on death and life. Seppuku (Hara-kiri: 切腹(腹切り) “Hara-kiri” is known by non-Japanese as a fearful and incomprehensible suicide specific to Japan (Okuma, 1973). Seppuku, also called hara-kiri, is a traditional form of suicide in Japan. Seppuku is written in Kanji as 切腹 (seppuku), and hara-kiri is written in Kanji as 腹切り (harakiri) in Japanese. Seppuku is a compound Kanji of 切 (setsu which means ‘to cut’), and 腹 (fuku which means ‘an abdomen’). Hara-kiri is also a compound word, but the order of Kanji is reverse, and reflects the Japanese syntax of “hara (an abdomen = object) + wo (a case particle marking the object) + kiru (to cut = verb)”; 腹 (hara which means an abdomen) and 切り (kiri which means to cut). Though the two Kanji, 腹 (fuku/hara) and 切 (setsu/kiri), both in seppuku and hara-kiri have different readings, seppuku as well as hara-kiri literally mean “to cut abdomen.” The meaning of hara-kiri is “an act of killing oneself by cutting open one’s stomach with a sword, performed especially by the samurai in Japan in the past, to avoid losing honor” as given in an English dictionary (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, 2005: keyword of “hara-kiri”). In a Japanese-Japanese dictionary (Daijirin, 2006: keyword of “切腹”), seppuku is defined with the historical description. This Japanese definition of seppuku is translated as “1. To die from cutting one’s abdomen by oneself. Seppuku was regarded as a samurai’s self-determination after the Heian Era through medieval and modern times. 2. one of the capital punishments for executing samurai in the Edo period to protect his honor. He went through only a motion of disembowelment, but an assistant beheaded him.”

The first Japanese seppuku is said to have occurred in 989CE. Seppuku came to be popular among the samurai warriors who valued courage and mental power. By doing disembowelment which causes severe pain compared to the other ways of suicide, a samurai could demonstrate his own strong mental power. Suicide by using a sword, which only samurai warriors were allowed to carry, satisfied the samurai warrior’s spirit. In order to represent a samurai’s courage, some samurai warriors even threw their inner organs out of their own bodies after cutting themselves (Okuma, 1973: 7-28). From the Kamakura period (1192-1333), seppuku was established as a method of suicide. Seppuku is described as a method to expiate guilt, to apologize for mistakes, to avoid stigma, to atone for friends, and to prove their
own honesty. Seppuku was, therefore, regarded as an accomplished suicide suitable for imperturbable samurai warriors. In the Edo period (1603-1867), seppuku was established as a form of capital punishment though seppuku was committed voluntarily before then (Yamamoto, 2003: 18-38). Seppuku as capital punishment was abolished in 1873 after the end of the Edo period when the samurai were displaced from the top of the class hierarchy. However, Yamamoto (2003) insists that the idea of seppuku has been kept in the current Japanese business culture. Fuse (1985) focuses on this type of suicide to take responsibility for social, political, or corporate blunders in modern days. Because legal responsibility and moral responsibility are closely related in Japanese culture, suicide continues as a means for individuals to make atonement for legal stigma. This kind of suicide is also committed to protect the group to which the individuals belong. On the other hand, moral and legal responsibilities are divided in the North American culture. Therefore, the cultural expectation is only on the legal responsibility in case of social blunders (Fuse, 1985). On May 28th, 2007, the suicide of Minister Toshikatsu Matsuoka during the Diet session surprised the Japanese people. A corruption case involving him was being conducted, and his lack of accountability about the corruption drew severe criticism before his suicide. The reason for his suicide is still unknown, but it appeared to the Japanese people that the minister committed suicide to take responsibility for the corruption case. Truth of the corruption has never come to light due to his suicide.

Suicide after a social scandal is called 引責自殺 (inseki-jisatsu = suicide to take responsibility for a scandal) in Japan, but the 引責自殺 (inseki-jisatsu) occurs regardless of whether the person is guilty or guiltless. 引責自殺 (inseki-jisatsu) is caused by a sense of disgrace. Those who commit 引責自殺 (inseki-jisatsu) think that a scandal related to them adversely affects a community which they belong to, and that the scandal disgraces their names regardless of the truth of the scandal. It sometimes occurs that followers who hold the key information of a scandal which their bosses have caused commit suicide in order to conceal the truth and to guard the bosses and the communities. 引責自殺 (inseki-jisatsu) occurs in Japan because the Japanese people tend to possess strong sense of belonging to their community, and they cannot imagine losing the community which forms their identity. After the 引責自殺 (), people usually do not blame the people who have committed suicide to conceal the truth because blaming the dead is thought to be disrespectful in Japan (Takahashi, 2003).

Martyrdom in Western Christianity “Martyr” is defined as a “person who has given or exposed his life in testimony to the truth or relevance of the Christian faith” (New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967: 312) and “martyrdom is the condition of being a martyr” (New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967: 314). According to New Catholic Encyclopedia (1967: 314), three conditions are required for martyrdom:

1. that physical life has been laid down and real death undergone;
2. that death has been inflicted in hatred of Christian life and truth; and
3. that death has been voluntarily accepted in defense of these.
Bowersock (2002) reported that some early Christians desired to die by martyrdom, which was a “manifestation of Christianity in the pagan Roman world” (Bowersock, 2002: 66), and they looked happy on the way to martyrdom. Shin Catholic Daijiten III (1996) reported that for two and a half centuries until 313 when the Roman Empire recognized Christianity officially, Christianity was suppressed and persecuted. Earnest Christians were martyred testifying their faith in Christ. Martyrdom was sometimes treated as religious fanaticism, attracted pagans, and increased the number of Christians. However, the scenes of martyrdom gave an impression of suicide as Bowersock (2002) reported. “Their enthusiasm for death comes very close to a desire to commit suicide – a suicide to be arranged by an external agent but with the clear complicity of the victim” (Bowersock, 2002: 61), and Christian theologians in the pre-Augustinian period raised questions about it. Plato and his later followers in the Roman period were opposed to any self-destruction, and their assertion was accepted by many Christian writers. Clement of Alexandria in the third century addressed martyrdom as suicide in terms of murder of oneself, and as a means to confess Christians’ faith in God was not necessarily established through their own deaths. St. Augustine (354 - 430) clearly upheld injunctions against suicide including martyrdom. Early Christianity historically allowed self-destruction as a form of martyrdom, but the custom of martyrdom did not last after St. Augustine (Bowersock, 2002).

Even in modern times, Christianity including both Roman Catholic and Protestant do not have a positive image about suicide, and this attitude is a result of their traditional religious heritage in the Western world (Fuse, 1985). Before St. Augustine, Christianity was not very critical of suicide. For Christians, the fundamental religious belief is that human life has been given by God and only God can control life and death. In spite of the mainstream rejecting suicide, some people were attracted by martyrdom to become a saint. St. Augustine (354 - 430) is the first person to clarify suicide as a mortal sin based on an interpretation of the Holy Bible though there is no specific statement to forbid suicide in it (Maris et al., 2000).

In the Arles Council in 452, it was declared that suicide was a criminal act, and was forbidden. In the Middle Ages, canon law as well as civil law rigorously treated suicide as a criminal act, and this attitude to treat suicide as a mortal sin in public continued until the 19th century (Yamana, 1970).

In modern times, because the issue of suicide shifted from philosophical approaches to psychological, sociological and medical approaches, suicide is no longer regarded “as a heroic act of free will or as a mortal sin, but as an disease” (Maris et al., 2002: 120). However, even in the modern USA, suicide is often considered to be a stigma. For example, in Fine (1999), one chapter named “The Stigma” collected the survivors’ personal stories associated with the stigma of suicide related to their loved ones. Some survivors try to conceal the suicide of their loved ones, and there are survivors who even insist that it was not a suicide, but something else.
Group suicide in the Western World and in Japan

“Shinju,” (double suicide) as well as hara-kiri, are known as methods of suicide particular to Japan (Yamana, 1970: 63). The notion of suicide corresponding to “double suicide” or “group suicide” exists in English and Japanese culture, but the concept of “” is different depending on its background. Japanese “” is written in Kanji as “心中” ( ), which literally means “heart-inside,” and in the 17th century, it was made to show “how faithful they are to each other” and that they have “no double-heart” (Yamana, 1970: 63-64). An effort to stay together in another world is made by means of double suicide even in modern times. Fuse (1985) said that group suicide is categorized into two types, forced double suicide and agreed double suicide. In North America, for example, there are some murder-suicides where persons commit suicide after killing their loved ones. On the other hand, “agreed family suicide” or “agreed mother-child suicide” are more common in Japan.

Takahashi (2003) reported that the ratio of “murder-suicides” is not largely different, but the social attitude toward the “murder-suicide,” especially toward the “agreed mother-child suicide,” differs in Japan and the Western countries. Takahashi (2003) used the case of a mother-child suicide in Los Angeles as an example. A Japanese mother attempted to drown herself and her two children in the sea in 1985. The mother survived, but her two children died. This mother was prosecuted for murder, and the mother was regarded as an egoistic mother who killed her children without necessity in the USA. However, Japanese society was sympathetic to the mother. The mother and her children were treated as an expression of alteregoism, and it was thought that the children could not live happily without a mother even if they were not killed. Mothers who killed their children, and then attempted suicide are usually not punished severely in Japan while in the USA those mothers are severely punished for the murder of their children.

Ueda et al. (2005) reported that several cases of “ネット自殺” (net jisatsu = Internet suicide) which is also called “ネット心中” (net = Internet group suicide) had an impact on Japanese society in 2003. By utilizing the “suicide bulletin board” on which the solicitants actively gathered people who had vague suicidal thoughts, suicidal strangers came to know each other, and they committed group suicide together. From November 2000 to February 2005, 40 cases of “Internet group suicide” were reported in the newspapers.

According to a journalist, Shibui (2004) net / Internet group suicide is characterized by the fact that participants do not interact with personal feelings with each other, the encounter is a coincidence, the purpose of the encounter is group suicide, and psychological connections are not found among group members. The postings on suicide bulletin boards usually do not contain personal stories, such as why they would like to commit suicide, or what their problems are. For members of Internet group suicide, suicidal people who appear in the Internet function as a “tool” to assist each other in suicide. Suicidal people use other suicidal people as a means to help them commit suicide, and the suicidal people function as a “suicide machine” for each other. When the members have a deeper understanding of each other’s personal stories, when
their philosophy of suicide differs, or when they wonder if they would like to commit suicide during exchanging information, net/Internet group suicide is unfulfilled.

The problem of “ネット心中” net / Internet group suicide is not the suicide bulletin boards because it is possible for suicidal people to exchange their feelings, and to communicate supportively on Internet. A key to prevent Internet group suicide is to use the suicide bulletin boards to support suicidal people, and to care for the suicidal people individually in a way that suits their different personal backgrounds (Shibui, 2004).

Takahashi (1998) reported on mass suicides committed by religious groups in modern times. One of the well known mass suicides related to cult religions is the case of People’s Temple which occurred in Guyana in South America in 1978. The whole religious community of the People’s Temple, which was established by Jim Jones in 1956, emigrated to South America to avoid conflict with neighbors in the USA, and to establish their ideal world. In an isolated community, the People’s Temple members were convinced that a variety of sources were persecuting them. After attacking a group from the USA which investigated inhuman treatment in People’s Temple, Jim Jones, the leader, directed the community members to commit mass suicide because he despaired about the future of his cult community. The mass suicide resulted in the deaths of 913 members, though some were murdered by the other members. Takahashi (1998) also discussed the mass suicide of Heaven’s Gate that occurred in California in 1997. Heaven’s Gate was led by Marshall H. Applewhite who believed in UFOs. When the comet Hale-Bopp approached the earth, the leader convinced 38 followers to commit suicide with him to board a spaceship behind the comet, which they believed to exist, to go to the Kingdom of God.

Takahashi (1998) proposed three features of mass suicide related to religious beliefs. 1. A leader of a religious group regards him/her as a savior, and the activities of the religious group are often based on the savior’s conviction. 2. The religious community is isolated from the external societies, and the leader and the followers are connected closely. 3. The delusional conviction of the leader binds the followers closely. Some viewpoints from Fuse (1985) Fuse (1985) raised several points regarding cultural differences between Western and Japanese culture in terms of suicide. In Europe, self-destruction is caused by feelings such as isolation and alienation based on an excess of individualism. In North America, a conflict is caused between the individual’s desire and satisfaction based on non-integrated social traditions and regulations in the environment of a racial melting pot. Suicide in Japan is related to collective awareness by the pressure of the society, or by despair at being ostracized from the society because the Japanese people possess a strong sense of identity in their community. This Japanese identity entails a strong sense of cooperative behavior. Japanese suicide is also characterized by suicide to take responsibility for a failing in a group which the persons belong to.

According to Fuse (1985), Western people and Japanese people possess different concepts of their public and private consciousness. The Japanese people do not distinguish between their public responsibility and their private responsibility, so the suicides compensate
for the honor of the group which they belong to with their deaths. For Japanese, the public face is deeply connected to the individual personality, and the destruction of the public face can be a reason to commit suicide. In the West, public responsibility is clearly distinguished from the private individuality, and the disruption of the private individuality in the private relationship can be a reason to commit suicide. Fuse (1985) mentioned that, in Japan, in the case of “mother-child” suicide, or suicide of aged people, they commit suicide so as not to cause inconvenience to anyone. The Japanese people do not have the custom to take care of outside parties for prolonged periods. Therefore, accepting long-term support can be a reason to commit suicide because the suicides hope to stop causing inconvenience to the third parties. The Western way of thinking is dualistic such as a demarcation of good and evil. Based on dualistic thought, people are judged whether to be good or evil. This rigid adjudication culture can drive people into suicide in the Western countries.

Conclusions

Concerning Hara-kiri and group suicide in Japan, the Japanese people are very sensitive about their relationships or how they belong to their own community. Because the community forms their identity, the loss of community or saving community from destruction can be a reason for suicide in the Japanese culture. In the Western culture, though the martyrdom and group suicide, suicide is thought to be sinful, suicide often occurs. Basically, individual conflict can be the cause of suicide in the Western world.

References


Part IV

Conceptual and Cultural Perspectives

on Death and Dying
Of all the things that can be said about death one seems fairly obvious – death is inevitable and despite man’s incessant efforts cannot be ultimately avoided. To alleviate the shock of such a discovery cultures of the world seek solace in religious and philosophical beliefs that mediate the experience for them and teach them how to make the best of the bad business. Every religion has addressed the issue of death and afterlife in its scriptures. Cultural worldviews that evolved around those religions continue to influence us regardless of whether as individuals we describe ourselves as religious or not.

In his article on death and philosophy, Robert C. Solomon points out two, perhaps most frequent attitudes towards death: the denial of death and its opposite, realised through an act of turning death into a fetish. On the material level, the denial of death is most commonly realised through burying ourselves in the routines of everyday life and deferring the thought of the inevitable; on the more spiritual level, it takes the form of the belief that even after death life continues thanks to the survival of one’s soul, mind, memories, through reincarnation, or through the unification with the divine powers (156,159). The view that death is insignificant and somewhat unreal can be found in Classical Greek philosophy, in the teachings of Taoism and Buddhism or in the more modern fascination with healthy lifestyle and cosmetic surgery. On the other hand, death fetishism, or the glorification of the death experience, according to Solomon, owes its origin as much to the religious beliefs in Judeo-Christian and Islamic martyrdom, as to the ancient and medieval warrior ethics, becoming “the extreme but perverted version of the heroic, warrior mentality in which death is the critical moment of life” (162). Death is not only to be conquered but for those who die well, it brings a promise of life eternal, lived to the full in the garden of heavenly delight.

Whichever the option, the idea that death is not the end, that it is only a phase in the cycle, or indeed the beginning of a new life seems to have been comforting to humans ever since our ancestors became aware of the fact that death was unavoidable. The belief in the afterlife manifests itself in the enthusiasm with which every major religion has embraced the concept of the post-mortem reward for the righteous and the punishment for the sinners, but it is also evident in the multiplicity of strategies for appeasing the spirits of the dead and preventing them from returning from the grave that have developed as a significant appendix to burial rituals. Still, whether being carried into the bosom of Abraham, burning in the cauldron of hell fire or causing mischief amongst the living, much of our image of the afterlife appears to have been fashioned on the assumption that the spirits of the dead are expected to retain their bodily characteristics from the time they were alive. In his essay on “Afterlife in Cross-Cultural Perspective,” Peter Berta observes that, as a necessary result of death being treated as an empirical taboo in many cultures, “individuals essentially perceive death and afterlife on the pattern of their life in this world, by the projection of their anthropomorphic categories and
relations” (1). Berta remarks that the concept of anthropomorphizing the afterlife can be found in practically all religious teachings (2), as exemplified by the practice of placing favourite belongings of the dead person with the body to be used in the other world (2). At the same time, however, the survivors “rationalize” their construction of death and the afterlife through a juxtaposition of realistic and symbolic imagery used to depict the difference between the living and the dead and their respective “living” habits. For instance, if the dead are supposed to consume food similarly to humans, they are frequently expected to feed on the steam or the smoke of the offerings rather than enjoy the actual meal. According to Berta, such dualistic construction of the death concept (through anthropomorphizing and rationalization) “(partially) alleviates the empirical taboo of death, and makes it meaningful” (1).

At the same time, however, once we begin to visualise the afterlife in terms of a secondary existence in some form of a universe parallel to our own, be it a form of heaven, hell, purgatory, or any other “beyond,” we begin to hypothesise the possibility of breaching the borders between the world of the living and that of the dead and coming into contact with the souls (or even the “bodies”) returning from the grave. Such an assumption allows Clive Barker, one of the masters of contemporary ghost story speculate in his Books of Blood that the dead have highways.

They run, unerring lines of ghost-trains, of dream-carriages, across the wasteland behind our lives, bearing an endless traffic of departed souls. Their thrum and throb can be heard in the broken places of the world, through cracks made by acts of cruelty, violence and depravity. Their freight, the wandering dead, can be glimpsed when the heart is close to bursting, and sights that should be hidden come plainly into view.

They have sign-posts, these highways, and bridges and lay-bys. They have turnpikes and intersections.

It is at these intersections, where the crowds of dead mingle and cross, that this forbidden highway is most likely to spill through into our world. The traffic is heavy at the cross-roads, and the voices of the dead are at their most shrill. Here the barriers that separate one reality from the next are worn thin with the passage of innumerable feet. (Barker 1)

There can be little doubt that religious concepts of the spiritual afterlife have contributed greatly to the everyday popular practices aimed at keeping the afterlife contained in the world beyond and preventing it from spilling its unearthly contents back into the lives of the living. Frequently these practices have very little in common with the religious teachings as such, at times even blatantly contradicting the official stand on spiritual matters of one church or another. One way to explain the persistence with which different cultures tend to invent customs and rituals aimed at keeping the dead at bay (a recurring habit since at least the Palaeolithic era) can be a simple observation that while the idea of the afterlife promoted by religion remains for most part of it an abstraction for the believers, the earthly remains of their kith and kin, the corpse, the coffin, the urn, the burial place – all that is unquestionably very real for the survivors. Needless to say, while the concept of the reward for the just and
punishment for the wicked is subject to a serious delay mechanism in the mind of the living, the earthly presence of the bodily remains, marred by the signs of decomposition, can easily give rise to a feeling of threat of a more tangible kind. The rituals, customs, and superstitions surrounding death and burial are as much a mechanism for coping with the finality of dying, as a result of the need for protection from the dead returning from the grave in the form of a ghost.

At the dawn of the 21st century, as Peter Buse and Andrew Stott put it eloquently in the introduction to a selection of essays on ghosts in deconstruction, psychoanalysis and history, “[c]hances are, ghosts will make another comeback.” (1) No longer simply the matter of old wives’ tales ghosts have enjoyed a rather profitable existence as subjects of literary and film narratives. Although episodic ghastly appearances can be traced back to Homeric epics, medieval ballads, Jacobean tragedies, Romantic poetry and many other early and early modern literary texts, it is the appearance of the ghost story as a separate literary genre that truly contributed to the shaping of the popular image of “the ghost” in the minds of the generations to come. It is of no coincidence that one of the earliest experimental film productions ever made was Edison’s 12-minute version of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* produced in 1910. Horror film, for the large part of it connected with the supernatural, is one of the oldest cinematic genres and has remained one of the most successful and lucrative forms of cinematographic expression to date. Celluloid ghosts, created in the image of their folkloric and literary predecessors, today continue to infuse popular imagination with visual representations of the unseen. As a result of that, 21st century ghosts can be seen as a curious combination of original religious beliefs, social and cultural rituals, rural and urban folklore, literary traditions and cinematic representation, re-fashioned and transformed to fit the demands of the materialistic but immaterial post-industrial society we live in.

This article focuses on the popular representation of the afterlife, or our belief in such, as embodied in the idea of a ghost, a revenant, or a spectre, or in other words, the spirit of the deceased, as contrasted with the more animistic spiritual beings epitomising the powers of the natural world. For the lack of suitable research materials, the paper is geographically limited to the areas influenced by the major religious systems of beliefs, out of which Christianity (particularly Catholicism), Buddhism and Taoism seem to be particularly spirit-friendly, and to the areas culturally abounding in literary and cinematic representations of the spiritual encounters between the living and the dead. At the time when inter-cultural communication has become a hot topic to discuss, we become aware that even the dead are expected to resolve their cultural differences. One way to bring harmony to the culturally diverse world of contemporary spirits, as this paper suggests, is to see them as subject to the same process of globalisation and informatization as the living.

Today’s ghosts do not linger aimlessly in deserted castles, nor do they hover impatiently over burial places. More and more often we see them invade virtual worlds of the new media, haunting computers and telecommunication devices, feeling very much at home within the immaterial realms of modern technology we have come to take for granted. If the ghosts were created in our image, ironically, living in the age of information and hyper-reality pushes us to embrace the unseen (now legitimised by science). While the rationality of the industrial age denied the existence of the supernatural, such a simple claim is no longer easy to uphold in the
times when we are expected to believe in artificial intelligence, virtual reality and online banking involving invisible funds. No wonder then that in our contemporary world of ghosts, ghosts have become more real than ever.

**Significant Others**

One of the key disputes of the Reformation concerned the existence of the purgatory, a waiting station in the system of divine retribution where the disembodied spirits of the dead lingered in anticipation of the day when they can be called for from heaven. The Protestant doctrine, which maintained that the dead went straight to heaven or hell did not allow for the possibility of the return of the soul to earth. It was argued that those who experienced heavenly delights would not feel the need to leave heaven, and those suffering eternal torments in hell would have little chances to go anywhere in the first place. And yet, common knowledge held it that ghostly apparitions walked the Earth, which seemed to tip the balance in favour of the Catholics. The easiest answer to the dilemma, as pointed out by Gillian Bennet in her article on ghosts and witchcraft, was to redefine ghosts in terms of the agents of Satan, sent to earth in the guise of the dear departed to lure the living into damnation. These demonic creatures, “masquerading as the spirit of the dead” (Bennet 7) were invoked by the human servants of hell known as witches, whose evil intentions needed no further explanation. The fervour with which the Christian church (Protestant and Catholic in unison) launched into centuries of persecution of witchcraft can bear evidence to the success of the said redefinition.

This seemingly innocent act of reformulating the concept of the ghost had rather dire consequences. As Bennet notes,

> whereas before there had been the forces of good and evil, and below them, most influencing daily life, amoral elemental creatures and morally neutral ghosts, after the Reformation, these lower-order creatures became assimilated into the higher orders. The balance of fear in the supernatural world was drastically revised, the forces of evil and danger now outnumbering those of good by about three to one. In addition, the supernatural creature for which there was best evidence was now no longer the harmless ghost, but (possibly) an evil spirit out to entrap the unwary. And where before the ghosts had behaved according to a strict code of haunting – seeking revenge, preventing injustice, revealing sin and secrets – the devils were subject to no such well-understood conventions. (9)

The described conceptual transformation contributed greatly to the familiar notion of the potential malevolence of ghosts put to a great use in a multiplicity of ghost stories. Not surprisingly then, at the peak of their existence, 19th century ghost stories from the countries whose culture was shaped by Christianity and the unshaken belief in Reason could be seen as exercises in rationalising the unseen through narratives carefully structured around inductive or deductive reasoning thanks to which their male, scientifically-minded protagonists could “explain” the existence of the ghost by discovering the “purpose” of the haunting (vengeance, disclosure of the secret, spiritual intervention). Yet, the very fact that the ghosts in question seemed to haunt random people and places, often bringing harm to innocent bystanders made it
impossible to see them purely in terms of “morally neutral” creatures. Indeed, the enthusiasm with which the protagonists of the story set out to destroy the ghosts, made them parallel to demons and monsters, seen at that time univocally as the agents of evil.

The unclear situation of ghosts in Islamic cultures seems to point to a similar division. Although most of the sources claim that Islam does not teach the existence of ghosts, regarding any interest in the supernatural as the unfortunate heritage of pre-Islamic ignorance and superstition, the evidence of which can be, for instance, the shutting down of a museum exhibition on ghosts, ghouls and supernatural beings by the state of Malaysia in 2007 after Islamic religious authorities issued a fatwa against it (source: AP, Kuala Lumpur), there seems to be a significant confusion regarding various interpretations of Islamic teachings on the netherworld and the prospects of the afterlife. As it is frequently pointed out, the Qur’an states it firmly there is no return from the grave: “[...] and before them is a barrier until the day they are raised” (Al-Mumenoon, The Believers 23.100). There is also no means of communicating with the dead: “[s]urely you do not make the dead to hear [...]” (Al-Naml, The Ant 27.80).

Explaining major themes of the Qur’an, Fazlur Rahman discusses the Qur’anic descriptions of the Day of Judgment which, according to him, is meant to result in the utter destruction of the earth and annihilation of life: “All that is on earth will perish” (Ar-Rahman,

The Beneficient/The Mercy Giving 55.26). Rahman surmises that the initial destruction will result in a transformation of the earth into a Garden which is to be inhabited by a new form of creation: “We have decreed Death to be your common lot, and We are not to be frustrated from changing your Forms and creating you (again) in (forms) that ye know not” (Al Waquia, The Event/The Inevitable 56.60-61). This act of bodily resurrection or re-creation leads Rahman to suggest that the Qur’an sees heaven and hell as a purely material realm, in which it is man as a person and not his disembodied spirit that is subject to reward or punishment. He notes:

The Qur’an, unlike Muslim philosophers, does not recognize a hereafter that will be peopled by disembodied souls – in fact it does not recognize the dualism of the soul and the body and man, for it is a unitary, living and fully functioning organism. (Rahman 112)

Rahman’s argument is that while Islamic philosophy and Sufism prefer the reading of the Qur’anic descriptions of heaven and hell in terms of a metaphor, the Qur’an is in fact trying to “describe the happiness and punishments as effects, i.e., in terms of the feeling of physical and spiritual pleasure or pain” (112).

Quite to the contrary, Sayyid Mujtaba Musavi Lari in his Lessons on Islamic Doctrine seeks evidence for the resurrection and the hereafter in spiritualism and strongly claims that

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8 All the quotations from the translations of the Qur’an were taken from an online Qur’an translation project of the Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement at the University of Southern California which brings together several existing translations of the Arabic text. The translations can be found online at http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/cecc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/
“[c]arefully executed experiments have shown that is it is definitely possible to establish communication with the spirits of the dead” (105-106). Other forms of experiential evidence for the existence of the spiritual realm quoted by the author include hypnotism, magnetism, telepathy and dreams. Quite understandably then, for Lari the body and the spirit are connected only during their material earthly existence. He writes: “There can be no doubt that after death the spirits of men – the only element within them that is truly essential – are transferred to the vast expanse of the non-material world” (171). After death, Lari upholds, “the spirit separates from the body and pursues its existence under a different order and set of conditions” (171), “no longer subject to the limits imposed on it by a weary, heavy body” (173). At the same time, however, given that all the examples concerning the dead returning from their graves to communicate with the living quoted by Lari are Anglo-American in origin, it remains unclear whether he intends to suggest that Islam believes in the existence or ghosts as such.

A relatively frequent explanation of the popular belief in ghosts and spirits in Islamic cultures connects the said phenomena with the notion of the jinn. In pre-Islamic mythology, the jinn were night-walking shape-shifting spirits of ancient people capable of inducing diseases in humans, at times appearing in the guise of demons or succubi. In the Qur’an the jinn are a race parallel to humans, the chief difference between them being the fact that unlike humans who were made from baked clay, the jinn were made from fire. Although the Qur’an teaches that similarly to humans, the jinn can be both good and evil creatures, their association with the devil, Iblis, who “was of the jinn, so he rebelled against his Lord’s command” (Al-Kahf, The Cave 18.50) has earned them a rather bad reputation.

According to Mustafa Ashour the jinn is renowned for its power to change shape and assume various forms, also human forms. He remarks on a difference of opinions regarding the material aspect of the jinn and the ongoing debate on whether the jinn have bodies on their own, inhabit the bodies of others or exist independently. Perhaps as a result of this debate, El-Sayed El-Aswad claims in his Religion and Folk Cosmology that ‘ifrit – most commonly described as a more powerful type of a jinnī (the word jinnī signifies one singular jinn) – is considered to be “a component of the person insofar as it refers to the ghost of the dead person” (103). The Qur’an also warns the believers against the harmful influence of a particularly malicious jinnī known as shaytan that constantly tries to cause harm to man’s wellbeing by diseases and dreams. One of the forms that shaytan can take is that of the qareen, or a “constant companion”: “If anyone withdraws himself from remembrance of (Allah) Most Gracious, We appoint for him an evil one [shaytan], to be an intimate companion [qareen] to him” (Az-Zukhruf, Ornaments of Gold, Luxury, 43.36). According to some sources, after death, when the soul has left the body, the qareen remains on earth ready to impersonate the deceased whenever summoned. It is all the easier since the qareen has spent the entire life with the person from the moment s/he was born and possesses intimate knowledge of his/her life. Consequently, the psychics attempting to communicate with the dead during a séance end up summoning his/her qareen instead (“The World of the Jinn”).

It appears, thus, that ghosts in Islamic cultures are a controversial issue to say the least. The said controversy accounts for the apparent lack of legitimate depictions of ghosts and
spirits in the works of literature and film, give or take several exceptions. Islamic religious authorities spare no efforts to detach the teachings of Islam from pre-Islamic supernatural lore portrayed as detrimental to faith. Contrary to that, Eastern religions seem to have embraced many of the earlier animistic beliefs, shaping them as they see fit and incorporating them into their doctrines. And even if both Buddhism and Taoism deny death as such, seeing it as equivalent with life, this does not stop them from formulating a rather complex notion of the afterlife dealing not only with the appropriate protocols of reward and punishment and subsequent reincarnation, but also determining the levels of involvement of the dead with the living.

In his book on birth and death in Buddhism, Ikeda Daisaku remarks that “[a]ccording to the Buddhist view, life is eternal” and “death is thought to be not so much the cessation of an existence as the beginning of a new one” (84). Daisaku stresses that the eternity of life and the continuity of the cycle of birth and death constitute the fundamental premise of Buddhism (85). Similarly, in her article “Crossing the Gate of Death in Chinese Buddhist Culture,” Yutang Lin explains that “[t]o Buddhists who are keenly aware of impermanence, living is concurrent with dying” (3). In his article on “Death and Transformation in Classical Daoism,” Roger T. Ames pays specific attention to the Chinese Taoist context where, similarly to Buddhism, “[l]ife and death have no separate status” (59). He begins his discussion quoting from the Taoist classic text Zhuangzi that “[l]ife and death, existing and perishing, are one continuous unit” (58) and continues to explain that for the Chinese “[t]he cosmos is an ever condensing and expanding field of psycho-physical energy (qi) that undergoes its own process of ceaseless transformation” (58).

Based on that assumption of continuity, the popular Tao-influenced image of the afterlife becomes simply an extension of this world. The spiritual aspects of the dead person divide into the heavenly hun and the earthly po. While the hun departs the body at the moment of death, the po remains earthbound, lingering in the vicinity of the corpse and its burial place. To ensure that the po of the ancestors does not turn mischievous, its relatives do not cease in their efforts to make its spiritual existence as comfortable as possible. In practical terms this means furnishing the tombs of the ancestors (i.e. their new living quarters) with anything their spirits might possibly need or lack and making regular offerings involving burning paper money to make sure the dead ancestors remain prosperous and can dutifully pay their taxes in the afterlife (Ames 61). Even this, however, may prove to be insufficient, for some ancestral spirits are believed to be as capricious and malevolent in death as they were in life.

In her article on Chinese ancestors and their malevolence, Emiko Otake systematises the findings of several anthropological researchers (Ahern, Wolf, Jordan, Wang and Harrell) and divides the ancestral spirits into two categories: the ancestors understood as a collectivity, and as individuals. Contradicting earlier opinions (Freedman, Hsu), claiming that the spirits of the ancestors are “only a source of benevolence, never a source of punishment to their descendants” (Hsu qtd. in Otake 21), Otake enumerates several potential reasons of the ancestral spirits’ malevolence including, among others, revenge, capriciousness, punishing misbehaviour, asking to be worshipped, or letting the living know of an uncomfortable situation. Seen from this perspective, the ancestors’ meting out punishment to their descendants
with or without reason can be seen as an effective form of communication between the two groups. The problem is, at least according to what we can learn from the depictions of supernatural encounters in popular culture, that the victims of the spiritual bullying are frequently not related to the angry ghosts in question.

According to Robert F. Campany the change, which can be described as a certain “collectivisation” of ancestors began in early medieval China, in the period of Six Dynasties (220–589), as exemplified by the voluminous collection of ghost stories known as zhiguai, or “accounts of the strange.” Campany reads the stories in terms of their being “creative models both of and for proper relations between the living and the dead” (16), and suggests that since the gross majority of the stories describe ghosts in terms of “other people’s ancestors” (a “strange” experience) rather than one’s own (a more “ordinary” and “natural” experience), their aim is to prepare their readers for a change in attitude regarding the responsibilities of the living towards the dead and universalising the principle of filial piety by extending it too include all the souls of the dead (18-19).

As Campany remarks, in ancient times “a sharp distinction was made between what one owed to one’s own ancestors and what one owed and could properly give to other people’s ancestors” (32). Making offerings to random spirits was not considered as an additional merit but rather as an act of arrogance and disregarding one’s own ancestral spirits. In the Six Dynasties period, Campany notes, ghosts no longer needed familial relations to be able to request and expect things from the living. That change, according to the author, can be contributed to the introduction of new Buddhist and Taoist liturgies for the dead that demanded universal offerings for all the souls, including the non-kin dead (18). One of the Taoist practices that developed around that period and seems to be going strong till this day was offering food to all the spirits of the deceased on the 15th day of the 7th lunar month, commonly known as the beginning of the Hungry Ghost Festival.

The idea of the “hungry ghost” owes its existence to Hinduism. In his article about funerary food in Hinduism, David Knipe describes a complicated process of feeding the spirit of the deceased in order to provide it with a temporary body and send it on its way to the world of ancestors (pitrloka). The spiritual entity, known as the preta is defined by Knipe in terms of “life force that departs from and survives the body for another rebirth” (42). Although the preta remains invisible, it is expected to consume food through the ritual eating performed on its behalf by funeral priests known as bhoktas or by crows, frequently identified as bhutas, or disembodied spirits (35). The vulnerable preta is fed from the moment of death for the period of 10 days, since the food offerings are supposed to construct an invisible transitional body without which the preta could not become an ancestor (pitr) (34-35). The offerings of water and other drinks intensify around the time of cremation since the preta is expected to suffer severe thirst from the heat of burning (35). The feeding rituals last for 13 days and Knipe identifies over seventy different items on the menu. As we can see, hunger in this case is treated very literally.
In Buddhist beliefs, the hunger of ghosts represents a more metaphorical dimension. As explained by Robert Wicks in his article on Tibetan Buddhism, “[t]he dead person can choose either to become enlightened by giving up his or her “unconscious tendencies” that have been the cause of suffering, or the person can choose to remain bonded to those dispositions and be fated to circle once more through the patterns of his/her past existence” (71-72). A spirit that decides to pursue revenge (apparently the most common reason for the spirits to remain on earth) instead of giving up its earthly emotions cannot move on to be reborn and remains in the “intermediate existence.” Unable to let go of its attachments, the spirit remains entrapped in what the Buddhists associate with “the four evil ways:” Hell, Hunger, Animality and Anger (Daisaku 119-120). According to Lin, the human soul is “helplessly engulfed in transmigration within the six realms of suffering. These six realms are: heavens, asuras, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and hells” (2). Trapped in the realm of hunger, or hungry ghosts, the vengeful spirit will continue to be tormented by its own desires, including the desire to avenge itself. And since in Buddhism even hell is not eternal, as eventually the soul will be reborn into this world, it is in fact the stubbornness with which the ghost refuses to let go of its attachments that keeps the soul from moving on and constitutes the punishment in itself. When the spirit is unable to renounce the world completely it delays its eventual rebirth into a new life (Daisaku 96).

The concept of a vengeful spirit seems to be particularly strong in popular imagination and the souls of those who died “bad death” – in tragic circumstances, prematurely and unexpectedly – are frequently expected to return and demand retribution. One example of such a powerful ghost can be the Japanese onryō or goryō (“vengeful spirits of the dead”), frequently treated as minor deities requiring pacification. In his essay on the Tokyo Yasukuni Shintō shrine, Klaus Antoni discusses the possibility that the shrine, officially erected to honour the loyalty of Japanese soldiers who had died for their country in various wars, was in fact meant to protect the living from the hatred of the fallen soldiers who died bearing the grudge and needed to be continually appeased (133). Quoting Shimagawa, Antoni writes: “their will to live was crushed, their deaths seemed without sense, and their spirits were full of hatred and frustration [...] in the very moment of their deaths they had become bitterly hating, vengeful gods – onryōgami” (127).

What is interesting to notice is the fact that in popular ghost narratives (whether literary or cinematic), supernatural vengeance is frequently described and perceived in terms of karmic retribution, even though it contradicts in fact both the Hindu and Buddhist teachings on karma. In Hinduism, ghosts and evil spirits are “agents working outside fate” and can exist outside karma (O’Flaherty 16). An example of such a spirit is the bhut-pret defined by P.C. Joshi as “ghost-demons” that loiter around cremation grounds. In his evaluation of a traditional magico-religious medical system of a central Himalayan tribe, Joshi describes a frequent belief that the bhut-pret can possess a person’s body when he or she becomes suddenly frightened and cause behavioural changes that can be interpreted as madness (13). Since, according to Joshi, the bhut-pret appear “when someone dies accidentally before completing the pre-written life which he/she should have lived as per “luck-fate” (13), they may be seen as existing outside of the pre-ordained karmic order that regulates the movement of time and creation through repetitive cycles.
The Hindu notion of karma, embraces the idea that there is no action without its consequence. Hillary Rodrigues refers to it as a “moral principle of causality” (50) and explains:

The mechanics of karma are consistently described as akin to other processes observed in the natural world. Acts are spoken of as seeds (bijā), which although they may lay dormant for long periods of time, will germinate and bear fruit (phala) under the appropriate conditions. The fruits of karma may be produced in this lifetime or in any future incarnation. (51)

Seen from this perspective karma is primarily a principle that teaches us to expect reward for good deeds and retribution for evil ones. In Buddhism, karma results only from intentional actions and it is therefore believed that one can change his/her karma. Although this change is meant to happen thanks to meditation and resisting negative impulses, in popular Buddhism we can find specific prescribed rituals that serve as a shortcut to salvation. One of the simpler and more common rituals that can help one improve his/her karma is purchasing caged animals and releasing them from cages. There are also more complex rites, like the one performed in Thailand, in which a person can undergo his/her own funeral rite while being alive and thus wipe the slate clean and begin a new life. The ceremony involves listening to the monks chanting appropriate sutras and sometimes, for a dramatic effect, spending some time lying in a coffin.

The belief that ghosts, particularly vengeful spirits, serve as a manifestation of karmic retribution is certainly a very popular one, although it does not necessarily find any support in Buddhist scriptures. From a Buddhist perspective, such a vindictive spirit would itself be in a lot of trouble, for its decision to avenge itself could be seen as negative action resulting in bad karma. If we accept the premise that bad events are results of prior bad actions, then the violent death of a person is also a result of accumulated bad actions from this or previous lives, and avenging it simply prolongs the suffering. The idea that karma can be changed may sound quite optimistic but it leaves one with a lot of responsibility for one’s actions. The simplistic balancing of action and reaction offered by an intervention of the ghost is undoubtedly an easier option. If the problem in life is attributed to an unhappy spirit, all we need to do is feed it and make appropriate offerings to put things right. This is by far less complicated than living a life full of virtue. No wonder then that ghosts continue to be in such great demand.

Seeing is Believing

With the coming of the industrial age, European model of knowledge began to centre on science rather than religion. While medieval and ancient knowledge paradigms resorted to logic to prove or disprove arguments (the final logical statement being – “it’s God’s will”), in the industrial state logic was replaced by the scientific method that relied on collecting empirical data and testing previously formulated hypotheses by various techniques that involved the principles of reasoning and allowed for the measuring and evaluating evidence. Where before
ghosts had been seen as proof of the spiritual afterlife and their presence amongst the living had not been questioned (although their motivation might have been), now they had to be captured, measured, weighed and labelled to “objectively” verify their existence. As rationality and the scientific method became perhaps the most successful Western “export” since the onset of European colonialism, the belief in the universality of reason and the objectivity of science proved relatively popular. But in the rational world there was no room for creatures as irrational as ghosts, unless they could be explained and justified in a verifiable manner.

The simplest type of an explanation was obviously the complete denial of the existence of ghosts and treating the belief in the supernatural as evidence of the previous generations’ ignorance and superstition. One very typical example of such reasoning can be found in the article of M.E. Durham who attributes the fear of ghosts and evil spirits to our ancestors’ lack of knowledge on contagious diseases and interprets a variety of burial practices and methods to combat ghosts as instinctive sanitising behaviours. The author reviews such protective actions as purification from ghosts by bathing, creating a barrier of fire, using salt, or sweeping in terms of maintaining personal hygiene after one has come into contact with the deceased and compares the habit of wearing mourning garments to hoisting a flag over an infected area. Even the custom of casting ashes on the head of the mourner receives a comment that “wood-ash is perfectly sterilized and a perfect cleanser” (165). There is no chance than a ghost can make even a vague appearance in that text.

While the purely biological explanation of Durham may seem crude today, there is no doubt the same idea can be found in later critical texts that explain the supernatural through psychoanalysis or ideology. Laurel Kendall, for instance, describes an interesting Korean ritual of exorcising spiteful spirits of the first wives and transforming them into allies of their successors. The author describes the ceremony of invoking the spirit of the first wife in terms of “confrontational family therapy” pointing out that while the conflict between the dead first wives and the living wives resembles the conflict between wives and concubines, in fact all of the women involved are victims of discrimination in a powerfully patriarchal Korean society and their situation is quite similar (219-221). While concubines usually receive the husband’s attention on a daily basis, the first wife can only wait patiently, hoping that her perseverance will win her husband back. In the case of a dead first wife who, as Kendall writes is “not only sexually, but also materially deprived” (219), her jealousy turns into rage if she finds she has been denied what the second wife enjoys in life. On the other hand, however, it is also easy to see that the angry ghost of the first dead wife serves as a reminder to the second wife that her own position in the household is rather precarious, as it can be taken away with the appearance of a new woman in the life of her husband.

The fact that the uneasy relationship between the Korean wives retains its characteristics even after the women’s death is reminiscent of what Margaret Ahern claimed about the Chinese ancestors: “The dead in the underworld retain the personalities and characters they had while alive, but they are remembered as they were during their middle years, not as helpless old men and women awaiting death” (Ahern qtd in Otake 23). And even though the second wives described by Kendall had hardly ever known their predecessors since
they mostly came to the household from outside the community, they obviously shared common expectations regarding the position of women and their relationships.

The association of the supernatural with gender struggle and the issue of male dominance returns in the article of Dev Nathan, Govind Kelkar and Yu Xiaogang in the context of categorisation of women as witches, demon-keepers or evil spirits. Looking at a number of tribal communities in India, China and northern Thailand, the article suggests that the persecution of women as the agents of evil has frequently had a very practical cause in mind: the eradication of ancient matrilineal cults contradicting the male-centred dogma of the dominant religion (59), changing women’s right to land ownership (62), suppressing female healers (62) and justifying the lower position of women in the society by denying them access to knowledge and restricting their forms of spiritual expression (60-61). When women are identified in terms of evil spirits, they can be brought under control by the mechanism of exorcism. Still, it becomes obvious, that seen from this perspective the “ghost” becomes nothing but an ideologically-based excuse for the introduction of laws based on gender discrimination.

Although such and similar approaches tend to disbelieve in ghosts and rationalise their existence through scientifically explained phenomena, it has to be noted that ever since the beginning of the scientific age, science has been employed as much with the purpose of disproving as verifying the existence of the supernatural and the scientific battle to prove once and for all the presence of ghosts among the living to authenticate numerous cases of alleged haunting continues till this day. Discussing 19th century séances, Steven Connor challenges the dominant opinion that “Victorian spiritualism is the expression of a widespread dissatisfaction with the materialism of nineteenth-century science, industry and social and political thought” (203), observing that “[s]piritualism was not so much endangered as driven by the demand for empirical evidence” (204). He describes a shift in mediumistic techniques from simplistic material forms (rapping and the movement of objects) to more mental ones, such as hypnotism, automatism or telepathy (205), and finally to the “creation and exploration of a new kind of collective bodily experience” (207) resulting from contemporary changes in the relationship between vision and sound exemplified by the emergence of early telecommunication technologies.

Connor points out that by the second half of the 19th century photography became established as an objective verification technique testifying for the truth of the phenomena being photographed. As a result of that, “the séance was orientated more and more around the need to produce visible traces, as the reality of manifestation became measured against the possibility of recording” (207). Dan Meinwald situates the birth of spirit photography in the context of 19th century spiritualism, described by him as a belief that formulated a philosophic or even a religious foundation for the denial of death by seeking a scientific, empirically verifiable proof for the existence of spiritual afterlife (“The Afterlife” online). Meinwald’s observation on the specific use of photography to record death-related evidence is described by him in the context of 19th century America as originating from post-mortem photographs, which were seen as particularly valuable since they represented the loss of an individual (“The Body” online). Seen in this light, spirit photographs became a natural extension of the said
process, since the living perceived the spirits materialising in the photograph in terms of their dead relatives returning from the grave (“The Afterlife” online).

According to Connor the appeal of spirit photography lay in its making the other (the ghost) visible and familiar (208). This fact, however, made it vulnerable to manipulation and as historical records show, there were plenty of skilled photographers who took advantage of the gullibility of their spiritually-inclined audience and produced fake evidence of spectral manifestations (especially after the discovery of double exposure). To rehabilitate the Victorian séance, Connor suggests re-evaluating its primary purpose in terms not as much of summoning ghosts but “enact[ing] the hypothesis of a different kind of body in this world” (209).

Describing spiritual technologies used by ghosts to communicate with the living during Victorian séances, Connor remarks that ghosts seemed to be particularly aware of contemporary developments in communication technologies. If the basic system of communication with the dead involved an interpretation of a series of alphabetic knocks, a similar method was employed by the creators of the electric telegraph. The automatic writing method corresponded according to Connor to the systems of “visible speech,” such as the phonoautograph which enabled the translation of sound vibrations into patterns traced on lamp-black glass plate (212). Last but not least, the separation of the voice from the body accomplished by the invention of the telephone, the phonograph and the gramophone was mirrored by the splitting of the spiritual manifestation into “full materialisation” of the spirits separately from the medium’s body and the “direct voice” experience, in which the voice of the spirit was heard speaking independently, frequently amplified by a megaphone-resembling trumpet (213).

Connor continues his exploration of the technological awareness of the spirits by a recounting of 20th century experiments of Friedrich Jürgenson, who claimed to have communicated with the dead through radio and microphone, and Konstantin Raudive, who recorded messages from the white noise between radio channels and enhanced recordings done in a silent room, as a result of which he maintained he had captured and conversed with voices that belonged to the dead. The said experiments marked the beginning of interest in EVP, or Electronic Voice Phenomena, which, according to James E. Alcock, despite being of little interest to serious parapsychologists today remains popular with general public and home-grown ghost hunters (Alcock mentions at least 50,000 internet sites devoted to EVP, although an average Google search comes back with over 4,000,000 hits). In his article on EVP published in an online science magazine Skeptical Inquirer, Alcock suggests possible explanations of the recorded voices in terms of cross-modulation (accidentally picking up another radio station) and apophenia (spontaneously seeing connections and patterns which do not exist in reality) (“Electronic Voice Phenomena”). The employment of Geiger counters, Electromagnetic Field (EMF) detectors, ion detectors, and infrared cameras gets similarly criticised in several articles by the magazine’s editor Benjamin Radford, who quotes one of the entrepreneurs selling custom ghost-hunting kits to his customers for as much as 850 USD apiece, simultaneously admitting that “there exists no device that can conclusively detect ghosts” (“Reality check...”)
It goes without saying that serious parapsychological research carried out today involves more complex knowledge of neurobiology, advanced physics and chemistry, cognitive psychology and computer science than an average ghost believer can muster. It is enough to review some of the titles of the articles published in the more respected academic journals (European Journal of Parapsychology, The Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research, Journal of Parapsychology) to feel utterly confused as to what “quantum frameworks,” “dyadic EEG correlations” and “lunar-magnetotail encounters” have in common with our everyday, popular concept of a ghost. And although, since the scandalous trials of 19th century spirit photographers (William Mumler in America, Frederick Hudson in England and Édouard Buguet in France) ending with an exposure of fraud, most people remain sceptical about the authenticity of the spectral images recorded by photographic and video cameras of all sorts (if Mumler’s accidental stumbling upon double exposure caused much trouble in the past, digital possibilities of photo-editing programs like Photoshop seem endless in comparison), the hunger for the visual representation of the ghost remains.

As Louis Kaplan observes in his article on spirit photography, “a spirit photograph of a dead ancestor may be viewed as a projection of the survivors’ need “to people the world” with such ghostly phenomena and maintain a connection with ancestors after their departure from earth” (2). Kaplan reminds us that “the discourse of spirit photography functions as an analog to scientific photography – whether astronomic or microscopic [...] articulating photography’s ability to see the invisible and reveal truths beyond the powers of the naked eye” (1). As we are taught to suspend our disbelief confronted with the images of galaxies and bacteria, a general opinion prevails that while many spirit photographs are unquestionably fakes, some of them might just be real enough. And they are, as real as we want them to be.

The Mediums and the Message

Discussing 19th century spirit photographs, Meinwald points out the visible differences in the photographic representation of the materialised spirits, which seem to be consistent with the expectations of a given society. And so, while American spirits tended to remain recognisably human, if a bit faded and transparent, English ghosts were usually shrouded in folds of ectoplasmic vapours and less substantial, while the French ones seemed an odd mixture of the two (“The Afterlife”). In all the cases, the spiritual figures were undeniably anthropomorphic, making it all the easier for the bereaved to recognise their late relatives in the vague impressions on the photograph. The depictions like the above confirm two frequently quoted facts about ghosts: 1) that initially ghosts were most likely to be portrayed in terms of revenants – animated corpses and skeletons, or (when the identity of the ghost was known) the exact likenesses of what the dead were remembered like from the time when they had been alive, and 2) that at some point in the 19th century a noticeable shift in spectral representation was taking place with regard to European ghosts.

The notion of a revenant, which according to David Buchan “connotes a corporeal creature, a substantial person acting like a human being because he or she is to all appearances a human being, though one returned from the Otherworld” (145) is perhaps the best
exemplified by the spectral visitors depicted in late medieval ballads (e.g. Scottish/English Border Ballads). In his structuralist analysis of the roles of revenants in ballads, Buchan sees the return of the revenant motivated by the need of helping people cope with grieving, reveal the cause of its death brought about by the third party involved, or take revenge (147, 154). Whatever the cause, however, the iconicity of the revenant figure is never questioned, for it remains part of its definition.

With the emergence of the 19th century ghost story something changed in popular representation of ghosts. One potential reason behind the change can be a shift in purpose those new texts were supposed to achieve. While there can be little doubt as to the moralising aim of late medieval ballads, if Victorian ghost stories were also, in a sense, upholding the existing moral principles of the age, they were first of all meant to be entertaining. And the masters of the new genre were soon to discover that although revenants may have been useful as a pedagogical instrument, the feeling of dread the ghost story audiences hungered for was best realised through the employment of the Gothic “Unnameable” – the figure of a ghost that escaped easy definition.

Victorian and Edwardian ghosts found on the pages of many books upset the familiar anthropomorphic representation of the supernatural. Rather than an iconic image of a human being they become its metonymic representation – a ghastly footprint, unruly locks of hair, a glowing pair of eyes, an impression on the mezzotint. At times even such subtle connection is broken and the ghost disappears from the text leaving behind merely an indexical sign of its presence – a gust of wind, the rustling of the bed sheets, an inexplicable feeling of dread or coldness. What seems interesting, however, is that although the corporeal features of ghosts tend to disappear, 19th century ghosts appear to be gendered creatures, coded by their masculine properties. They terrorise passive female victims, whose reactions to the supernatural encounter are described as vaguely pleasurable and evoke strong homophobic reactions in the male protagonists who would rather die than be touched by the spirits. Perhaps it is not mere coincidence that Freud maintained that “spirits and demons are only projections of man’s own emotional impulses” (qtd in Kaplan 2).

It goes without saying that 19th century spirit photography translated such and similar popular depictions of ghost into the photographic image. These images, in turn, gave rise to further representation of spirits in the emerging medium that itself has frequently been metaphorised as a ghost. Drawing on folkloric and literary sources, which, it has to be said, not always agree with each other, for over a hundred years filmmakers have been peopling popular culture with spectral phenomena. Cases such as the Amityville House, which remains one of America’s best loved haunted houses, may have started with real-life tragic events (a mysterious murder of the DeFeo family), but there is little doubt that the Amityville ghosts owe more popularity to a series of successful film productions focusing on the house and its spirits, rather than to the alleged murderous instincts of the ghosts themselves. Interestingly enough, even though today the story of the Amityville haunting ordeal experienced by the Lutz family during the 28 days of their stay in the house has been proven to be a hoax, as admitted by Ronald DeFeo’s attorney, William Weber who confessed: “We created this horror story over many bottles of wine that George Lutz was drinking [...] We were creating something the
the difference between a celluloid ghost and a “real” one is frequently difficult to tell.

The willingness with which contemporary audiences accept the “reality” of ghostly representations in the media is frequently described as symptomatic of a renewed interest in supernaturalism but it can also be seen as a syndrome of the information age, where the models of real (a hyper-real) are being generated without origin and reality (Baudrillard 367). The phrase “ghost in the machine,” originating from the critique of Cartesian dualism, becomes representative of post-modern fluid, fragmented, hybrid subjectivity that demands the blurring of boundaries. Baudrillard writes:

This is the time of miniatourisation, telecommand and the microprocesession of time, bodies, pleasures. [...] This change from human scale to a system of nuclear matrices is visible everywhere: this body, our body, often appears simply superfluous, basically useless in its extensions, in the multiplicity and complexity of its organs, its tissues and functions, since today everything is concentrated in the brain and in genetic codes, which alone sum up the operational definition of being (153).

But when the body becomes obsolete, its materialism seen as redundant, how are we to tell the difference between humans and spirits? And if we have become “a terminal of multiple networks” (152), then so have our ghosts, for even in their basic form they have always thrived on mimicry.

Delineated by contrasting religious tenets, literary fashions and aesthetic trends, culturally-coded representations of ghosts still can strike us as relatively diverse. At the same time, however, it is becoming clear that ghost cultures, similarly to human cultures are in for a substantial change. As the world strives to make the best of encroaching globalisation, we are facing cultural hybridisation on an unprecedented scale. Although the physical borders between nations may still hold strongly, it is becoming obvious that the borders between cultures are less tangible today. And while the said fact does not, in fact, contribute to the eradication of cultural differences, at times even aggravating the existing conflicts, it certainly allows for a swifter circulation of values and opinions across cultures and results in a rapid growth of new hybrid cultural groups, not necessarily associated with the nation state, race or ethnicity.

Perhaps the most important factor responsible for this change is the shift in the philosophical paradigm that can be observed in the post-industrial age. When the state can no longer be seen as an all-powerful entity in itself, the real power belongs to international trusts and corporations, and since the corporate world is motivated by profit, economic rationalism becomes the most influential ideology. But while the capitalist society saw power in terms of controlling production of goods and labour, there is no doubt that today the most crucial commodity is information. Randy Kluver defines informatization as “the process whereby information and communication technologies shape cultural and civic discourse” (427). Computers, the Internet, telecommunication and media technologies have resulted in re-orientation of societies and have seriously affected our understanding of perception. While we...
are asked not to trust our senses and have faith in the invisible on daily basis, we should not be surprised that ghosts and spirits have become more acceptable than ever. The fact that ghosts are subject to further digitalization to fit the demands of the information age is also not surprising. An excellent example of that can be the case of a woman from Indiana who in 2004 sold the ghost of her father on eBay for a substantial sum of 65,000 USD. Bound by the rules of economic rationalism, how can one doubt the existence of a ghost that makes profit?

The digitalization of ghosts has already affected their representations across cultures, although the most visible change can be observed in Asian horror cinema. This can be due to the fact that traditional portrayals of ghosts in Asian cultures have retained much of their original iconic characteristic and are currently being forced to abandon the apparent materiality of their spiritual bodies by new technologies. As a result of that, while for the greatest part of their mediated appearance Asian spirits can still be seen, heard, smelt and touched as before, today their materialisation frequently seems to require technological intervention. Ghosts have been seen distorting or materialising within photographs in Japanese Ringu and JuOn movies, Thai Shutter, Korean R-Point or Taiwanese Silk, creating interference in television waves (Ringu, JuOn), being captured on surveillance cameras (JuOn, Kairo, Ghost System), film and video cameras (The House/Baan Pee Sing, The Victim/Pee Kon Pen) or sent to a mobile phone as a video-message (One Missed Call). They have even been exorcised with a help of a Polaroid camera (The Park). As if this was not enough, the recent Thai film The Screen portrays also a particularly Thai custom of projecting films in public spaces or in temples as an offering to the spirits of the departed, which certainly adds an entirely new dimension to a more traditional treatment of ghosts in the media.

Ghosts have hovered over mankind since the day the prehistoric man discovered death. For centuries we have spared no efforts to create their representations in our image. It is only natural, although at the same time ironic, that at the time when we have created for ourselves this brave new world of shadows and illusions, we are now closer to ghosts than ever. And as we turn ourselves into ghosts in the machines, those other ghosts become increasingly more real. Who’s to tell what will happen next?

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12. The End of Death: The Conceptual Metaphor Patterns of Death in Arabic

Alaaeldin E. Soliman

“Know that most of the language, when contemplated, is metaphorical and not realistic”
Ibn Jinnī (d.1002) Al-yaṣāiṣ

Introduction

Thinking how we shape values and cultural concepts in language always remind me of my first composition I wrote in Japanese. After having finished writing it, I was very busy thinking of words to answer my Japanese teacher when she praises me. Why not? I wrote my composition in simple Japanese utilizing my new thick dictionary. Two days later I had my composition returned to me, and the result was catastrophic. It was bleeding red ink from top to bottom; even the title “The Japanese pyramids” was surrounded by a big red circle.

As an Egyptian “the pyramids” to me has, in addition to being old buildings, also the connotative meaning “great works” or “great achievements”, i.e. Egyptians have the conceptual metaphor GREAT THINGS or PEOPLE ARE PYRAMIDS. But since the same conceptual metaphor does not exist in Japanese, my composition was as if it was written by using a Japanese keyboard connected to Arabic operating system. The result of course was neither Arabic nor Japanese. Knowledge of the underlying concepts which shapes the target language (in this case Japanese) is essential to understanding, learning, and translating it.

Arab scholars one thousand years ago have bequeathed a tremendous amount of work in the field of linguistics in general and about the figurative use of language in particular. Although their interest did not lie in semantic research in general, but in knowing the exact meaning of words in The Qur’an and in the [collections of] sayings of the prophet, their arguments about the nature of figurative language can be profitable to general linguistic theorizing. Among the most interesting arguments is the one put forward by Ibn Jinni (died A.D. 1002).

Ibn Jinni denies the literal-figurative (metaphorical) distinction in language by saying “know that most of the language when contemplated is metaphorical and not realistic. This applies to the common verbs as: qāma Zaid-un ‘Zaid got up’, qaṣada ʿAmr-un ‘Amr sat down’, ʿinṭalaqa bišrun ‘Bishr set out’, jāʔ l-ṣaifu ‘the summer came’, ʿinhazama l-šitāʔu ‘winter was
defeated’. Do not you see that the verb indicates the meaning of categorization. When you say Zaid got up, or stood up it means: “he was the one to carry out standing up, how can this be while he (the verb) is a category. This category involves all the past, present and future. Being all those who would be found to carry out standing up. It is known that no one single person can at any one time, not even in ten thousand years, have the multiplication of all the action of standing up which included being under illusion; this is impossible for any thinking man. And if this is the case, you would come to realize that ‘Zaid stood up’ is a metaphor, and not a reality, it is a matter of using the whole in the place of the part for elaborating, exaggerating and to make the few look like the many” (1986:448) Ibn Jinni. In this way, Ibn Jinni argued that even concrete physical experience can be considered as a metaphorical expression in language.

The purpose of this study is to investigate expressions on death in Arabic and the concepts underlying them. First, I will review the concepts of time, life and death in the pre-Islamic period to explain the vast shift that was introduced by Islam into those concepts. Second, I will explain the metaphorical nature of some of the basic verbs indicating death in Arabic and their usage in The Qur’an and media. Third, I will point out some underlying concepts which constitute the basic conceptual metaphor patterns of death and dying in Arabic. Fourth, I will refer to the Egyptian contemporary obituaries where Muslim and Coptic obituaries are shaped into the frame of Islam and Christianity respectively.

The present study takes its basic theoretical background from the work of Lakoff & Johnson (1980), Lakoff & Turner (1989), and Lakoff (2006), where metaphorical expression is conceived as the surface realization of cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system.

**Time, Life, and Death in the Pre-Islamic Period**

All what we know about the Arabic language in the Arabian peninsula before the advent of the prophet Muhammad (570-632), comes from the poetic heritage from the period in which people recorded their wisdom and philosophy as well as illustrating their environment, and social relations in verse. The conceptual structure we can descry in these poems are strikingly so contradictory with Islamic concepts that they make us wonder if Islam stemmed from the same culture. Husām (2005:5-70) summarizes as follows the features of the concept of time in the pre-Islamic period:

1. Lack on the part of the people in that period of any sense of time continuity, be it past or present.
2. Their feeling that time is an irresistible enemy, and that it leads man imperatively to an eternal end.
3. Their belief that time is eternally renewable.

As for the non-continuity of time (1), it means that pre-Islamic people felt that time has no extension, and that past and present are all alike. This feeling is due to: (a) the non-spatial
extension for pre-Islamic people, (b) the non-stability of the existing tribal relations, (c) and the absence of belief in resurrection.

The non-spatial extension is due to the nature of pre-Islamic life style that was based on traveling for water to escape drought, or seeking safety away from fighting and war, for fear of wars or for fear of suffering the possible consequences of defeat. Traveling from one place to another was seen by some as a strategic advantage enjoyed by the Arabs. This idea is very clear in ʔal-ʔaʃša’s words to the king of Persia:

“You can not triumph over us or subject us to your power as you did with Eyad tribes in Tikrit, that have agriculture as profession and can not leave their land because they wait their harvest. But our food and money embodied in our camels which are available to us wherever we are.” (1950:231) Muhammad Husain.

The second reason for lack of association is due to the nature of the tribal relations during the pre-Islamic period that was characterized by the struggle among the tribes, a situation that resulted in a strong feeling of the absence of the sense of history. The third reason for lack of the sense of association is due to the absence of the notion of resurrection, since this absence would also entail the absence of time extending into the future.

“And he makes comparisons for us, and forgets his own (origin and) Creation: He says, who can give life to (dry) bones and decomposed ones (at that)?” *The Qur’an*, Yâsîn, [Yasin] 36/78.

“They say: what! When we die and become dust and bones, could we really be raised up again?” *The Qur’an*, ʔal-muʔminūn [The Believers] 23/82.

The second element of the pre-Islamic concept of time is the notion that it is an adamant and victorious enemy, an unavoidable eliminator of men. None would escape from its claws since time is an irresistible enemy.

“And they say: what is there but our life in this world? We shall die and we live, and nothing but time can destroy us. But of that they have no knowledge: they merely conjecture” *The Qur’an*, ʔal-jâyiya [Bowing the Knee] 45/24.

The third element of pre-Islamic concept of time is that it is antagonistic to man, is renewable, and eternal since it always rolls out and rises anew, but it rises with others whom it did not eliminate. Time rolls out and causes man to enter the cycle of young age, which is a stage praised and glorified greatly in pre-Islamic poetry, dismissing at the same time old age as an evil omen. This concept was the source of such important themes in poems as hating time, old age or its features, and loss of time value or hope, and the preference of facing death while
young rather than waiting for an old age. It was even known that some of the Arabs committed suicide when they reached an old age.

**Life and Death in Islam**

Before I go through the changes that Islam brought about in the concept of death among the Arabs, I will review life, and death as it is illustrated in *The Qurʾān*. The first event of Islam was in 610 A.D. when Muhammad, who was forty years old at the time, received his divine message from God through the Angel Gabriel. Islam introduced many concepts contrary to those spread among the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula at that time. Its main message was monotheism, i.e. God (ʔallāh) is the only one which created the universe and humans, Muhammad is God’s messenger and that it is God who creates men and makes them die, as well as judging them on the Day of Judgment. Life and death in *The Qurʾān* are illustrated as follows;

ʔallāh created mankind and life to be worshiped:

“And I (Allâh) created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship me.” *The Qurʾān, ʔaḍ-ḏāriyāt* [The Wind that Scatter] 51/56.

ʔallāh created life and death to test man:

“He who created death and life that He may test you which of you is best in deed: and he is the exalted in might, oft-forgiving.” *The Qurʾān, ʔaẓ-ʔisrā* [The Night Journey] 17/44.

Not only animate things, but every entity in the universe is alive and feels:

“And neither heaven nor earth shed a tear over them: nor were they given a respite.” *The Qurʾān, ʔaḍ-duḍuṭ* [The Smoke] 44/29.

“The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare his glory: there is not a thing but celebrates His praise; and yet ye understand not how they declare His glory! Verily he is oft-forgiving, most forgiving.” *The Qurʾān, ʔaẓ-ʔaṣṣ* [The Narration] 17/44.

And everything will die:


We experience death every time we sleep:

“It is ʔallāh Who takes away the souls at the time of their death, and those that die not during their sleep. He keeps those (souls) for which He has ordained death and sends the rest for a term appointed. Verily, in this are signs for a people who think deeply.” *The Qurʾān, ʔaẓ-zumur* [The Groups] 39/42.

The life in this world is not the real life. The real life is the eternal life after death. In the following verse from *ʔaẓ-ʔanfāl* [Spoils of war] ʔallāh talks to the living as if they are dead.
“O you who believe! Answer ʔallah (by obeying him) and (his) messenger when he calls you to that which will give you life.” *The Qur'an, ʔal-anfāl [Spoils of War]* 8/24.

“You (Muћammad) are dead (will die), and they (too) are dead (will die)” *The Qur'an, ʔaz-zumur [The Groups]* 39/30.

“And this life of the world is only an amusement and a play! Verily, the home of the Hereafter that is the life indeed (i.e. the eternal life that will never end), if they but knew.” *The Qur'an, ʔal-ʕankabūt [The Spider]* 29/64.

After death there is life in the grave *hayātu l-barzax* (Lit: ‘the strait life’), and it is temporary until resurrection:

“Until, when death comes to one of them (those who join partners with Allāh), he says: My Lord! Send me back, So that I may do good in that which I have left behind! No! It is but a word that he speaks; and behind them is Barzax ‘a barrier’ until the Day when they will be resurrected.” *The Qur'an, ʔal-muʔminūn [The Believers]* 23/99-100.

Death has an end, it is temporary, but life is eternal:

“They will never taste death therein except the first death (of this world), and He will save them from the torment of the blazing Fire.” *The Qur'an, ʔad-duxān [The Smoke]* 44/56.

Man experiences four stages, The invisible world → Life (in this world) → Death (moving to the grave life) → resurrection and eternal life in ʔal-janna ‘the paradise’ or in *Jahannam* ‘hell’.

“How can you disbelieve in Allāh? Seeing that you were dead and He gave you life. Then He will give you death; then again will bring you to life (on the Day of Resurrection) and then unto Him you will return.” *The Qur'an, ʔal-baqara [The Cow]* 2/28.

**Changes in the Concept of Death:**

Islam was to lay down an entirely new world view unknown to pre-Islamic culture and beliefs. Linearity of time absent in the pre-Islamic concepts became an essential element in the Islamic period. Muslims are a part of a nation running back to the past, tied with the first man, and extended to the future to be linked with the last man. Continuity is essential in Islam both in faith and rites. *The Qur'an* cites that fasting was laid upon Muslims as it was laid upon those before them. Pilgrimage in addition was also established as a religious act of duty done by Abraham. Islam has also established the relation among Muslims by stressing the importance of visiting patients and joining funerals:

“This Ummah ‘nation’ of yours is a single Ummah and I am your lord and cherisher: therefore serve Me (and no other).” *The Qur'an, ʔal-anbiyāʔ [The Prophets]* 21/92.
Islam linked Muslims to the Abrahamic religions:

“Without doubt, among men, the nearest of kin to Abraham are those who follow him, as are also this Prophet and those who believe: and Allah is the protector of those who have faith.”


The idea of resurrection has added a basic element to the Islamic concept of time, life and death, since it means that man’s fate is eternity. According to Islamic vision, this world is the believer’s “prison and hard time”. Viewed in this way, the last day in life is no longer the last day at all, because it would have a next.

Death is but a “sleeping span”, after which man wakes up physically and spiritually to be for his deeds. The one who sleeps deeply would not know how long he has slept. The same applies to the dead who wakes up and thinks that he has been so only for a while.

The notions of resurrection and judgment day have their impact upon the future of man in this life too. Man is no longer aware of the best possible span of his times. During pre-Islamic period, youth was the best. But from the Islamic perspective all his life span becomes an opportunity to do the righteous deeds that get him into the paradise. For this reason the view on old age becomes entirely different too, because Islam forbids blaming old age or time and has renewed the image of death.

These new Islamic concepts have entirely changed the Arabs’ notion of time and death and they have clearly and directly affected the Arabic expressions concerning death, on the lexical as well as on the metaphorical level. Death in pre-Islamic society was just losing life or vanishing, which is not a dynamic movement. But from the Islamic point of view, there is God (ʔallah) responsible for life and death, and will be the subject or the doer. Man’s birth is the process of moving from ʔālam l-ġaib ‘the invisible world’ to ʔal-dunyā ‘this world’ (Lit: ‘the low place’), and death is the process of moving from this world to the hayāt l-qabr ‘grave life’ or ʔal-barzax ‘the strait life’, before moving next to the eternal life ʔal-ʔāxira (Lit: ‘the last place’) in ʔal-janna (Lit: ‘the garden’) paradise or in Jahannam ‘hell’.

These dynamic movement from one life to another needs new vocabulary, and the resulting change in verbs and conceptual metaphors correspond to the new Islamic world view, and that is what I am going to demonstrate in the following paragraphs that examine the basic words referring to death and dying, and their relation with the above mentioned concepts.

**The lexical level:**

There are many words that indicate death. Some of these words are basic which only means “death”, “to die”, and other words indicate the manner of death, i.e. to die in an accident or to be murdered, strangled, etc. I will focus here on three verbs and their derivatives; māta as the neutral or prototypical verb that indicates dying. And two other verbs tawaffā ‘to
die’, and ʔustušhida ‘to die for Allāh’s sake’ (usually translated as “to be martyred”) which originally did not indicate death or dying but their metaphorical usage reflects to Islamic concepts of dying.

\textit{māta “to die”:}

The commonest Arabic noun used in this respect is \textit{maut} (M. Sg) ‘death’ derived from the verb \textit{māta} (M. Sg. 3rd Person. Past) ‘to die’. Death is “stillness”, and “every thing subsided means it died” (ʔibn manzūr 1970, Vol 3:547). The verb \textit{māta} mainly means ‘to die’ as in \textit{māta X} ‘X died’, and it indicates ‘to become still, motionless’ too, as in \textit{mātatu l-nār-u} (Lit: ‘the fire died’) to indicate that ashes cooled, and as \textit{mātatu l-rīћ-u} (Lit: ‘the wind died’) to indicate that the wind died down. The verb \textit{māta} is neutral in meaning, i.e. it only means loss of life and not especially related to Islamic culture.

\textit{tawaffā / tuwuffiya ‘to die’:

The verb tawaffā or tuwuffiya is one of the commonly used verbs, and it is more formal than \textit{māta}. Tawaffā is active voice, and tuwuffiya is the passive voice form of tawaffā. Tawaffā / tuwuffiya are derived from the root \textit{wafā} which has many meanings (‘to be perfect’, ‘to live up to a promise’, ‘to satisfy’, etc), the most central one being ‘to fulfill’, ‘complete’, As in \textit{waffā dain-a-hu} (he repaid his debts completely), \textit{ʔistawfaitu mālī} ( ‘I took my money completely’), or as in \textit{The Qur’an}:

“And fear the day when ye shall be brought back to Allah. Then shall every soul \textit{be paid} what it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly” \textit{The Qur'an, ṭal-ʔaqara [The Cow] 2/281.}

The Active voice form is used as in \textit{tawaffā-hu allāh ‘he died’} (Lit: ‘Allāh fulfilled/ completed him, Allah took him completely’), and the passive voice is used as in \textit{tuwuffiya Zaidun ‘Zaid died’} (Lit: ‘Zaid was fulfilled’). In \textit{The Qur'an} it is used as in the following verse to indicate “to sleep” too:

“It is he who doth take your souls by night, and hath knowledge of all that ye have done by day: by day doth he raise you up again; that a term appointed be fulfilled; in the end unto him will be your return; then will he show you the truth of all that ye did”. \textit{The Qur’an, ṭal-ʔanʕām [The Cattle] 6-60.}

It is clear that this verb originally did not signify any relation with death, or loss of life, and its usage is metaphorical only in relation with the Moslem world view. Literally it means that ‘Allāh has completed for the one who died (in) his life’ or ‘took him completely’, which indicates the end of the span of time afforded to the deceased and his or her movement to the hereafter where there is accountability, a meaning that did not exist before Islam.

\textit{ʔustušhida ‘to die for ʔallāh’s sake’, šahīd ‘the one who died for ʔallāh’s sake’:

The verb ʔustušhida ‘to die for Allāh’s sake’ (Lit: ‘to die for Allāh’s path or road’), and the nouns šahīd ‘the one who died for Allāh’s sake’ and šahāda ‘dying for Allāh’s sake, certificate,
evidence’ all stem from šahada which means ‘to witness, to see, to swear, to attend, to testify’, and they are often translated as ‘to be martyred’, ‘martyr’, ‘martyrdom’ respectively, as in:

“There is no god but He: That is the witness of ʔallah.” The Qur’an, ʔāl ʕimrān [The Family of ʕimrān] 3/18.

“Every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting.” The Qur’an, ʔal-baqara [The Cow] 2/185.

Šahīd ‘the one who died for Allāh’s sake’ has many explanations among Muslims. The one who died for Allāh’s sake is called šahīd because, “heaven is guaranteed (promised) to him by Allah and the angels”, or because “he will be alive in heaven”, while the others’ souls will be dead till the Day of Resurrection. Or he is the one whose death is an evidence to his strong faith.

“Think not of those who are slain in ʔallah’s way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord; They rejoice in the bounty provided by Allah. And with regard to those left behind, who have not yet joined them (in their bliss), the (Martyrs) glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor have they (cause to) grieve. They glory in the Grace and the bounty from Allah, and in the fact that Allah suffereth not the reward of the Faithful to be lost (in the least).” The Qur’an, ʔāla ʕimrān [The Family of ʕimrān] 169/171.

What concerns us here is that the use of ʔustušhida, šahīd, and šhahāda as metaphorical. Their choice in the mass media is a clear sign of the stance of the speaker or the writer towards the deceased, as it indicates a kind of subjective sympathy. The following example demonstrates how the expressions for death vary according to the different perspectives. (1) and (2) are two titles about the same news. The first one is from BBC (Arabic news), and the second one is from Aljazeera (Arabic news).

**BBC (Arabic: 2009/9/25)**

1) maqtal-u ʔalāʔat-i filištîni-yīnā fi ʔarāt-in ʔisra’iliyat-in
   killing-Nom three-Gen Palestinian-Gen in raid-Gen Israeli-Gen
   Three Palestinian were killed in Israeli raid.
   (Lit:’(the) killing of three Palestinian in Israeli raid’)

**Aljazeera (2009/9/25)**

2) ʔalāʔat-u ʔushadāʔ-in bi-ʔarāt-a fi ʔasf-in ʔisra’iliy-in
   Three-Nom martyrs-Gen.Plu in- Gaza in bombing-Gen Israeli-Gen
   Three martyrs in Israeli bombing in Gaza.
In (1) the noun *maqtal-u* means ‘killing (of)’, and we can consider it a neutral word or an objective way of reporting what happened, since it does not have any particular connotation. While Aljazeera, an Arabic news agency, uses the noun *šuhadāʔ* ‘martyrs’ as in (2), which implicates Islamic values. The same news agency (Aljazeera), however, does not use the word “martyr” in its English version on the web.

Also when the subject of the active verb is the one who did the killing (the agent) the verb *qutila* ‘killed’ is used as in (3).

(3) ʔisrāʔil taqtulu settat-an fi l-daffat-i wa ɣazza

*Israel* kills-3.F six-Acc in def-bank-Gen and *Gaza*

Israel killed six in the west bank and *Gaza*. (Aljazeera: 2009/12/26)

We can find similar differences in the way that the media describes death, through the usage of the expression “suicide attack”. There are at least three translations in Arabic for the action of killing others by casting one’s life away, i.e. “suicide attack”. Each of these three translations expresses an idea related to a special psychological attitude. In case of sympathizing with the action the expressions used are, *ṣamaliyya ʔistišhādiyya* ‘a martyr attack’ or *ṣamaliyya fidāʔiyya* suicide attack (Lit: ‘sacrificial attack’). The first one *ṣamaliyya ʔistišhādiyya* may be used by a person has an Islamic point of view to the incident. The second expression *ṣamaliyya fidāʔiyya* suicide attack” (Lit: ‘sacrificial attack’) is used in a broader scale in the Arabic media. The word *fidāʔiyya* “sacrificial” or *fidāʔi* ‘fighter who risks his life recklessly’ stems from *fadā* which means ‘to redeem, to sacrifice’. The third expression is used to indicate “suicide attack” in Arabic media is *ṣamaliyya ʔintiḥāriya* ‘suicidal attack’, one used in the case of reporting the incident in an objective manner. But it does not make any sense in authentic Islam, because *ʔintiḥāriya* ‘suicidal’ is from *ʔintahara* ‘to commit suicide’ which is doctrinally forbidden in Islam.

**Conceptual metaphors of ‘death’ in The Qur’an:**

Death in *The Qur’an* is illustrated from various angles within the above quoted passages that articulate fundamental Islamic concepts and values. Death is moving from this world to another world where man meets God.

**DEATH IS A DESTINATION**, and **“DEATH IS MEETING GOD”**

Qad xasira l-lađina kaḍḍabū bi-liqāʔ-i l-llāh-i

Indeed lost.3.M who.Plus considered as a lie.3.Plus Prep- meeting-Gen God-Gen

“Lost indeed are they who consider it a lie that they will have to meet God.” *The Qur’an*, ʔal-ʔanʕām [The Cattle] 6/31.

kaʔannamā yusāqūna ʔila l-mawt-i wa hum yanzurūna

as if they were being driven to def-death-Gen while they looking.3.Plus
“as if they were being driven to death, while they were looking (at it).” The Qur’an, ʔal-ʔanfāl [Spoils of War] 8/6.

And death means to be taken, completed, or fulfilled by God, The Angel of death or death itself.

**DEATH IS AN ACTION (OF COMPLETION / FULFILLMENT)**

fa-ʔin šahidū fa-ʔamsikū-hunna fi 1-biyūt-i hattā
And if testify.3.Plu confine.imper-Pron.3.F.Plu in def-houses-gen until
Yatawaffā-hunna l-mawt-u
fulfill.3.M.sg-Pron.3.F.Plu def-death-Nom

“And if they testify, confine them (i.e. women) to houses until death comes to (fulfill) them or Allâh ordains for them some (other) way.” The Qur’an, ʔan-nisā?, [Women] 4/15.

$qul$ yatawaffā-kum malak-u l-mawt-i 1-lazī wukkila bi-kum
θumma ?ilā rabb-i-kum turjaʕ-ũna
then to Lord-gen.Pron.2.Plu be brought.pass-Pron.M.Plu

“Say: The angel of death, who is set over you, will take your souls. Then you shall be brought to your Lord.” The Qur’an, ʔas-sajda, [The Prostration] 32/11.

There is a strong tendency in The Qur’an to personify death. Death is illustrated in many verses as a person who approaches, comes, or pursues people.

**DEATH IS A MOVING ENTITY (DEATH IS AN APPROACHING PERSON)**

ʔam kuntum šuhadāʔ-a ʔið ʔadāra yaʕqūb-a l-mawt-u
Or you were witnesses.Acc when approached.3.M Jacob-Acc def-death-Nom

“Or were you witnesses when death approached Yaʿqūb (Jacob)?” The Qur’an, ʔal-baqara, [The Cow] 2/133.

hattā ʔiðā jāʔa ʔahad-a-kum l-maut-u tawaffat-hu
until when comes.3.M one-Acc-Pron.2.Plu def-death-Nom take.3.F-Pron.3.M
rusul-u-nā
messenger.F.Plu-Nom-Pron.1.Plu

“Until when death approaches one of you, Our Messengers (angel of death and his assistants) take his soul.” The Qur’an, ʔal-ʔanʕām, [The Cattle] 6/61.
And spend from what We have provided you before death comes to one of you.” The Qur’an, ṭal-munāfiqūn, [The Hypocrites] 63/10.

DEATH IS A MOVING ENTITY (DEATH CHASES / OVERTAKES)
Whoever leaves his home as an emigrant unto Allah and His Messenger, and death overtakes him, his reward is then surely incumbent upon Allah.” The Qur’an, ṭan-nisā?, [Women] 4/100.

Say (to them): Flight will not avail you if you flee from death or killing.” The Qur’an, ṭal-ahzāb, [The Confederates] 33/16.

Say that which flee from death or killing. The Qur’an, ṭan-nisā?, [Women] 4/100.
“Say (to them): "Verily, the death from which you flee will surely meet you." The Qur’an, ʔal-jumʕa, [Friday] 62/8.

DEATH IS AN ENTITY (CREATED BY GOD)

We can find Death illustrated as an entity too, which is a decree, created by God. It is fearful for non-believers, but the believers long for it, since it is an entity in a bargain with God, who gives the believers the eternal life in Paradise in return for what they give in this life.

Naћnu qaddarnā baina-kumu l-mawt-a wa mā nahnu bimasbūqīn
We decreed.1.Plu between-Pron.2.Plu def-death-Acc and not we outstrip.1.Plu
“We have decreed death to you all, and We are not outstripped.” The Qur’an, ʔal-wāqiʕa, [The Inevitable Event] 56/60.

DEATH IS AN ENTITY (CREATED BY GOD)

ʔallazī xalaqa l-mawt-a wa l-hayāt-a li-yablūwa-kum ʔaiyukum
who created.3.M def-death-Acc and def-life-Acc that test.3.M-Pron.2.Plu which of you
ʔahsan-u ʕamal-an
best-Nom deed-Acc
“Who has created death and life that He may test you which of you is best in deed.” The Qur’an, ʔal-mulk, [Dominion] 67/2.

DEATH IS AN ENTITY (FEARFUL FOR NON-BELIEVERS)

yajʕalūna ʔašābiʕ-a-hum fi ʔādān-i-him min l-ṣawāʕiq- ḥādar-a l-mawt-i
thrust.3.Plu fingers-Acc-Pron.3 in ears-Gen-Pron.3 from def-thunder fear-Acc def-death-Gen
“They thrust their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunder-clap for fear of death.” The Qur’an, ʔal-baqara, [The Cow] 2/19.

DEATH IS AN ENTITY (TO LONG FOR)

Qul ʔin kānat l-a-kum d-dār-u 1-ʔāxirat-u ʔinda l-lāh-i xāliṣat-an
Say if was for you def-home-Nom def-hereafter-Nom at def-Allah-Gen only for-Acc
min dūnī n-nās-i fa-tamānū l-mawt-a ʔin kuntum šādiqīn
from without def-mankind then-long.Imper.Plu def-death-Acc if you were truthful
“If the home of the Hereafter with Allâh is indeed for you specially and not for others of mankind, then long for death if you are truthful.” The Qur’an, ʔal-baqara, [The Cow] 2/94.
and indeed you were wish.2.Plu def-death-Acc from before-Gen Nomin meet.3.Plu-Pron.3.M

DEATH IS AN ENTITY (IN A BARGAIN WITH GOD)

indeed def-Allah-Acc purchased.3.M from from def-believers persons-Acc-Pron.3.M
wa ʔamwâl-a-hum bi-ʔanna la-hum l-jannat-a.
and goods-Acc-Pron.3.M by-that for-them def-paradise-Acc
“Allah has purchased of the Believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the Garden (of Paradise).” The Qur’an, ʔat-tawba, [Repentance] 9/111.

“O ye who believe! Shall I lead you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous chastisement? That ye believe in Allah and his messenger, and that ye strive (your utmost) in the cause of Allah, with your wealth and your persons.” The Qur’an, ʔaš-ʔaf, [Battle Array] 61/10-11.

One of the most interesting metaphors used in The Qur’an to designate death is the one which illustrates death as entity that can be tasted. The use of the “taste” metaphor to express a bitter experience can be found in other languages, for example in English or Japanese, but usually it does not combine with the notion of death in such languages. In The Qur’an it is used more than once as in the following.

DEATH IS AN ENTITY (CAN BE TASTED/HAS A TASTE)

They will never taste death therein except the first death.” The Qur’an, ?ad-duxxān, [The Smoke] 44/56.

I think that this metaphor is approved in Arabic because it stems from the Islamic concept that death is a mere experience or a stage through which mankind passes. Death is the end of this life but not the ultimate end, which makes death only an experience like any other experience mankind can go through.

To summarize the above-mentioned conceptual metaphor patterns of the noun “Death” in The Qur’an, we can relate them to three main schematic patterns, (A) DEATH IS AN ENTITY, (B) LIFE IS A JOURNEY, and DEATH IS AN ACTION. Each one of the three schematic patterns has a subgroup of conceptual metaphoric patterns which conceptualize DEATH through hypostatization and personification as illustrated in the figure below.

Death is a static and dynamic entity. It is created and decreed by God, it has a taste, and it is an entity to be longed for and feared. It approaches and chases man, to fulfill his life and take him to the next temporary destination.
This is how the word “death” is depicted in *The Qur’an* which plays a central role in shaping concepts and values for Muslims in particular and Arabs in general. In the next paragraph I will give an example from the Arabic contemporary discourse, viz., Egyptian obituaries, to exemplify how different values can be created through use of disparate conceptualizing patterns.

**Egyptian obituaries:**

There is one language but two religions in Egypt, Coptic Christianity and Islam. Copts constitute less than 10% of the population, but the Coptic Christian population in Egypt
is the largest Christian community in the Arab world. Although it is almost impossible to find differences in daily language between Muslims and Copts, we can notice easily a clear difference in the way each introduces their obituaries. Since death-related expressions are mostly religious in their connotation, each piece of Muslim and Coptic obituaries is shaped into the frame of Islam and Christianity respectively.

**Egyptian Muslims obituaries:**

Despite the use of such non-Islamic expressions as, *raḥīlu* ... ‘the departure of...’, or *ġaiyaba l-mautu*... ‘death absented...’ in the regular news, such expressions are not used in Muslim obituaries. Usually, one of the following three verbs which means ‘died’ is used: (1) *tuwuffiya* (Lit: ‘was fulfilled/ completed, Allah took him completely’), (2) *ʔintaqala ʔilā* ‘moved to’, or (3) *ʔiћtasaba* (Lit: ‘to anticipate a reward in the hereafter by adding a pious deed to one’s account with God’) which stems from the verb *ḥasaba* ‘to charge, count on’. All of the three verbs are metaphorical and they are used as in the following examples (the translation is almost literal):

(1) (The deceased) was taken to God’s mercy. (Lit: ‘God took him/ fulfilled his life and took him into his mercy’)
(2) (The deceased) was moved to God’s mercy.
(3) The President Hosni Mubarak gives (deposited) his grandson Muhammad Alaa to/with God.
   (Lit: ‘the President Hosni Mubarak anticipates God’s reward in the hereafter for his grandson’s death’)

Muslim obituaries mainly contain prayers for mercy to the deceased, and their sharing in the agony with the family of the deceased. Usually it does not contain glorification of the deceased. Although the obituaries may contain a verse from *The Qur’an* about death and heaven, usually, it does not indicate directly that the deceased will be in heaven as we can see in the Coptic obituaries.

**Coptic obituaries:**

Coptic obituaries are different from Muslim’s in their vocabulary and content. They may contain a picture of the deceased which is very rare in Muslim’s obituaries. None of the verbs mentioned above are used. Instead, there are Christian expressions as in the following examples:

(4) (the deceased) Moved to the heavenly glories.
(5) With Jesus it is much better.
(6) He lay down with a hope for resurrection.
(7) He moved to the amenity paradise.
(8) I have the desire to be released to go to the Christ, this is much better.
(9) He went home at the end of his service.
(10) May you enjoy the amenity paradise.

In Coptic obituaries we can see such lines as in (11-14) expressing the sorrows of the deceased’s family. And the deceased is described as “The heaven’s groom” or “the heaven’s bride”.

11) Your departure has shaken our life and your separation is unbearable.
12) Dear brother, because I was faraway I missed your last farewell, but you are always in our heart however the days are long.
13) My kind husband and my dear father, we miss your angel calmness, you left and tolerated pains. We shall cry for ever for you. Our only condolence is that you are in paradise.
14) We lost and deposited a precious gem with the Christ.

The above examples from Muslims and Coptic obituaries can be related to the three main schematic patterns, (A) DEATH IS AN ENTITY, (B) LIFE IS A JOURNEY, and DEATH IS AN ACTION. But what makes it easy to recognize and distinguish between Muslims and Coptic obituaries is the difference in the subgroups in the conceptual metaphoric patterns.

For example, in Muslim obituaries death is apparently conceptualized as an ENTITY, but never as a LOSS OF A (PRECIOUS) ENTITY as in (14). In Muslim obituaries DEATH IS A JOURNEY as in (2) where the deceased moves to God’s mercy, but not to “the heavenly glories” or “with Christ” as in Coptic obituaries.

Conclusion

The Arabic language was a stage there was a vast shift made by Islam in the concepts of death and dying. In the pre-Islamic period death was losing life or just vanishing which gave death a stationary or static nature. On the contrary, Islam introduced death as one stage in the eternal life of man. Death is the process of moving from this world to ‘the grave life’ before moving next to the eternal life. The vocabulary and metaphors in Arabic correspond to these dynamic movements from one life to another.

In The Qur’an DEATH IS AN ENTITY created and decreed by Allah, an entity to long for, fearful for non-believer. It is an entity in a bargain with Allah, and it can be tasted too. There is a high tendency to personify death. It is a person who completes life, approaches, comes, or pursues mankind. In the mass-media death expressions give a clear sign to show the stance of the speaker or the writer towards the deceased. Although it is almost impossible to find differences in daily language between Muslims and Copts, there is a clear difference in the way each introduces their obituaries.
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13. A Japanese view of the Other World reflected in the movie Okuribito (Departures)

Keiko Tanita

Introduction

Religion is the field of human activities most closely related to the issue of death. Japan is considered to be a Buddhist country where 96 million people support Buddhism with more than 75 thousands temples and 300 thousands Buddha images, according to the Cultural Affairs Agency in 2009. Even those who have no particular faith at home would say they are Buddhist when asked during their stay in other countries where religion is an important issue. Certainly, a great part of our cultural tradition is that of Buddhism, which was introduced into Japan in mid-6th century. Since then, Buddhism spread first among the aristocrats, then down to the common people in 13th century, and in the process it developed a synthesis of the traditions of the native Shintoism. Shintoism is a religion of the ancient nature and ancestor worship, not exactly the same as the present-day Shintoism which was institutionalized in the late 19th century in the course of modernization of Japan. Presently, we have many Buddhist rituals especially related to death and dying; funeral, death anniversaries, equinoctial services, the Bon Festival similar to Christian All Souls Day, etc. and most of them are originally of Japanese origin.

Needless to say, Japanese Buddhism is not same as that first born in India, since it is natural for all religions to be influenced by the cultures specific to the countries/regions where they develop. Japanese Buddhism, which came from India through the Northern route of Tibet and China developed into what is called Mahayana Buddhism which is quite different from the conservative Theravada traditions found in Thai, Burmese, and Sri Lankan Buddhism, which spread through the Southern route. Every major religion has shifted somehow in accordance with the local culture, and it is of this local culture of Japan I would like to present a glimpse of here. However, this is not a religious scholarly treatise but a study from the mundane viewpoint of common people as presented in a movie.

Introduction of the movie

The Japanese movie Okuribito (Departures), was released in 2008, and won the 81st Academy Award as Best Foreign Language Film, as well as 96 other awards around the world, including the 3rd Asian Film Award for Best Actor in 2009, and Asia Pacific Screen Award for Best Actor also in 2009 for its main actor Masahiro Motoki. Consequently, it has English subtitle and has been shown in many Western, as well as Asian, countries. One of my motives of writing this paper is the remark of some Americans who saw the movie, to the effect that they were very impressed by the Buddhist concept of death and afterlife. However, the idea of
afterlife seen in the movie is not exactly in line with the Buddhism doctrine, but with an older, animistic belief from the prehistoric era, though the latter now constitutes the base of ancestor worship which is an integral part of Japanese Buddhism through the influence of Shintoism.

The story of the movie focuses on a newly unemployed cellist who came back to his small hometown disappointed but happens to become an undertaker, the person who cleans the dead bodies and applies the make up to them, usually in front of their family and relatives, before placing them in the coffin, which are to be cremated later.

The English subtitles use the term “encoffiner” which may be the translator’s invention, as it is not found in any major dictionary I looked into. The role of an encoffiner is not the same as that of an embalmer whose primary task is to preserve the body to be buried. It is to allow bereaved families and relatives to bid farewell to their deceased and to remember them in as good condition as possible. So, the emphasis is on farewell as seen in the original title, *Okuribito*, which literally means the one who sends someone off.

It is also the task of an encoffiner to purify the contamination which is believed to be brought by death according to ancient belief. Therefore, he is at the risk of being considered contaminated himself and is likely to be the target of prejudice. This happens to the protagonist. His wife goes back to her family home when she finds out about his new job, and a boyhood friend casts a stone at him until his own mother dies and goes through the encoffinement rite performed by the protagonist. Through this rite, both his wife and his friend realize the solemnity and sincerity of his job and come to appreciate it. The story ends when the father of the protagonist who abandoned his wife and son a long time ago dies, and by performing the rite for him, the protagonist reconciles himself with the father against whom he has born a grudge ever since his childhood.

Using this movie as the principal material, I would like to present a view of “the other world” found in the language of Japanese script, which we have inherited from our ancestors long before the arrival of Buddhism and is reflected in Japanese daily conversation along with Buddhist tradition.

**Data and analysis: Introduction of categories and patterns**

To start with, an analysis of the shift of underlying metaphors in the translation from Japanese to English and their causes is necessary in order to clarify how close the Japanese and English scripts are at the metaphoric level, which will affect the understanding of the movie. It may help clarify the cause of the remark by the American audience mentioned above.

In order to make the analysis, the expressions related to death and dying are extracted from the Japanese script and its English subtitles released abroad. There are 92 such expressions as “died”, “corpse”, “funeral”, “deceased”, “passed away”, etc. In order to analyze
their underlying metaphoric patterns, they are extracted together with their contexts and categorized in the conceptual metaphoric frameworks which are primarily based on the works of George Lakoff et. al.(1980) and had been developed during our past researches on death and dying-related metaphors in Japanese and English. As described in other papers in Part II and III, six semantic categories have been established with several patterns in each of them.

Let me give a brief description of each of six semantic categories. As for the details of the conceptual patterns in each category, please refer “General Introduction on the Death and Dying Project” in Part II.

The first category is ACTION/EVENT: This category contains the expressions which are most descriptive, straightforward without metaphor such as “to die”, “dead”, “dying”. In this category, death is described as a mere fact with some emphasis on time, place, process and its result.

The second is CONTAINER: This category consists of 3 conceptual patterns. In the first pattern, to die is regarded as destroying a container, in the second, death is a phenomenon in which life in the form of liquid, heat, fire, flame or breath, goes out of a container, and in the third, death itself is regarded as a container. A Japanese popular euphemism for “to die”, iki wo hikitoru, literally meaning “breath taken out”, falls under the second pattern of this category, but no token is found in this script. No English example, such as “last breath”, is found either.

The third is ENTITY: It consists of death as person, death as moving or fearful or heavy entity, and death as losing an entity. The examples of this category are “face their death”, “death nears”, etc. The third pattern in this category, E-3: DEATH IS LOSING AN ENTITY, is one of the 3 patterns which are found only in the Japanese script, which I will talk about later.

The fourth category is JOURNEY: It consists of death as departure with no return, death as the end of the journey of life, death as going to another place with certain destination in mind, and dying itself as journey. The expressions such as “pass away”, “deceased”, “departure” belong to this category. Given the theme of this movie, it is no wonder that a great many expressions in this category are found both in the Japanese script and its English subtitle which I found fairly faithful to the Japanese expressions. However, when analyzed by pattern, the differences do exist, on which I will also discuss later.

The fifth is STATUS: Included in this category, along with the typical Lakoffian metaphoric pattern of LIFE IS UP AND DEATH IS DOWN, are death as lack of movement such as sleep, as disappearance, as transformation into some other existence like angel and Buddha, and also as bondage. In case of death as disappearance, death can be understood as separation, loss or damage from the survivors’ point of view. S-3: DEATH IS DISAPPEARANCE and S-5: DEATH IS TRANSFORMATION are the other 2 patterns found only in Japanese, which I will also talk about later.
The last one is TIME: This is a rather small category with the cyclical concept of time such as day or year with such expression “the winter of life” as example. Since it is by nature poetic expression, it’s not easily found in the daily dialogues such as the one in this movie.

Results of the analysis 1: No. of expressions in each semantic category

The results of metaphoric conceptual analysis are as follows:

Firstly, vast majority of both Japanese and English expressions belong to either ACTION/EVENT or JOURNEY. A fair percentage of the Japanese expressions and their English translation falls under the category of ACTION/EVENT where death and dying are talked about in a plain, straightforward language. This result corresponds to the results of several analyses my colleagues and I carried out for the past years of this project. It means that both Japanese-speaking and English-speaking peoples tend to use non-metaphoric language in various fields, registers and topics related to death and dying. In this study, 39 Japanese expressions out of the extracted 92 fall under this category, while in English, 46 expressions are found here.

Also there are the large number of expressions falling under the DEATH IS JOURNEY metaphor; 32 (more than one thirds) in Japanese and 41 (almost 45%) in English. This result is quite understandable when thinking of the theme of this movie. There are only 5 expressions in English which do not belong either to A or J, and their breakdown is two belonging to SS-3, one to S-1 as same as their Japanese counterparts, and two not belonging to any. It is those two which poses the issue of “the other world” most clearly.

Graph 1: Expressions in Each Semantic Category
Results of the analysis 2: The issue of Kanji

Secondly, there are some categorical shifts caused by Kanji. Kanji is one of 3 kinds of characters used in Japan, and since they were originated in the ancient China, they are also called Chinese characters as described in Part III. They were introduced into Japan in 5th to 6th century and used to notate Japanese sounds, and developed into 2 kinds of phonograms as well as continued to be used as ideograms, though their shapes might not be exactly the same as what are used in the present China. Now we have about 2,000 Kanji/Chinese characters in daily use and about a half of them are taught in elementary schools for 6 years. Since they are ideograms, each of them has its own etymological meaning, sometimes more than one.

As pointed out earlier, there are 3 patterns which appear only in Japanese script and do not have any English counterparts: E-3: DEATH IS LOSING AN ENTITY (also the semantic category of ENTITY), S-3: DEATH IS DISAPPEARANCE and S-5: DEATH IS TRANSFORMATION. The Japanese expressions in these three patterns shifted metaphorically in translation due to their use of Chinese characters

The Japanese expressions in the first pattern use this (遺) Chinese character, pronounced [i] and means “passed down without being lost”, “leaving something behind” or “something that remains”, such as in 遺体[itai], “remaining body” and 遺品[ihin] “goods left behind”. “Leaving something behind” or something is “passed down without being lost” implies that something else is lost. In this case, it is considered LIFE as AN ENTITY is lost and therefore this expression is classified as E-3: DEATH IS LOSING AN ENTITY. They are all translated as “body” and “belongings” which have no overtone of being “not lost but left behind” and therefore simply categorized in the straightforward ACTIN/EVENT.

Similarly, the second one, S-3: DEATH IS DISAPPEARANCE, uses this (亡) Chinese character, which is pronounced [bou or na(-kunaru, -ki)], and its etymology is “leaving the visible field”. 亡くなる[nakunaru] is the most preferred euphemistic expression of “to die” in Japanese. Therefore, this euphemism is very often used not only in this movie but also in our daily dialogue, such as 亡き夫[naki otto], “late husband”. In the English subtitle, “to pass away” is used, which belongs to J-1: DEATH IS DEPARTURE.

In the third one, S-5: DEATH IS TRANSFORMATION, this (故) Chinese character is used. It is pronounced [ko] and etymologically means “made old/ancient” as used in 故人[kojin], “the person who made old/ancient by death”, indicating the change of status into “oldness”. They are translated as “deceased” in all cases, which came from the Latin word decessus, “to depart, to leave”, also belonging to J-1: DEATH IS DEPARTURE. Such metaphoric shift in translation attest the strong impact of etymology on the daily dialogue, especially that of Chinese characters on Japanese language.
Results of the analysis 3: Other categorical shift in translation

There are 23 expressions in the English translations which do not fall into the same category as original Japanese script. Seventeen of them are due to the etymological impact of Kanji, Chinese characters, as described above, while the shift of six remaining expressions is caused by two reasons, both of which pose interesting issues related to a Japanese view of death/dying and afterlife.

The first reason is the difference in emphasis such as follows:
1. 皆さま、どうかお近くでお見守りください。（minasama, douka ochikakude omimamori kudasai）: falls under J-2, meaning “Everyone, please, close on and behold” In English, “Everyone, please see her off from up close.” This classified is in J-1.
2. 母を看取ってあげられなかった罰なのか? (hahawo mitott e agerarenakatta batsunanoka) : falls under J-2 and means “Is this punishment for not being able to nurse mother[’s last moment]?” In English, it is “Is this my punishment for not seeing my mother off?” And classified as J-1.

These two expressions reflect the different view of death in the JOURNEY metaphor in Japanese and English. In Japanese, the emphasis is on the last moment in life, that is, J-2: LIFE IS JOURNEY/DEATH IS ITS END. In English, both translated as “see her off”, the emphasis is on a new start, thus, J-1: DEATH IS DEPARTURE. These examples are too few to assume anything conclusive, but it may not be quite impossible to regard them as examples of the assumption that in an event or activity by which one thing ends and another thing starts, on which to place emphasis is also determined by cultures, and, if I dare say, it may be that the Japanese place emphasis on the end while the English-speaking people prefer the emphasis on the start. For example, the word “commencement” is often used in English to refer to a graduation ceremony and literally it is a start, while in Japanese, the ceremony is always called卒業式(sotsugyoushiki: finishing-work ceremony) with an emphasis on finishing.

Following is another example with a different emphasis:
3. 葬家のお名前は? (soukeno oname wa?): belongs to the straightforward category A and means “What is the name of burial family?” In the English subscript, it is “The name of the deceased is…” J-1 pattern

In English, the dead who are going on JOURNEY is emphasized, while in Japanese, the emphasis is placed on the family who host the funeral rite. This script could be easily translated as “The name of funeral family?” within the same screen space, but the translator must have thought this translation more natural for such scene in the English-speaking context. This is the matter of customs and conventions, rather than metaphor, and it indicates that a funeral is a personal rite among English-speaking people, while Japanese funeral as a rite backed up by family institution.
Here is another cause of shift: passive voice in Japanese

4. 9年前にな、死なれちまった。（kyuunenmaeni na, shinare chimatta）belongs to SS-3 and literally means “Nine years ago, I was died [by my wife]” It is translated as “Passed away 9 years ago”. J-1

This expression shows an interesting feature of the Japanese language. The passive voice is used to indicate damage, injury, or suffering, which is close to the English expression “something wrong/unwelcome happens on someone” such as “My car broke down on me when I was in a hurry” or “It rained on me when I had no umbrella with me”. The above example emphasizes that his wife’s death was extremely damaging to him, and thus is classified into SS-3: DEATH IS SEPARATION/LOSS/DAMAGE, whereas the English translation uses “pass away” (J-1: DEATH IS DEPARTURE) since, I suppose, it is very difficult to translate this expression with the same conceptual pattern in the limited length of the subtitle.

Expressions reflecting a Japanese view of the Other World

The last two expressions are most closely related to the central issue in this paper, a Japanese view of “the other world”.

5. おばあちゃん、ごくろうさま（obaachan gokurousama）J-2-a/J-3: “Grandma, (we appreciate all) your pains and troubles. It is translated “Thank you for everything, grandma.”

6. おつかれさまでした。（otsukaresama deshita）J-2-a/J-3: “(We acknowledge) your fatigue and weariness. = You must be tired. = Good work today.” Also translated as “Thank you for everything.”

The translation of 5 and 6 do not fall under any semantic category set for our research on death and dying. J-2-a: DEATH IS RELIEF FROM BURDEN/STRUGGLE may be the closest, but it does not reflect the sense of appreciation and/or acknowledgement these expressions have. So here, we must examine the expressions per se rather than comparing them metaphorically with English expressions. They are the words of farewell to the dead and untranslatable into English. These expressions are commonly used not only to the dead but also to the living. Actually, they are very casual expressions used at a workplace. The former is used to express appreciation for any service, trivial or important, and the latter by those who stay at a place to those who leave there, for example, as the greetings from the workers who still have work to do in their offices/workshops to their colleagues who have completed the day’s work and are going home. Or it’s even used by the sport club staff to a club member leaving there after doing exercise. (In these expressions, the emphasis is placed on “the end”, completing some tasks or works, as in the case of 1 and 2 above, the examples of different emphasis.) In the case of the movie, these words are uttered to the dead by the bereaved family and friends at the crematory. The dead is considered to have completed her task in this world and so now she can leave there for another, better, place, or presumably go back to where she had come from. The similarity of the situation is conspicuous. That is why these expressions are classified as J-
Then, the capital issue arises; where is the grandma in the movie going? In the Buddhist belief at a common people’s level, she would be tried for her behavior during her lifetime. And if she passes the test, she could go to nirvana, but most likely she would fail as the vast majority of human beings do and would transmigrate into another life, either as human or as other creatures depending on her merit, and repeat the life in this world as shown in the following illustration Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Other World -1: Buddhist Transmigration illustrated by Bunpei Yorifuji (Shinikatalogu (Catalogue of Death), 2005, Yamato Shobou, Tokyo, p38, with coloring and translation by the present writer)

If she is to face such a fate, would her family and friends use such words of farewell to her? No. They used these expressions because their idea of afterlife is not the Buddhist transmigration or reincarnation, but an older, animistic belief that the dead people would go to another world and live there happily as spirits who watch over their offspring, and even visit them once in a while. This belief has had a great impact on Buddhism during the process of its taking root in the soil of Japan.

There are more expressions supporting this point in the script such as また会おうの(mata aou no), “See you again”, and いってらっしゃい(itte rasshai), polite
expression of “go!”, “bon voyage”, “have a good trip”. The latter is a compound verb consisting of itte (go) and rasshai (come) implying that you go but are expected to come again. It is a speech formula often used to see off those who would come back soon such as going to school or to their work place. These expressions when used to see off the dead presume a place where you go after you die and where you can meet again the people who died before you. This does not coincide with the Buddhist teaching of reincarnation from one form of life to another before finally attaining enlightenment enough to go to nirvana. These expressions used for the dead imply the end of one world/life and the beginning of another, not only in the metaphoric level but also as a creed to live by. They are translated literally “see you again” and “have a nice trip”, which are acceptable as a subtitle translation, and belong to the same J-3 pattern as in Japanese, but we must not forget what lies behind these expressions.

**Japanese Other Worlds**

So what is the other world referred to here? Let me give you the underlying notion of the Other World that Japanese have. Before the arrival of Buddhism, the ancient Japanese had believed the Other World was located either on the mountains or beyond the sea, depending on the different ethnic groups which composed the origin of the present Japanese. Some scholars proclaim that ancient Japanese can be roughly divided into 4 groups: proto-Japanese whose origin is unknown, those from the continent in the west who eventually gained the dominion over the most part of Japan, those from the north who presumably became the present Ainu people, and those from the south sea representing the cultures of Okinawa and other southern islands. The first 3 groups seemed to have the notion of the Other World on the mountains and the last group was said to have believed their Other World beyond the sea.

What is interesting is that the notion of the Other World of Ainu people in the far north and that of Okinawa and the southern islands seem very similar in spite of their geographical remoteness and the difference in their locations. Being outlying regions as seen from the center of Japan from where the impact of Buddhism had spread, they seem to retain well the prototype of the Japanese Other World, according to Takeshi Umehara, in a lecture in 1989 titled “The Japanese Vision of the Other World” at the International Research Center for Japanese Culture. He states that their Other World is a reverse of this world with no distinction between heaven and hell, where almost every soul, not only of human beings but also of other creatures, goes and lives with their ancestors’ souls, and such belief is still reflected in their funerals and festivals.
Whether on the mountain or beyond the sea, the Other World is very close to this world, unlike the Christian Heaven or Buddhist Nirvana which are supposed to be located at an unreachable distance or dimension from this world. Kunio Yanagida (1875-1962), the founder of Japanese folklore studies, stated in 1945 in his work Senzo-no-Hanashi (On Our Ancestors), Collected Works of Kunio Yanagida 13, 1990, by Chikuma Shobou, p61, “The view of afterlife, the belief that the souls of the dead stay within the Japanese soil forever and won’t go too far away from us, has been considerably deep-rooted in the Japanese populace ever since the beginning of this land and is still persistent”.

The souls of the dead are believed to come back often to stay with their family and relatives for certain periods of time, the idea which was later incorporated into Buddhism and became the custom of the Bon Festival. This is a popular festival celebrating the return to homes of ancestral spirits in the mid-summer.

Although not found in this script, supportive expressions were found abundantly in the data extracted for our previous researches. In the topic of abortion, in Part III, for example, one frequently-found example was 送り返す (okuri kaesu) or お返しする (okaeshi suru) J-3: which means, “to send back (in this case, an unwanted baby) to the place of its origin”. 
These expressions imply that there is a world from where a baby-to-be comes from and goes back when it dies either as a fetus or a human.

We can see a similar picture in other secular material, an old popular song called SENDOU KOUTA (Ballad of Voyagers), with the song by Ujo Noguchi, and the music by Shimpei Nakayama, composed in 1921, with original title KARESUSUKI (Dead Susuki Grass, a type of autumn grass weed often seen in plateaus and river banks ), which goes:

Orewa kawarano karesusuki “I am blighted SUSUKI grass on the river bank”
Onaji omaemo karesusuki “you too are blighted SUSUKI grass just as I am”
Douse futariwa konoyodewa “Anyway we are both in this world”
Hanano sakanai karesusuki “dead SUSUKI grass which could never bloom”

This verse implies that they could blossom together in the Other World, and can be taken to suggest double suicide. As pointed out by Maeda in her paper in Part III, double suicide has been acknowledged, sympathized, and even glorified in Japan. There are ample examples of the lovers who could not accomplish their love due to the social conditions and committed double suicide found in the folktales, classic dramas, songs and other stories. They do it because they believe they would go to a better place after they die where they could realize their love. It’s not a taboo to commit suicide in the traditional Japanese culture in contrast to the Judaeo-Christian faith, and it is this ancient belief in the Other World that has made suicide, especially the ones caused by tragic love, acceptable and romantic in society. Those who are left behind would console themselves with the thought that the dead two would be having a happy life together in the other world.

The second verse of the song above goes:

Shinumo ikirumo nee omae “Whether to die or to live, my dear one”
Kawano nagareni nanikawaro “What’s the difference in the flow of the river”
Oremo omaemo Tonegawano “So you and I, together on the Tone River”
Funeno sendoude kurasouyo “May make a living pulling an oar”

The two in the song seem to have changed their minds and decided not to die, because, obviously, the lives in this world and in the Other World do not make much difference from their viewpoint, but not because they believed in the Buddhist view of the afterlife which could not assure their being together after they die. Similarly, there are many examples in Japanese reflecting the more pristine and naïve animistic belief dating back probably to the Joumon Period (before BCE 1000) than the later Buddhist concepts of the transmigration of souls and nirvana.
Conclusion

This paper is an attempt to extract from such a popular media such as a movie and a song, as much information as possible on common Japanese culture regarding death and dying, which is closely related to religion. Firstly, the technique employed in the previous researches on the same theme, contrastive analysis of underlying metaphor, is applied in order to examine the metaphoric closeness of the Japanese and English scripts which influences the understanding of the movie. Movies reflect speech in a great variety of human activities and situations. Since the movie used here has the theme of “Departures”, sending off the dead people, it is natural that the underlying metaphor of a great part of the related expressions in both languages is that of JOURNEY. Though the underlying metaphor of the Japanese script and that of the English subtitle are not exactly the same, the English translation proved to be fairly faithful to the Japanese script even at the metaphoric level.

The causes of the categorical shift in the translation is in large part the impact of the etymology of Kanji (Chinese characters), as well as of the difference in the emphasis in accordance with the different views and customs among Japanese- and English-speaking peoples, and of the use of the Japanese passive voice which suggests receiving some injury/damage/suffering.

Secondly, focusing on two expressions which have no exact counterparts in the English subtitles and using a song as an additional material, an attempt was made to show that our present dialogues reflect the notion of the Other World not in the context of Buddhism, but in that of a pre-Buddhist belief.

Edward B. Tyler (1832-1917), sometimes called the father of anthropology, classified in his classic, *Primitive Culture* (London: John Murray & Co., 1871), the views of afterlife into three basic categories: otherworld or afterworld, resurrection, and transmigration. In the first one, the dead would go to the Other World where they live in the same way as in this world. According to Bronislaw K. Malinowski (1884-1942), a Polish-born anthropologist and pioneer of ethnographic fieldwork, Kiriwina people in Trobriand Islands believed that Tuma Island where the dead would go and live was just another island in their neighborhood. (*Baloma: the spirits of the dead in the Trobriand Islands*, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1916) The basic substratum in the Japanese concept of the Other World described so far is quite similar to this belief, and falls in this category. I believe every culture in the world had a similar concept of the Other World as its base layer before they were covered by such major religions as Christianity and Islam, the afterlife view of which is clearly the second one, “bodily renewal” as called by Tyler. The last category, transmigration, was divided by Tyler into transmigration and reincarnation. He considered the latter as a special case of the former, in which the dead transmigrates into a human being again, not into lower animals. This dualistic theory of body and soul is essential in Buddhist teaching.
Japanese do have a mixed heritage of Buddhism as well as reverence for the spiritual power of nature and ancestor worship, the mixture of the first and the third categories by Tyler. However, the afterlife view of the first category seems to be less recognized since modern Japanese tend to call themselves Buddhist, especially when they are abroad. Japanese people abroad, especially those who are in cultures with the strong influence of Christianity and Islam, tend to mistake this base layer heritage as Buddhist tradition. I hope the native and local beliefs and traditions, not only of Japan but also of any people or culture, under the veil of the major religions of the world such as Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, would be more acknowledged and appreciated in view of advancing the cause of understanding among all countries and peoples.

References

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14. Shift of Metaphoric Conceptualization Patterns in Translation in the Field of Death and Dying

Keiko Tanita

Introduction

The subject of this research is DEATH, 死 in Japanese. This paper is a part of the project on the underlying conceptual patterns in the vocabulary used in expressing the subject of death and dying in English and in Japanese. See Parts II and III of this volume. A presentation of this paper was made at International Cognitive Linguistics Conference in Krakow, Poland, which followed earlier work from the project on Death and Dying in the contemporary discourse of Japanese and English at the 2005 conference of ICLC at Seoul, Korea, and the 2006 conference of International Association of Intercultural Communication Studies at San Antonio, USA. The project, the comparative analysis of conceptualization patterns, aimed at establishing a well-balanced database in English and Japanese in relevant genres for the discourse on Death and Dying and categorizing the data into the underlying metaphorical patterns, in order to shed light upon how the linguistic and cultural perspectives of English- and Japanese-speaking peoples shape their respective values on and the understanding of the universal fact of death.

Purpose

In the overall research of finding distinctive cognitive patterns of English- and Japanese-speaking peoples on death and dying in general, this particular paper aims at (1) examining the possible shift of underlying conceptual patterns in translating between English and Japanese in the domain of Death and Dying and (2) at considering the impact of cultural differences in the choice of translating underlying conceptual patterns, assuming that in the translation process between an Indo-European language and a non-Indo-European language, some underlying conceptual patterns of death/dying-related expressions contained in the original texts shift in accordance with their respective cultural and religious paradigms. Meanwhile, in other cases, the original patterns are retained which present death and dying as a universal experience.

Analytical Method

George Lakoff, the pioneer of this field, states in his famous *Metaphors We Live By* (1980):
The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.

In order to get an idea of how metaphorical expressions in everyday language can give us insight into the metaphorical nature of the concepts that structure our daily activities, he considers the metaphorical concept TIME IS MONEY as it is reflected in contemporary English, stating such examples as:

You are wasting my time.
The flat tire cost me an hour.
I’ve invested a lot of time in her.
I don’t have enough time to spare for you.
How do you spend your time these days?
We are running out of time.
Is that worth your while?
Do you have much time left?
Thank you for your time.

All the expressions are related to money, supporting the common perception of English that time is a precious thing, or a limited resource with which one accomplishes a certain goal. Adversely, by analyzing the italicized expressions, the underlying metaphor which the users of a language share for the topic can be found.

In order to classify the death/dying-related expressions for that purpose, six general semantic categories with metaphoric conceptual patterns were set up based on Lakoff and Johnson (1980). However, our approach has been inductive and the patterns are not fixed a priori but have and may continue to change or be enlarged as data requires. Also, the contrastive nature of the analysis requires the modification to allow for the Japanese language. For previous work on the semantic categories see Parts II and III, especially Chart 1.

Data and their Sources

As data sources, I used two English books written by Elizabeth Kuebler-Ross (1926-2004) and one translation of one book and two translations of the other.
The first book is her autobiography, The Wheel of Life (1997) and its Japanese translation by Keichi Ueno in1998, titled Jinsei wa mawaru wanoyouni 『人生は廻る輪のように』. The second book is Questions & Answers on Death and Dying (1974) which is the collection of questions and answers on her technical writings and lectures. The latter has two translations which are Shinu shunkan no taiwa 『死ぬ瞬間の対話』 by Shoukichi Kawaguchi in 1975, a
year after the English publication, and “Shinu shunkan” wo meguru situgi "死ぬ瞬間"をめぐる質疑応答 by Shou Suzuki in 2005, thirty years after the first translation.

These books of hers were selected because she was famous as a medical doctor, psychiatrist, and thanatologist, whose works naturally contain a large amount of death & dying-related vocabulary and their Japanese translations are readily available. Especially, Questions & Answers on Death and Dying was chosen for its two translations by different translators over thirty years, which shows us whether the stylistics of two translators and the time gap have any impact on their choice of words and underlying metaphors.

These books were written for the general public, not for highly trained professionals, even though the register of Q & A is health and medicine, with professional people asking questions to the author. The translators, too, had the general public in mind when choosing the Japanese words and expressions, and used plain, moderate, conversational type of language with the expected politeness common in Japanese society when talking about death and dying, not detached, dispassionate, technical language which would be used for medical reports or case-studies. These translations can be considered to reflect the average and moderate discourse on death and dying where the subject of discourse (the dead) is neither very superior nor inferior to the speaker, but treated with due respect.

English data consist of the expressions with such keywords as “death”, “to die”, “dead”, “dying” and other related- and/or euphemistic expressions found in two English books, while Japanese data are the translation of English expressions as above, taken from the three translated books

All the data are the keywords with their respective contexts. Contexts vary in accordance with the syntactic roles of keywords. If a keyword is a noun, such as “death”, and serves as subject or object, its predicate verb is an important context, and if it’s used after a preposition, its preposition and in many cases the larger syntactic context becomes important in order to examine its metaphorical category. Similarly, if a keyword is a modifier, like “dying”, the modified has to be considered and if it’s a verb, such as “to die”, adverb and other complement clauses become an important context.

Data Calculation

Keywords in different contexts and their translations are counted but not their frequency. This means that an English expression consisting of a keyword and its context and its translation are always considered as a pair. Therefore, one English expression with four different translations is counted as four pairs of expressions (data). For example, if the expression “death is coming” has four different translations such as 1. si ga tikazuku 死に近づく (to come close to death), 2. si ni tikazuku 死が近づく (death approaches), 3. si ga
Counted as such, The Wheel of Life has 241 pairs of expressions extracted, the breakdown of which is shown in Graph 1, with keywords “dead” 5%, “death” 29%, “death and dying combined” 2%, “to die” 10%, “dying” 13%, “life” 10%, “life & death combined” 2%, “live” 2%, and other keywords 27%.

Similarly, 266 pairs of expressions are found in Q&A translated by Kawaguchi, the first translation, the breakdown of which are keywords “dead” 1%, “death” 38%, “death and dying combined” 0%, “to die” 9%, “dying” 17%, “life” 8%, “life & death combined” 1%, “live” 2%, and other keywords 24% as shown in Graph 2.

While in Q&A translated by Suzuki, the newer translation, 313 pairs of expressions are found, the breakdown of which are “dead” 2%, “death” 35%, “death and dying combined” 2%, “to die” 14%, “dying” 21%, “life” 4%, “life & death combined” 0%, “live” 1%, and other keywords 21% as shown in Graph 3.

The different number of expression pairs is the reflection of the translators’ choice of words. Many more varieties for the same English word are used in the Suzuki translation, reflecting his style. For example, the expression “dying patient/child/person, etc.” (ACTION/EVENT, one of the semantic categories for conceptual pattern analysis to be discussed in detail later) is translated in fourteen different ways by Kawaguchi, and in seventeen ways by Suzuki. Though not indicated here, we also noticed his choice of expressions is less formal, more explicatory and narrative in style than the Kawaguchi translation, which, we assume, reflect not only his style but also the thirty years lapse of time.

In the Kawaguchi translation, forty-four pairs with the expression “to die” (ACTION/EVENT), one of the most descriptive expressions, are found, out of which thirty-six are translated straight forward as sinu 死ぬ (die) (ACTION/EVENT) with four different euphemistic expressions (belonging to CONTAINER, ENTITY and STATUS semantic categories) for the remaining five, while the Suzuki translation contains thirty-eight pairs, out of which only thirteen are translated sinu 死ぬ (die) with four other varieties (CONTAINER, ENTITY, JOURNEY and STATUS).

Even though the source text is the same, there is a great difference between the two translations of Q&A on Death and Dying, reflecting the translators’ style and the 30-year time difference. Therefore, they can be considered as two separate books.

In both English sources the ratio of “death”, “to die”, “dying”, and “dead” accounts for about 73~79% of all keywords, meaning that both in autobiography and technical writing, the direct expressions are preferred more than euphemistic expressions. This shows that the author,
Taking the above into consideration, her two works and their three translations can be regarded as three independent sources to be combined in the following conceptual pattern analysis, which makes 820 the total number of expression pairs to be analyzed.

General Semantic Categories for Conceptual Pattern Analysis

Six general semantic categories based on Lakoffian studies were developed along the lines with our previous research. See Chart 1 in Parts II and III in this volume. They are the framework for metaphoric conceptual patterns, and are given here with some examples of each category.

ACTION/EVENT (A) with representative keywords die, dead, dying: They are mostly descriptive expressions without metaphor. In this category, “death” is regarded as mere fact with some emphasis on time, place, process and its result. The Japanese expressions in this category are *sinu* 死ぬ (die), *sinda* 死んだ (dead), *sinisouna* 死にそうな (dying), and so on.

CONTAINER (C) with such examples of the expression as a life blown off, find the meaning in death: In the former, death is a phenomenon with life going out of a container and in the latter, death itself is a container. The Japanese expressions are *inoti wa satteiku* 命は去っていく (one’s life is going out), *iki wo hikitoru* 息を引き取る (to take out one’s breath) (former), *si ni imi wo miiidasu* 死に意味を見出す (to find the meaning in death) (latter), etc.

ENTITY (E) with the examples, death is not a stranger, have a good death, face their death, coming death: This category has a large number of expressions. It consists of death as person, death as moving or fearful or heavy entity, and death as losing/destroying an entity. The examples of the Japanese expressions are *si wo matu* 死を待つ (to wait for death) (MOVING), *si wo osorete* 死を恐れて (afraid of death) (FEARFUL), *inoti wo ubau* 命を奪う (to rob life) (LOSING AN ENTITY), and *kotokireru* こときれる (one’s life is cut) (DESTROYING AN ENTITY)

JOURNEY (J) with a large number of examples such as pass away, someone is gone, till the end, gone off to better place, the journey embarked on: This category consists of death as departure with no return, death as the end of the journey of life, death as going to another place with certain destination in mind, and dying itself as journey. There are also a plenty of examples in Japanese such as *syuppatu* 出発 (departure), *wakare* 別れ (parting) (DEPARTURE), *imawa no kiwa* いまわの際 (on the edge of one’s time) (END), *atira gawa* あちら側 (other side) (ANOTHER PLACE), AND *nagai tabi no mae no kyuuyou* 長い旅の前の休養 (rest before a long trip) (DEATH AS JOURNEY).

STATUS (S) with the examples, dropped, relieve this suffering, be at peace, ask to sleep, become butterflies: Included in this category, along with the typical Lakoffian medical doctor and psychiatrist, preferred descriptive, rational type of discourse even in talking about her personal life and experiences.
metaphoric pattern of LIFE IS UP AND DEATH IS DOWN, are death as lack of sensibility, disappearance, rest, transformation and darkness. In this context, death can be understood as separation/loss from Survivor’s Perspective (SS). The Japanese examples, which are of a little variety, are *heiwa no nakani* (in peace) (LACK OF SENSIBILITY/REST), and *nakusu* (to have someone disappear or become invisible) (DISAPPEARANCE), *sousitu* (loss) (SEPARATION/LOSS).

TIME (T) with the example, days are counted: This is a rather small category sometimes with the cyclical concept of time such as day or year. Since it is by nature a poetic expression, very few expressions have been found so far in this research, the sources of which are descriptive in style. The Japanese example is *jinsei no bansyuu* (late autumn of one’s life).

Here are some examples of the categorical shift in the translations. “until they die”, a straightforward expression belonging to A-1: Dying is an action/event in a point in time or at place, is translated as *si ga atozureru made* (death comes) (until death comes). Here, death is an entity that comes to one. So it belongs to E-2-a: DEATH IS A MOVING ENTITY. “lost their child” belonging to SS-3: DEATH IS SEPARATION/LOSS form survivor’s perspective is translated as *kodomo no si ni deatta* (to meet the death of one’s child). So it belongs to E-2: DEATH IS AN ENTITY, but its attributes such as fearful, moving, heavy are not described.

Meanwhile, here are examples of the translation without categorical shift. “impending death” belonging to E-2-a is translated as *semarikuru si* (death that is coming near) which also belong to E-2-a. There’s no shift in conceptual patterns in this case, as in both cases, death comes to one. Similarly, there is no change in the category in the case of “her departure” translated as *sonoko no syuppatu* (departure of the child), which are both J-1.

The quantitative result of the analysis of the translation is shown below in Section 7 with more examples.

Results of Conceptual Pattern Analysis

1. Number of Expressions and their Conceptual Categories

As can be seen in Graph 4, ACTION/EVENT shows the largest number both in English (451) and in Japanese (316), reflecting mainly the author’s choice of words. The second largest is ENTITY, the third JOURNEY, the fourth STATUS, with CONTAINER and TIME being negligibly small. The total number of expressions is 820 both in English and Japanese (total of 3 translations) since they are extracted as pairs. So the difference between numbers presented by the right bar (Japanese) and the left bar (English) in each category corresponds to the categorical shift.
2. Shift of Categories from English to Japanese

Among the 820 expression pairs, 553 pairs, more than two thirds, remain in the same category, with only 268 pairs (32.7%) showing category shifts. However, it’s noteworthy that out of 268 shifts, 170 (63.4%) are from ACTION/EVENT to more figurative categories, namely ENTITY, JOURNEY and STATUS, meanwhile the reverse shift from figurative categories to ACTION/EVENT is very small (43, 16%), as shown in Graph 5.

3. Examples of Shift

The largest shift occurs from ACTION/EVENT to ENTITY which accounts for 38.1% of all shifts. Here is a typical example. “dying patient” is translated as si no sematta kanja 死の迫った患者 which means “patient to whom death is approaching”. Therefore, E-2-a:

DEATH IS A MOVING ENTITY. This expression can be translated literally and matter-of-factly as sinisouna kanja 死にそうな患者 (dying patient). However, the translators consciously avoid this translation as being crude and cold, since these books are not technical writings for the medical professionals, but meant to be read by the general public. Whether the speaker is of higher or lower ranking than the subject of discourse, the dead or the dying in this case, is a decisive factor in Japanese vocabulary choice, and the translators of these books mostly use the expressions to reflect the author’s respect for the dead and dying people seen in all her books.

One of the forty-six examples of the shift from ACTION/EVENT to JOURNEY is “been expected to die” translated as si no tenki wo toru to kangaerarete 死の転帰をとると考えられて (to be expected to reach the turning point by death) where the sick person is expected to reach the end of sickness. Thus, it belongs to J-2: DEATH IS THE END OF THE JOURNEY.

The shift from ACTION/EVENT to STATUS is found in twenty-two pairs of expression. “those who died” is translated as nakunatta hitotati 亡くなった人たち which means “people who disappeared from the visible field”, therefore, S-3: DEATH IS DISAPPEARANCE. This also can be translated literally, as sinda hitobito 死んだ人々 (dead people), but it is avoided for the same reason as in Example 1. This is a very conventionalized way of expressing death and dying, reflecting Japanese general discourse, in which there is a tendency to talk of dead people in an especially deferential manner. The use of the kanji 亡(bou, nakunaru) instead of 死(si) contributes greatly to the large percentage (sixteen out of twenty-one) of S-3 pattern in the STATUS category.

Among the eighteen pairs found to shift from ENTITY to ACTION/EVENT, “impending death” translated as mousugu sinu もうすぐ死ぬ (to die soon) is one example. Meanwhile, “wanted to let go” translated as sinitagatte 死にたがって (wanted to die) is a good example among sixteen pairs shifted from JOURNEY to ACTION/EVENT. They demonstrate the rare cases of the shift from the figurative expressions to the descriptive ones.
The shift from JOURNEY to ENTITY is seen in sixteen pairs while only nine shifts are found from ENTITY to JOURNEY. “he nears his death”, which belongs to the conceptual pattern J-2: DEATH IS THE END OF THE JOURNEY, is translated as si ga tikazuku 死が近づく which means “death nears to him” and is categorized as E-2-a. Though the number is small, they are very interesting examples, because this expression can be easily reversed from ENTITY to JOURNEY, depending on the author’s and the translators’ choice of words. In other words, whether the dying person is moving toward death or death is moving toward the dying depends on the users’ intuition. The interesting fact concerning the pattern of E-2-a is that there are fifty-seven Japanese expressions in this pattern, while only twenty-three English expressions are found in the same. Though the figure may not be statistically significant, it suggests the Japanese subconscious perception that death is beyond human control in spite of adopting at the conscious level the western values of fighting against it, especially in the field of medicine.

Among the examples of the shift classified as Others in Graph 5, “loss of a member of our family” translated as kazoku ga totu zen sinda 家族が突然死んだ (a family member suddenly died) shows the shift from STATUS (SS-3: DEATH IS SEPARATION/LOSS from Survivor’s Perspective) to ACTION/EVENT, and “let herself pass over” translated as iki wo hikitoreru you 息を引きとれるよう (so that she can take her breath out) is also one of very rare shift from JOURNEY (J-1: DEATH IS DEPARTURE) to CONTAINER (C-2-e: DEATH IS LOSS OF CONTENTS/BREATH), which is actually the only example.

Summary of Analysis

1. The expressions in ACTION/EVENT account for 55% (451) in English, while they account for only 39% (321) in Japanese. 22.6% (102) of English ACTION/EVENT shifts to ENTITY, and a large part of it (41.1%, 42) is attributed to “dying” as seen in Example 1. Its direct translation, sini kakete 死にかけて, sini kakatte 死にかかって, and sini souna 死にそうな are avoided as crude and impolite for the dying. Instead, death is considered as an object to which we become close to or as the end of the journey of life.

2. The shift from ACTION/EVENT to JOURNEY accounts for 10% (46) of ACTION/EVENT. For the same reason as above, “to die” shifts to its euphemistic and conventional expression nakunaru 亡くなる (to disappear from the visible field) as seen in Example 2, which is classified in the STATUS group.

3. As seen in the examples, the shift from ENTITY to JOURNEY and vice versa occur depending on whether death comes to one or one goes to death, which depends, in turn, on the author’s and/or the translators cultural intuition and the Japanese intuition tends to be the former.

4. 76% (114) of the English expression categorized in JOURNEY (150) remains in the same category in Japanese translation and the ratio of shift to other categories (24%) is relatively low as compared to 32.6% shift in general. It is because “death or life as journey” suits the Japanese discourse preferences very well, which has abundant expressions with the analogy of death as journey.
Preliminary Conclusion

The fact that over the two thirds (67.4%) of the English expressions remain in the same category in Japanese translation suggests the universality of the conceptual patterns of death and dying which is universal itself. However, there is a tendency to shift from descriptive expressions to more euphemistic expressions, shown in the ratio of the shift from ACTION/EVENT to more figurative categories (66.3%, 177) in all the shifts (267). This demonstrates numerically the tendency of Japanese language usage which we sense intuitively in our daily life, reflecting the difference in cultural values between the speakers of two languages as follows: (1) the Japanese general preference for euphemism; (2) the strong Japanese consciousness of relative ranking between the speaker and the subject; (3) the strong taboo of talking about death, which is considered to be inauspicious and a bad omen in Japanese society, especially by the older generation.

Note: The romanization of the Japanese scripts in this paper follows the officially sanctioned system of the Japanese Ministry of Education, except for titles and names published in the Hepburn system.

Graph 1: No. of Keywords in The Wheel of Life (241 pairs in total)
Graph 2: No. of Keywords in Q&A by Kawaguchi (266 pairs in total)

to die, 25, 10%
dead, 12, 5%
death & dying, 5, 2%
death, 68, 29%
dying, 31, 13%
life, 25, 10%
to live, 5, 2%
others, 64, 27%
life & death, 6, 2%
Graph 3: No. of Keywords in Q&A by Suzuki (313 pairs in total)

- life, 12, 4%
- life & death, 1, 0%
- to live, 4, 1%
- death & dying, 5, 2%
- to die, 43, 14%
- dead, 7, 2%
- death, 109, 35%
- dying, 67, 21%
- others, 65, 21%
- death & dying, 4, 1%
Graph 4: Number of Expression Pairs and their Conceptual Categories (820 in total)
Graph 5: Shift of Categories from English to Japanese (268 in total)

Note:
A   ACTION/EVENT
E   ENTITY
J   JOURNEY
S   STATUS

References

15. The End may be Near but so is the Beginning: An Ecological Reading of the Proxemics of Death in the Fictions of Pira Canning Sudham

Stephen Conlon

Textual Overview

This essay offers a reading of Pira Canning Sudham’s *Shadowed Country* (2004). All direct quotations from Sudham’s work are referenced in parentheses only by a page number from this novel. The text of this novel absorbs other, previously published, fictions and non-fictions written by Sudham. As the reader of this essay may not be familiar with the prior versions or lives of these texts, it is necessary to provide here a brief contextual overview of them. The body of *Shadowed Country* includes two major sections. The first is titled *Monsoon Country* and the second is *The Force of Karma*. The text of *Monsoon Country* was first published in 1993 and later reformed and re-published in 2002 before being again reformed and reborn in *Shadowed Country*. The second major section is a reformation of *The Force of Karma* (2002).

The argument offered in this essay is that a critical awareness of these texts in their prior incarnations may help the reader understand that Sudham’s Buddhist and literary approach to the theme of death in *Shadowed Country* is embodied as a textual metaphor in the way he creates new fictions out of the bodies of his already published works. While many non-fiction writers may change their texts as second or third editions, this willingness to transform his fictions is a distinguishing characteristic of Sudham the factionalist who incorporates in a seemingly incorporeal form his fictions and non-fictions in subsequent writings in a re-creative way that makes sense once his Buddhist approaches to death are understood. The mutability of his texts is apropos to his work in the context of his concerns with how things may (or may not) change in the material world of Thailand and in that world as it is metamorphosed in his work. For a Buddhist, the birth and death of texts is conceivable. So is the idea that as a text is incorporated into another text, both texts change in a way that suggest the unfolding of a lotus: as texts are reborn, new information that was previously buried in either the texts’ prior lives or the writer’s experience is brought to the reborn textual surface. To mark this rebirth, the author has also expanded or metamorphosed his name, adding “Canning” to it for *Shadowed Country*, suggesting the rebirth of the author as much as of the work.

Introduction

To a Western reader, Pira Canning Sudham’s novel *Shadowed Country* may seem to represent death in a culturally alien way. Sudham’s approach to the experience of death, unsentimental and detached as it is, does not offer the reader the opportunity to share through empathy or sympathy the central character of the novel, Prem Surin’s death experiences. The distance between Prem and those who die seems emotionally neutral if not cold. There is no
The novelist often only registers the fact that a person has died; and this usually is conveyed to the reader after the fact in terms of the narrative time. The deaths witnessed by Prem, of those who have shaped his experience and been close to him, do not lead him to any Hamlet, Lear, Othello or Cleopatra moments, there are no Anthony-like orations or reflections on the glory of the dead. Such impassioned moments of eulogy, while in place or appropriate in a Christian Western tragic experience of death, are foreign to the Thai experience where funerals are silently experienced except for the chanting of Pali Buddhist scriptures by the monks. Death in the West seems to be a time to turn back to the life of those who have died; but for the Thai, the moment of death is understood as a time for the dead to move on into the between, the time-space through which the dead move towards their next life.

Sudham is conscious of this difference and how it will shape his intended Western readers as he writes his novel in English. He opens Shadowed Country with a prologue in which the thoughts of the dying Marquess of Wealdon are couched in terms of what a Western reader would be familiar with when thinking of the death of a major character in a novel. Wealdon is on his death bed, lying “fretfully” enervated by “voices and images of things past” in an echo of Shakespeare’s Sonnet (XXX) as much as of the Scott Moncrief translation of Marcel’s Proust’s novel of memory and time as The Remembrance of Things Past. Wealdon’s dying moments are filled with a clinging regret for the loss of his children and the sentiments he feels when he recalls times with them which failed to deliver the happiness he hoped for. He addresses his dead son in the second person, as he echoes Lear’s “nothing comes of nothing” response to his daughter Cordelia:

Gerald, I planted those rhododendrons and azaleas for you and yours to enjoy and to walk on a carpet of bluebells. Alas… It came to nothing. Nothing at all. (24)

He is filled with anger and attachment when he remembers the death of his children in India where he worked in the Raj:

But now I wouldn’t even go near the damned trees he planted to remind us of that God-forsaken country. It’s bad enough for me just to think of Anne and you both buried there. They gave me some dubious reasons as to why they would not let me bring you back…Health? Political? (24)

This dramatic monologue addressed to the dead goes on until he dies, alone and in pain:

At this point, the unattended cardiac patient gaped, gasped and convulsed, making a vain attempt to breathe. A moment later, the long-suffering Marquess passed out of our troublesome world. (26)
In this, the only passage in the novel where death is described in terms of the dying person’s immediate physical experience, Sudham offers this image of dying as an entrée to his novel; it activates the schemata of the Western reader of the novel written in English with a number of familiar cultural elements related to death which stress the English or Western frame of reference in which Wealdon lives and dies. Much of the bitterness and clinging exhibited by Wealdon explains his bad karmic forces that will lead to his birth again as a lowly Isarn peasant. Isarn, also written as Esarn, is the poor northeastern part of Thailand. The sentiments and sensibilities enervate Wealdon’s death. But the expectations evoked by such a representation are deliberately disappointed by Sudham in his narrative of the life of Prem Surin, the reincarnation of the Marquess of Wealdon who grows up as a peasant in Isarn, the poorest part of Thailand, and inherits part of Wealdon’s estate as he works off the karma Wealdon had brought onto himself in his colonial service when he massacred hundreds of Indians.

Through the frame of the prologue, Sudham establishes how far apart Wealdon and Prem are: the world of an English aristocrat in the nineteenth century and the world of an Isarn peasant in the twentieth century are related through the experience of reincarnation. The connection is not dwelt on by Sudham; it is meant to be understood by the reader who is aware of the Buddhist frame-of-reference in the novel. And this experience is meant to be understood and felt by the reader as a natural thing; not as a magical device that makes the narrative exotic or spectacularly post-modern in the way Salmon Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981) works through the co-incidence of many Indian children being born at precisely the same moment when India and Pakistan separated from the English empire at midnight. At a deeper level of cultural significance, the two novelists’ visions are even more alien to each other. While Rusdie’s Western novel of India represents the birth of a new land free from its colonial past, Sudham’s work looks at a land dying under the forces of a corrupt oppression which is turning the world of the novel into a wasteland. Rushdie’s world is that of fertility myth; Sudham’s is more that of the quest undertaken by a hero which will eventually lead to a just reuniting of things that were falling apart in colonial India.

The novels of Rushdie and Sudham seem worlds apart; Rushdie’s myth revolves around the magical element of time while Sudham’s is grounded in the typical cultural space of the Thais. The linearity of Rushdie’s novel seems alien to the polychronic sense of time and space in Sudham’s vision. The bringing together of Muslim and Hindu characters and experience in Rushdie is not matched in Sudham’s novel where the world of the novel is more a blend of animism and Buddhism. These differences seem to stem from the different perspectives of the two novelists.

Rushdie sees things as an English writer while Sudham writes as a Thai. For all the strangeness of Rushdie’s magic realist narrative, his work is culturally closer to the experience of a Western reader than is Sudham’s. A reader can enter or access the more post-modern logic of *Midnight’s Children* without a deep understanding of Islam or Hinduism but a reader cannot enter the narrative space of *Shadowed Country*, its plotting and characterization, without a deep feel or sense for the way things are in Thailand. While Rushdie relies on a first person narration to bring the reader into the mind of his characters who telepathically read each other’s
minds, Sudham’s third person narration, even with its strong autobiographical presences, allows Sudham to establish a distance between the reader, the writer and the written text.

The foregrounding of the English setting and its Anglo-Saxon attitudes in the Prologue to Shadowed Country suggests that Sudham is aware of the distance of his reader from what will follow in the novel in terms of how Prem will experience his life and the deaths of those around him. The expectations of the Western reader are evoked, only to be challenged by the experience of reading the novel.

The representation of death in Shadowed Country is organically related to Sudham’s methods of composition and to the roles he sees for himself as much as for his hero Prem as a shaman, a teacher, an artist and a reincarnated person. The transitions between these various lives are major organizing forces in the novel’s narrative voice.

To understand the ways Sudham works, the reader needs to have more of a personal sense of the experience of life in Thailand than the reader needs of India to enter, for example, Rushdie’s world. Much of this difference stems from the reader’s degree of familiarity with many of the schemata the two novelists draw on in their work. An English reader of some breadth would know of the ways of Indians but not so much of the Thais. The distance between the reader and the text is not an accidental fault of the novel; it is one of the novel’s leitmotifs. To understand this proxemics of the novel, its representation of distance, it is necessary to place the novel in its own cultural and historical contexts that go far beyond the stereotype of Thailand as the Land of Smiles; there is much more to Thailand and to Thai attitudes than meets the casual eye of an accidental tourist or reader of Western pulp novels set in Thailand or Asia for that matter. Without a knowledge of, or at least a familiarity with these schemata, a reader may often feel alienated from the responses of the characters in the novel who, because of their differences to the ways a Western reader would interpret the Thai world, may seem distant, artificial or cold; even unrealistic, because of the characters’ lack of psychological attachment to the world they live in. The closeness we have been accustomed to feeling with the text of a novel in the West is not the same as the relationship between a Thai reader or writer in English. How a Thai understands the patterns of life and death are nothing like the patterns or ways of understanding a Western reader has experienced.

After describing Thai experience, this essay will look at the ways death structures the writing of Sudham, not in Western terms of finality and permanence, but in Thai terms of flux and impermanence. A Western need for closure and for a strong sense of a fixed terminus or ending is challenged in Shadowed Country by Sudham’s alien, un-Western approach to living and writing. If the reader can overcome his or her prejudices and experience the novel in a different way, the reader may learn much about the art of dying as a way off the wheel of suffering, attachment and the need for permanence in one’s life which we in the West seem to understand in terms of our notion of Self or Ego. Once such an experience of reading can be attained, the reader may find that Sudham’s claim to significance is that his work offers a spiritual path of liberation from the oppressive presence of death’s shadow and from the
commensurately oppressive demythologizing ways we have read fiction in the West as an unreal and distant thing that bears no immediate relation to the life we live in the real world.

**Cultural Space and the Place of Death in the Thai Mind**

Thai everyday experience is much more shaped by forces that have been downplayed in the West since the time of the Enlightenment with the power of the logos over the mythos. The world, as observed by Mulder (1989), is split between different forces of power: the often chaotic powers of the spirit world (umnart) and the moral force of the mother, the teacher and others (khuna). This division of the world is as much Buddhist as it is animist.

The sing saksit (supernatural ceremonial) powers of the spirit world are amoral, contradictory and chaotic. They are to be ameliorated or influenced by right ceremony, offerings. These powers have no logical rules or reasons for influencing things in one’s life. They are whimsical. The person who deals with such power is distant to it; there is no personal relationship between the power and the person. One’s world is divided into local, district and wider powers, each with its own zone of proximal distance from the person. This power is not to be confused with itiphon, the dark power of gangsters and criminals, though the danger of offending a person who is itiphon is similar to the danger of offending animistic power. Both can bring about death. The major difference is that the umnart power is always mollified with the right ceremonial initiative of the person who wants to placate that power.

The power of the local spirits, the praphuum, is limited by the distance of their power reach. Once one moves away from their place of power, their power diminishes. One then moves into the zone of another power. These zones also shape one’s life spaces. The ultimate threat of chaos is death, where one goes through the various cycles of hell (narok). To ensure one’s safety in this chaos, one follows certain death rituals (phithii anamongkhun). These powers are not of the dead; they are supernatural spirits that exist beyond the natural world.

The animistic world view divides social space into the inside and the outside; one is inside or outside the power zone of the spirit. In social terms, this division informs the way a Thai speaks of two types of friends: eating friends and dying friends (pern gin har ngai and pern die har yak). Dying friends are one’s inner family while one’s eating friends are in the public sphere outside one’s intimate personal space.

The outside world is the world of power, flux and instability while the inside world is the moral (khuna) world of the mother and the teacher who care for one. In Thai culture, the teacher (crue, the Pali form of “guru”) often has more moral authority than a parent. The teacher has no need of saksit power, as his or her moral force protects the teacher from any animistic influences.

While power is supernatural, moral force is natural. Khuna is the moral obligation one has to one’s teacher or parent. There can be no sin (bap) in disobeying supernatural power, but
sin is the ingratitude one may display towards one’s teacher or mother, one’s inner circle.
Khuna is the devotion given by a teacher or a student to a child. It too is ritualistic. The mother gives love while the teacher gives knowledge. Both enable the child to lead a moral life that will have karmic benefits. The mother and teacher are to sacrifice themselves, their happiness and well-being for the good of those in their care. By doing this, there is a bond of moral debt between the child and the mother or teacher. This bond is the source of the order of one’s life which is balanced by the chaotic flux of life outside the inner circle.

The purest form of order for a Thai is Buddhism. This order is beyond the order of human relationships marked by passion and prejudice (kilesa or defilement). Buddhism is the way to truth; it is the highest form of goodness (khun) understood as wisdom, virtue and compassion. This goodness is the source of liberation. By making merit (thumboon), one accumulates power as merit to protect oneself against the saksit powers of umnart.

The contradictions and conflicts between the inside and outside worlds, between umnart and khuna, are not resolvable. This view leads to a belief in the chaotic world around one which seems to blend with the Buddhist notion of flux or impermanence (annicata). In a world of flux, when one clings to things to seek ownership or permanence, one is asserting that one has a self or ego (atta). In such a state of illusion or maya, one clings (upadana) to things, including the belief in one’s ego which leads one to believe in the possession of things that are actually defilements (santiyojana) that lead to selfishness mamankara (possessiveness) which is moha (delusion).

The person who is clinging to things for the sake of permanence is in a state of dukka (suffering) that can only be broken when he or she realizes the annata (not-self). Without annata, one is in a state of ignorance (avijja) and selfishness; one cannot accept the sunnata or voidness of all things including the concept of a self. When one is in a mindful state (samadhi) of sunnata, one realizes a state of coolness or nirodha. The Thais value a cool heart (jai yen) and not the hot heart or jai ron which causes one to lose face by being attached to the way things happen which produces only dukkha or suffering. Only in a cool mind may one reach nirvana (nibbana in Pali) and so be free of dependence on birth, decay and death (jaramaraya). Samsara or the transmigration of the soul or spirit occurs throughout one’s life. Each day, the self dies and is born by another form of the self. In this way, the self is understood as impermanent. The karma of yesterday produces the results one experiences today. The wheel of life and death occurs in one’s life spans, not only in the death of the body as such. Death-in-life is a closer analogy for samsara than reincarnation as understood in the West as rebirth. Samsara is a state of flux, not permanence and is ego-free, selfless. This value is linked to the bunkhun (moral goodness) of the mother and the teacher who in sacrificing themselves create khuna or morality.

Sorrow, despair, pain and suffering exist because one is still under the delusion that one’s self is a permanent thing that actually can remain the same throughout one’s life. In
Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree (1962), Buddhadasa Bhikkhu explains the problem created by a desire for birth or death:

If we really understand Dharma we’ll shake our heads; we’ll want neither birth nor death. However, ordinary people don’t want to die. They only want to be born. They want birth without death, and what’s more, they want eternal life. Or, if they must die, they want to be reborn. This indeed is grasping and clinging. In short, the person born suffers one way and the person dying suffers another way. Only when there is neither birth nor death, when there is sunnata, will there be an end to dukkha. (1962: 118-119)

To be free from birth and non-birth is to be void, without a self or ego. He points out that at the moment of death, the mind should be free of desire or clinging:

When the time of death has truly come, let this feeling [coolness] be present. You should remember that when close to death the mind will gradually slip away. As the body runs down near its end, awareness will gradually disappear. You will forget more and more until you forget everything. You won’t know what time it is, whether it’s day or night; you won’t be able to tell where you are or whose house you are in; you won’t even be able to remember your name. But the awareness that nothing is worth having can stay on as the mind’s companion to the very end. Volunteer for the remainderless quenching! … With this skilful means, the mind will be able to dissolve itself into the sunnata which is nibbana. (1962: 124-125)

This quenching of desire comes with a correct understanding of the void there is in place of the illusion of a self. Vipassana is the clear insight into the true nature of things, the what’s what of life and death. Without this insight, one will be in the wilderness of vattasamsara which are the endless cycles of wandering, birth and death. When one has jati or ego-birth, one is exposed to the accompanying delusion of death; there is a self that is prone to die and this self clings to life or death. In such a mind, one lacks the insight to accept the voidness of one’s self.

The worlds of umnart and khuna are not understood as in opposition; they are blended in the Thai world view as complimentary contradictions. While Buddhism deals with the world inside oneself, the saksit rituals deal with the world outside. The division of the world is between the inside and the outside. Order is not the victory of the Buddhist inside over the chaotic outside; it is not a question of Buddhist science or philosophy prevailing over an animistic prior world. The contradictions that exist are part of the world; not to be resolved logically but to be kept in balance. Death, the ultimate force that threatens or embodies chaos, is not a thing but a transitional space or distance, a process which is interpersonal, not ideational. Like power, death has no “cause” as it is a saksit force. There is no moral aspect to death. Such power cannot be controlled or explained away (demythologized).
In *Keys to Natural Truth* (1988), Buddhadasa Bhikkhu considers the types of language we need to understand the world and *dhamma*:

Everyday language is based on physical things, and on experience accessible to the ordinary person. Being based on the physical rather than the spiritual, it serves only for discussion of physical, worldly matters and situations. It serves only for the tangible things perceived under ordinary everyday circumstances. By contrast, Dhamma language has to do with the mental world, with the intangible, non-physical world. (1988: 16)

While Bhikkhu does not explicitly say that the physical world is the world of *saksit* and that the Dharma language is for the *khuna*, the Thai view of the physical world as *saksit*, which is echoed in the Buddhist view of the world of *dukkha*, parallels this contradiction.

There is a bilingualism in the approach used by Bhikkhu which stems from the Pali language used by Thai Buddhism and the Thai language rooted in an older Tai language used in the everyday world. But it would be wrong to see the two languages as totally separate from each other. What makes the Thai language of death so rich is the roots of many Thai everyday words in the Pali Buddhist texts, the *Tripitaka*. By speaking everyday Thai, one is often unconsciously using words with a Tai husk and a Pali kernel. In other words, the Thai language is a blend of the everyday and the spiritual, the animistic and the Buddhist.

It would be too hasty a demythologization to separate the two by suggesting that the *saksit*, animistic meanings are the mythical while the Buddhist meanings are the logical and that the task is to decide which meaning is to be used. Such a monochronic solution is un-Thai. There is no either-or choice here, but rather a “both”. If this is the case, then we must avoid seeing the issue of the language of death, our specific focus here, in terms of monochronic structural stages between superstition and science, primitive logic/science and modern science, as Levi-Strauss (1962: 16-22) sees the relationship between myth and reason. In the Thai world, the contradictions exist and are unresolvable. Both worlds exist together, side by side, polysynchronously.

For Bhikkhu, we should be speaking both languages by referring to a sutra from the *Summyatta nikaya*:

It is essential always to interpret the Buddha’s teaching in terms of Dhamma language as well as in terms of everyday language. Both meanings must be considered. Please take careful note of the following passages:

*Appamatto ubho atthe adhiganhati pandito*

*Ditthi dhamma ca yo attho, yo ca 'itho samparayuko*

*Atthabisamayadhiro pandito ti pavuccati*
The wise and heedful person is familiar with both modes of speaking; the meaning seen by ordinary people and the meaning which they can’t understand. One who is fluent in the various modes of speaking is a wise person. (1988: 17)

Bhikkhu stresses the importance of not choosing one meaning at the expense of the other: “A discerning person must consider both meanings or modes of speaking and not just one of them alone.” (1988: 17)

In a sense, this double meaning, or double voice, is a form of yoga, understood as yoking things together. In this sense, there is a metaphorical organization of meaning. This is a specifically Buddhist approach to language, semantics, voice and poetics. When we place this linguistics in the context of the Thai world view discussed above, it may be suggested that the Thai view of the two contradictory worlds of saksit and khuna are built into the Thai language. In colloquial Thai, death (die) is a physical thing, but in Buddhism death is dukkha which comes from being trapped in the false binary opposition of ordinary semantic sense when we recognize good and evil:

When there is no knowledge of good and evil, we can’t attach to them, we’re void and free of dukkha. Once we know about good and evil, we attach to them and must suffer dukkha. The fruit of that tree is this attachment to good and evil. This causes dukkha and dukkha is death, spiritual death. (1962: 101)

The Pali voice in Thai language is heard along side the voice of the everyday words. They are inside each other. As a result, there remains a mythic presence, an ambiguity of voices which embodies this dialectical contradiction.

Without going into the implications this dialectic has for teaching English in Thailand in detail (see Conlon 2009 for a discussion of this issue) the Thai approach to language is pertinent to the study of the work of Sudham as he writes his novels in a foreign language, English. The point in this essay is to stress that if one is to understand the approach to death embodied in Sudham’s language, one needs to reconsider many of the ideas we in the West associate with mythoi and logoi in order not to impose Western post-Enlightenment divisions which demand a choice between the two languages of saksit and khunna, or between Pali and Thai or Thai and English. In Sudham’s writings, there is the double voice of Lao and Thai which is related to the identification of the relationship between Prem the Esarn child and the country of Thailand under the shadow of which the land of Esarn is exploited. These issues are related to another theme in Sudham’s work: exile. Sudham’s hero Prem experiences the animistic world of Isarn and the Buddhist world of the wat (temple) in which he is schooled in Bangkok. He does not choose one over the other.

Instead of René Gerard’s (1988) demythologization of death as a sacrifice ritual which works to protect the victim, and instead of Levi-Strauss’ view of death myths as taboos that
classify the physical world, a more sympathetic approach to the ways a Thai may see the rituals of death is Ernst Cassirer’s:

The original bond between the linguistic and the mythico-religious consciousness is primarily expressed in the fact that all verbal structures appear as also mythical entities, endowed with certain powers, that the Word, in fact, becomes a sort of primary force, in which all being and doing originate. *(Language and Myth: 44-45)*

Cassirer locates this nexus of mythical thought and verbal thought in the power of metaphorical thinking (84). This needs to be expanded when discussing the double voice of Thai language in *Shadowed Country*.

Whenever language has been used or changed, there is an implicit double mind at work. In the world of orality and myth, before language was written down, two or more people talked to each other in dialogue. This interpersonal exchange has always been open to contradiction. There is implicit in the act or art of dialogue a schizophrenic doubleness which is natural, not a disease or psychological barrier. *(See Ong 1982: 68 for a discussion of the split between internal and external voices. See also Bakhtin (1984) for the double voice and its relationship to the dialogical function of writing.)* To communicate is to be in two minds; one’s own and in the mind of one’s interlocutor. Dialogue is the yoking together of two minds or two world views. The discourse which embodies this dialogue holds both minds: that of the first person and the second person. It is not just two “I’s” speaking. The dialogue partners are sharing their worlds, blending them. In this sense, all speech has a metaphorical organization. Unless the dialogue partners recognize this, they will not understand that what they are doing when they turn-take or code-switch is experiencing a form of linguistic death. In terms of the Buddhist approach, death occurs at every moment in one’s experience, and this holds true for one’s language too. To stop talking or thinking in language is to die. When one starts to talk again, one undergoes a birth.

At the heart of ritual and myth is the dialogue we make, with ourselves and each other. And that dialogue forms our narrative with a sense of an ending; we are talking in death and to death. In a way, language is a *saksit* ritual to control the chaos of an amoral world. But it is also a moral good (*khunna*) that allows us to move beyond the consciousness of death. The stories we tell to control death are *mythoi*. The telling of the story is a way to control death, to conquer it.

Karen Armstrong (2005: 1) suggests that our creation of myth comes from our fear of death; we tell stories to explain death, the forces that threaten us in the world we experience in nature. What she could have said to extend this point is that the shaman, the artist, and the philosopher as teacher do this as they embody death for us in their various linguistic rituals. By absorbing death into language, we create mimetically a world in which the chaos of nature is embodied in a form which can be communicated to others. At the root of language, this force remains. The rhetorical practices of speech, writing, logic and grammar are
all rituals we employ to order our mythic mind and to yoke together the amoral world of nature and the moral world of culture. When we try to divorce these worlds into science and art, reason and myth, we do violence to language and hide the truth that it still embodies, at least for humanists such as Cassirer: language is a magical ritual we practice unconsciously from the depths of our mind which remains undivided, even though it is in a schizophrenic state which is neither good nor evil.

Patterns of Life and Death in the Textual Cycles of Shadowed Country

Monsoon Country, the second part of Shadowed Country, opens with the hero Prem Surin’s birth. The village khamnan or headman notes that the child’s birth in the Year of the Horse is auspicious as achanaï or achanaaya, literary words for “horse”, meaning “intelligence or knowledge” (30). As a young child, Prem is withdrawn, almost autistic; he is silent and keeps his eyes closed. He is given the nickname of Tadpole by his family, but others call him the Mute. The other children in the village say he is as mute as a tree or a buffalo. This name is inauspicious in Thai as to call a person a buffalo or kwai is considered to be the worst insult with connotations of extreme stupidity.

Prem’s first word is “look” (bueng) when he points to rain clouds, “grotesque shadows”, and sees that “rain was nigh” (36). In English the word “nigh” collocates heavily with the word “death” from the books of the Hebrew prophets and the Apocalypse of John. He is attracted by the beauty of the clouds as they changed “from form to form, shadow to shadow” (36). His sister Piang is upset as the wind rises when he utters his word and points. She thinks Prem has broken a taboo and tells Prem that he must not look at, listen to or speak about the “Power of Darkness” (37). But Prem has no fear of death (38). When he falls as he chases the village girls, as boys did in a primitive time (39), he starts to speak more, but his words are not in order.

It is not until he falls into a lotus pond, with its collocations to the Buddha, and is near death that his speech starts to flow. The seer Tatip Henkai is consulted and barters with the local “mother ghost” Pramae who adopts Prem and so saves his life from “the jaws of death” and makes his life bearable in the living hell of his “tormented” (45) life in the village in Isarn. Tatip sees that Prem is not one of the villagers, “not one of us” (42), and that he is an outcast (42) from the West. From this point, Prem starts to see himself inside Etan, his buffalo, and so sees with Etan’s eye. What he sees is the corruption of the headman in the village which the other villagers refuse to recognize openly as they suffer from ignorance under the Power of Darkness (74). He is given another name, “Luke-pi” or child of the spirit or mother goddess. He also takes on the buffalo’s power of “dumb endurance” (109). When his teacher Kumjai sends him to Krueeng Thep (the Celestial City or the City of Angels in Thai known as Bangkok in English) he is given yet another name, Luke-sith or Temple Boy (110).

Away from Napo, Prem learns well, especially English, although he is punished at school and at university for asking his teachers questions. He is offered a scholarship to
study in England. As he prepares for this third move in his life, he returns to Napo to take leave of his family. While there, Tatip Henkai, the village shaman, tells Prem “My end is nigh” (135).

The pattern established by Sudham in the narrative is to focus on those moments in Prem’s life when he moves from one life to another. These are the khwan points in Thai life experience. (Others are becoming a monk, getting married, etc.) Physically, the khwan (747) is the soul or essence one has in the crown of the head. With each transition he gains a new name. He learns that he has changed; he sees that man sheds his skin like a snake and takes on a new identity (95). He thinks to himself about this pattern of chaos as he debates whether to sit for the university entrance examinations:

Must I strive for higher learning? Prem pondered. It would be a pity to revert into the darkness after having done so well in the high school examinations. I have come this far. Alone, I boarded that train to come to the maze of this chaotic city. Now I am afraid of going further. I could not stop that train then as it took me away from my father and my teacher. The journey must continue. (113-114)

To win a scholarship to England while he is at university, he has to distance himself from the 14th October 1973 Uprising. He is asked about his involvement by the scholarship board. He tells the board that he stayed at the Wat (Temple) to learn how to read a Pali script. But Sudham then enters Prem’s mind as he answers the question and we see the language of the Mute is different to his appearance to the “Judge” as he “projected a look of being absolutely harmless (125)):

I wanted to rebel against every notion, every ounce of my blood that made me a Siamese, against the life of an obedient boy who had to behave, to be mindless and voiceless under the tyrannical suppression of the despots. On the other hand I am alive today because I have been obedient and because of my own lack of critical thinking and a political belief. Come with me, Rit said, and you will know what LIBERTY on an American coin means. But then Rit died along with hundreds of students, shot down by troops and tanks and helicopters. (129)

Sudham has not narrated this uprising which occurred at an earlier time. Nor has he told the reader that Rit, Prem’s best friend at the Wat, was killed. We learn these things at a distance, in Prem’s memory as he is being interviewed for a scholarship to leave Siam.

This is the first time in the novel that we learn of the death of someone close to Prem. It is not narrated in chronological time and is heavily contextualized in terms of Prem’s current position of being interviewed by the scholarship board. The emotion of anger is there, but not the sorrow for the loss of his friend. His external calmness is contrasted with the hot feelings he keeps inside. Much of this tension is a result of the fact that he was not with Rit when he was murdered by the soldiers.
This pattern of organization whereby the writer keeps back certain information in order to distance it from the reader is homologous to the way the writer re-organizes his fiction. The passages cited above are not in the earlier version of Monsoon Country. What we see is the new life of the story in Prem’s mindfulness. We are given italicized interior monologues which stress the space between Prem’s outside and inside worlds. This enters the new form of Monsoon Country when it is re-embodied in Shadowed Country where Prem is instructed in Vipassana by Pra Sungwian, the “venerable monk” who is his ajarn at the temple:

Meditation or Vipassana is a form of mental culture to achieve mindfulness, clarity and knowledge. When you are mindful you know exactly what you are doing. You are mindful of your actions, your words, your thoughts and you see things clearly as they are. (115)

This mindfulness is represented by Sudham in Prem’s increasing exposure to the reader through the interior monologues. Reading such passages after having read Monsoon Country in its earlier forms of life, the reader experiences a sense of the text being reborn as well as a sense that the earlier forms of the story were palimpsests under which the story now coming out to life were overwritten or submerged in the earlier lives of the text. This may be a form of the cycle of life and death that informs Sudham’s narrative method or strategy. The patterns of birth and death are not linear constructs; they are only seen when later events occur that bring the past back to life in ways that enable the reader to see the proxemic closeness of events from a Thai cultural perspective. Meaning or significance is generated through the repetition of the cycle, not by the chronologically linear development of a cause and effect pattern. The reader learns of things only when they become significant to Prem as he goes on his Vipasanna quest-journey for liberation through knowledge. Things that seem isolated in mundane time take on both saksit and khuna significance when they are experienced later under the impact of the force of karma. In the interview with the scholarship board, we see the student protest, the death of Rit and Prem’s change of life being yoked together: they give each other meaning by their proxemic relationship in Prem’s mindful state (Samadhi) during the interior monologue he experiences at the interview. We see why he is doing the things he does when he wants to leave the chaos of the city and the darkness of the shadow of Siam for England.

Prem’s last meeting with the shaman Tatip represents the end of a cycle of twelve years from the time Tatip became his spiritual father by dedicating his new life to the Mother Goddess. The next time Tatip comes into the story is now, when he is dying as Prem is preparing to leave Napo, Isarn and Siam.

When he returns to Napo, Prem learns of his teacher Kumjai’s fate as he has been driven out of the village and his school has been destroyed by his ex-students who accused him of being a communist. Prem is “drowning in a sea of pain” (131) when he learns of these events. What we as readers do not know yet, and will not learn for hundreds of pages, is that these events occurred as a result of the student uprising too. In his interior monologue, Prem addresses Kumjai in the second person:
Teacher, teacher, you should be careful in giving out books to your students, and you should never tell anyone that they must try to reach for the light. Words cannot be eaten. (133)

But he closes his monologue by talking of Kumjai in the third person:

Remember, it’s a sacrifice you’re making, he once wrote. Could it be that he would be arming himself with truth, to speak truthfully on our behalf without fear? LIBERTY is a foreign word found on a coin a good-looking American man dropped in the palm of my hand, an irony coming from a free land to remind me that I have been living in fear under a despotic regime that Siam has had for decades. But it is the death of Rit, a fair boy from Chiangrai, and the disappearance of Kroo Kumjai that have made me understand fully the meaning of LIBERTY. (135)

Three Characters

This essay will look at the deaths of three male characters in Shadowed Country, each of whom seems to be offered as a type of authority or power figure: Tatip the shaman, Regnitz the artist, and Kumjai the teacher. All three of these characters function as surrogate father figures who play significant roles in Prem’s life and his learning processes. The biological father, the taciturn Kum, has little to do to help his son. How and why these three surrogate figures die seem to form a pattern in the narrative which points towards a repressed theme that may be unfolded in subsequent (expanded) iterations of the novel which seem to be linked to a grail-like ethos revolving around the Fisher King’s wound and the wasteland he reigns over. The complications evoked by the pattern of death revolving around only male characters who remain pure and die in moments that confirm their power are refracted through another theme; that of homosexuality and its attendant recognition of the Thai patriarchal social structure which must be left for a subsequent political discussion of Sudham’s work.

Mothers, wives and lovers survive their men folk. The only female character who faces death is Prem’s lover Lizzy, who disappears from the narrative only to re-emerge as a D.E.A. agent who had to be spirited out of Thailand in the aftermath of a drugs operation in Pattaya. Her disappearance is also complex, coming as it does in terms of references to Wuthering Heights where Catherine and Heathcliff’s romance is represented in part in terms of absence and reunion on a spiritual level. This level of intertextuality will also have to wait for a subsequent discussion of Sudham’s Romantic vision.

The Death of the Shaman
The monologue addressed to his teacher segues into Prem’s last meeting with the shaman Tatip which occurs the day before he leaves Napo. The death of his only friend Rit and the fate of his teacher Kumjai are proxemically related to this meeting in terms of the textual space and time and the thematic significance of the three as a group in Prem’s life. This meeting represents the end of a cycle of twelve years from the time Tatip became his spiritual father by dedicating Prem’s new life to the Mother Goddess. The next time Tatip comes into the story is now, when he is dying as Prem is preparing to leave Napo, Isarn and Siam.

Tatip’s first words to Prem at their last meeting are stammered out: “Very goo, good of you to co.come to say goo.goodbye to me, ‘luke-pi” (135). While these words may be the expected speech pattern of a man in pain as he dies, they take on another meaning for a reader of Monsoon Country (1993) where Prem is the one who stammers until he falls into the pond. This speech has been passed onto Tatip in this scene which has been unfolded or added in the Monsoon Country part of Shadowed Country.

Tatip sees Prem’s premāe hovering over him and observes, “She is looking kindly at me now, knowing that my end is nigh.” (135) The premāe was not with Prem in Bangkok; she is only with him when he returns to the zone of her protection in Napo. Tatip’s echo of Prem’s thought that the “rain was nigh” (35) collocates the words “rain” and “end” (death).

The reaction of the teenager who has been caring for the dying Tatip is significant; he wants to leave Prem and Tatip at the mention of the spirit and death. He does this by observing the Thai proxemic rule of gom hua by bending himself as he passes between them so that his head is lower than theirs’ as a sign of respect for invading the space between them. When he has moved three yards away, he stands to jump away: “he fled from premāe’s vision” (136) to “confirm the tale of the luke-pi” (136) passed on by his father to him when he was younger.

Alone with Tatip, Prem feels the juxtaposition of their two visions: “the 20th century scholar who had been striving steadily forwards towards the light, succumbed to the lure of ancient mystique.” (136) Apart from the sense of movement and direction in Prem’s thought processes, there is the attraction (lure) of the ancient wisdom. Despite his education at university, Prem still feels that it is possible to move between the light (with its connotations of enlightenment) and the darker side, as connoted by the word “mystique”. There is a sense of privacy mixed with shame in Prem at this point; “But before asking the impinging question, he turned to look over both shoulders to see whether there was anyone listening.” (136). It is his bodily reaction which communicates his wavering intentions. The question that is said to be “impinging” is given a sense of proxemic movement too. The reader is not prepared for this question; it remains in Prem’s mind. Like the teenager who has moved out of the personal space between Tatip and Prem moments before, Prem senses that he must also make a physical gesture recognizing that his question too will impinge on Tatip’s space in the form of a verbal
The pattern of physical distance between the two has been established already in this meeting: Prem “seemed to be glowing with an aura of health and holiness”, “in contrast to the dying” (136). Prem’s voice is clear and exact in its pronunciation of the Lao language while Tatip’s “wavering voice trailed off in the dark cavern of time.” (136). The juxtaposition of life and death felt by Prem is contextualized in the series of contrasts between age and youth, confident and wavering voices, reason and superstition, the present and the past. The distances evoked by these juxtapositions create a sense of the malleable space between the two men in which Prem can move from the one life to the other. The duality in this is suggested by his looking over both his shoulders when he makes sure that no one else is impinging on their conversation.

When he finally asks his “impinging question”, there is no concrete context for it: “What else could you see, Grandpa?” (136) Time, both narrative and chronological, is breached by the question as Prem refers back several years and nearly ninety pages of the novel to when Tatip tells him of his vision regarding Prem’s past life. Time for both men is polysynchronic. And the reader is meant to understand the context without any scaffolding being supplied by Sudham. Tatip tells Prem “I’ve almost forgotten now. It’s so..so long ago since I had a look.” (137). Prem nervously fidgets, looks around behind him again, and asked Tatip to look again. He knows that Tatip is dying, but wants to know what he sees. Tatip resists this at first:

The weary soul and the youth locked eyes to test each other’s inner strength. Under the glare of Prem’s piercing pupils, the dying man yielded. (137)

The violence of the space between them is registered in the proxemic language (“locked eyes” as in a battle, “strength”, “glare”, piercing” and “yielded”). The sense of a grail-like contest of strength, as in a rite of passage, is strengthened by what Tatip then does as he prepares to look back at Prem’s previous life. He “cupped” his hands “to symbolize a blossoming lotus flower” (137), thus suggesting not only “a votive offering in worshipping the Spirits of the Universe” (the animistic saksit powers that surround him in the village), but the legends of Buddha sitting on the lotus leaf in a pond and Prem’s falling into a lotus pond which led to Tatip’s intervention in his life ninety pages and twelve years before. Prem’s heart “thumped to the tempo of Tatip’s voice “chanting” of the “magical mantra” while Tatip’s lips “moved as if his life was ebbing away”. (137). Here, the saksit and the Buddhist elements are blended or flow together, as is suggested by the water imagery of “pond” and “ebbing”. Tatip forsees the end of the novel when he tells of how Prem will again meet some of those involved with his previous life in England and how he will live in his “grand old house” again, after he has “done go..good deeds to compensate for the bad karma” (138). As soon as he says this, he announces “now I must go” (138). Tatip dies in the middle of blessing Prem: “May pramae, your sacred mother goddess pro..protect you always…” (138).
We then see Prem preparing the body and telling the relatives of what has happened:

Luke-pi closed the dilated eyes and the gaping mouth. Then he drew an old blanket over the body before leaving the hut. Having climbed down the ladder, he looked for the relatives of the dead to give them sad news. (138)

Not “the dead man” or “the dead seer”; Tatip’s corpse is no longer that of a person. This is a Thai view of the dead, full stop. The generalized and almost euphemistic space left says much about this view of a dead person. This distance is prolonged in the next sentence when Prem “delayed his departure from Napo two more days in order to attend the funeral.” (138). Again, not “Tatip’s funeral” or “the funeral of the dead man”; just “the funeral”. The pattern in this death scene is one of absence, of words left out, of the empty spaces of language. We do not see any tears or sorrow in Prem. The news is “sad”, not Prem. Death is part of the cycle which Prem has just had an intense experience of with Tatip. His words are reported, not direct; we are not shown him telling the relatives of Tatip’s death: the death of his “grandpa” is distanced from us, as it is distanced from Prem. While this tone of silence is appropriate given the ritualistic circumstances of the scene, there is no awe or grief in Prem. He sees death in a different, Thai, way – as the completion of the ritual Tatip has just performed for him that links Prem’s past and future to the seer’s death vision. The khwan time of transition in which Prem leaves the village for England, is ritualistically marked by the ceremony of “the funeral” as such, not “Tatip’s funeral”. There is no sense of finality or ending. Instead, Tatip says that he must “go” with the implication that he is entering the next stage in the cycle of karma. Sudham feels no need to depict the funeral in detail. He implies that the funeral is not special as it occurs in less than three days after Tatip’s death. In Thai culture, at least three days are required for the ceremony, with a week being more common. The higher the status the dead person had in life, the longer the funeral rites. The short time frame here suggests that Tatip was not regarded as an exceptional person in the village. His function as seer is not experienced by any of the villagers as awesome or noble. His role as the village shaman is a matter of fact, a mundane thing.

On a deeper level of culture, the representation of Tatip’s funeral would be irrelevant as the only thing left at a Thai funeral is the body of the dead; the mind has already left the body; it is not there to witness the funeral of its body. As a Thai, Prem would not consider it possible to talk to Tatip after he has died in the way Western people sometimes address the dead as if they were still present. In a similar way, neither Tatip nor Prem consider the possibility of Tatip talking to the Marquess of Wealdon, Prem’s former embodiment. The spirit of the Marquess is already in Prem’s body. It is no longer part of the body that was the Marquess’.
Death of the Artist

The death of the shaman Tatip marks a transition phase in the narrative: Prem leaves for Europe where he finds a new life when meets Dani Pilakol, a research fellow at the London School of Economics. Through Dani, Prem is invited to Germany where he meets the composer Helmut von Regnitz. The invitation comes at an auspicious time, when Prem (whose name means joy in Thai) is listening to the last movement of Beethoven’s ninth symphony, the libretto of which is Schiller’s “Ode to Joy”. These details have been added since the 1993 edition of Monsoon Country. The invitation arrives at a nadir in Prem’s writing attempts:

He wanted to be able to give Toon [his childhood sweetheart] a poem to celebrate her beauty and to uplift her weary heart from drudgery. He wished to remark on simple things that were beautiful and to give a few ballads and songs to a band of buffalo boys so that they could sing to praise the magical monsoon. Now he held a lot of conflicting ideas and had not been able to create those songs except bitter words in a foreign language to celebrate nothing but the pain and despair in the heart.

Yes, it would be difficult now to go back to the desk to face that piece of paper on which idealistic words had been arrogantly written. What could one do with the mumbo-jumbo of words passed off as verse? (176-177)

His poetry seems distant and empty to him; an idealistic and arrogant fraud.

The narration of the episode at Heeringen where Prem witnesses the death of the composer Helmut is the most extensive one in the novel (177-214). It represents the first major crucible or watershed of Prem’s art where he is involved in the death of the artist Regnitz. With the composer’s son, Danny leaves his adopted foster father, Helmut, for a skiing holiday and asks Prem to look after the sick composer. (Note the changed spelling of the name suggesting corporeal impermanence, at least in the English language/ Latin script. This fluidity of the body is also sounded in Prem’s reference to Tatip as his grandfather quoted above in this essay.) Here a parallel is set up between Prem’s relationship with Tatip, his spiritual grandfather and Danny’s relationship with Helmut.

In Shadowed Country, unlike in Monsoon Country (1993), Prem arrives in Germany as Luke-pi and as “the son of the mother goddess” (178). It “dawns on him” that Dani/ Danny (Dhani, a more orthodox Thai spelling, in the 1993 version) “could be a farang in the guise of a Siamese” (179). There is more modality in the 2003 version compared to Prem’s 1993 observation that “Dhani was in fact a farang in the guise of a Siamese” (1993: 169).

Without making an exhaustive comparison of the many changes of words between the two versions of the episode, the point to be made is that Sudham sees his words as
malleable, changeable, in a state of flux. While the death of Tatip is a new episode added in a macro way to *Shadowed Country*, the death of Regnitz is carried on from the earlier version and changed internally or in a more micro manner. By adding details about Prem’s spirit life in Napo, Sudham is stressing the relationship between the two deaths.

There is a formal, ritualistic atmosphere in the composer’s house. Prem celebrates Gemütlich, a “rite of Christmas” (179), with Danny and the composer’s son before Helmut, in a candlelit room:

A few minutes later, Herr Helmut von Regnitz made an appearance. Because the father moved rather slowly through the dark passages of his great house, the three young men did not see or hear him until he was ready to sit down with them. (179)

Helmut’s ghostly appearance is stressed: “His eyes had deepened in their sockets; however, there was a sign of life in them as they flickered against the dancing candlelight.” (179) After the rite of Christmas has been completed, Prem walks outside. Through a window, he sees a “perplexing scene” with Regnitz moving in his study:

It was a movement of a man in pain, staggering and stumbling and falling. Coming closer to the window, the observer saw that the composer had lain on the bed gasping like a stranded fish. (180)

The other two young men prepare dinner, leaving Prem alone. He worries that the old man needs assistance:

With such a care in mind, Luke-pi sat upright in the manner of meditation and channeled his thoughts into an intense beam at the image of Reinhard von Regnitz. And thus Reiner became aware of his father and went into the study. (181)

Danny asks Prem to “be an angel” (182) and look after the composer while the other two go skiing. In the morning, Prem meets what he guesses is the housekeeper who comes only occasionally and what he guesses is a doctor who checks on Regnitz. They do not recognize or respond to Prem. To get out of their way, he walks outside:

He wandered from the track into the snow-laden forest, wanting to look for the mystery. One knew intimately the monsoon plains, the desiccation, the croaking of frogs and the humming of insects, but the strange shapes of leafless beech, elm, and birch trees in the mist and the young spruces hiding under the snow had to be treated with awe. The secret and the exotic beauty lured him deep into the forest. (182)
When the composer does not come out for dinner, Prem decides that “the silent night would be perfect for composing a song.” He sits in his room, listening to the “murmuring of the great house” (183) while the snow falls outside and his words too “were descending like the snow, flake by flake, word by word.” (183) His song begins:

In an ancient room
foreclosed with doom
in monsoon country
I lay in disuse, in need of bravery
while vile portent and disaster
and lustrous laughter
of armed men and thieves
come with the rustling of leaves.
(183-184)

Here, he blends his immediate surroundings in Germany in the opening two lines with his memories of Isarn that follow. He sees himself as “weakened, silenced and saddened” and in the “doldrums” (184). The song ends with “Manora’s use of cunning/ to regain her sequestered wings.” (184), thus moving the narrative onto an explicitly mythic level of significance. Manora is one of the kinarries or winged goddesses or half-bird women who lived on Mount Meru, the centerpiece of the “Hindu-Buddhist cosmological model” surrounded by circles of oceans and continents (Jumsai: 12) from where the world was created. The three counter-clockwise moves around the pyre at a Thai funeral is the death cycle movement winding back up to Mount Meru. For Prem, her significance is that she was captured by a hunter who used a serpent to entwine her and was given as an “offering to the king” (184). As an alien, she is blamed for bringing “war, plague and economic crisis” (185) to the land. The courtiers tie her to a pyre and plan to sacrifice her to lift the curse. As part of her “last rite”, she asks to wear her wings so that she can perform “the kinarry’s Dance of Death” (185).

In Prem’s dream, Danny is led like Manora to a pyre. In a passion-like scene (“His skull was cracked, bleeding; his face was dripping with blood and his clothes were torn and splattered with excrement”) recorded in poetry in the dream, the men who want to make Danny the scapegoat yell:

Burn him, the alien who is dangerous,
becoming grossly prosperous;
and yet his heart is bent upon destroying,
guise and bribes employing!
He is a dead weight on the land!
Such a man cannot live in our land!  
(185)

All of this mythologizing about Danny is new to Shadowed Country. The “fiends” “pierced his heart with a sharp stake” (vampire-like), douse him with petrol, and hang him as he burns. In his prophetic buffalo eye of Etan, Prem sees Danny’s “soul rise with the flames and smoke” (186). The call of Danny’s soul makes him weep in the dream. When he awakes from the dream, he is still weeping. This shocks him, as he asks “Was his despair so refined now that he could cry only in dreams?” This question highlights the point that this is the only time Prem weeps for the dead in the novel. He regrets his inability “to reason, to question, to discuss, to make a critical appraisal. Like a Strasbourg goose, he had been force-fed with rote-learning.” (186). He does not know what to make of this experience; he is perplexed by it. He cries at the prophesied death of his brother-like friend Danny, but not at Tatip’s death. The impact of the mythic extension on Prem’s psyche traumatically generates his looking at himself as a sacrificial bird too. Unlike Danny, whose sacrifice is bodily, Prem sees his own mind as the victim sacrificed by the Thai education system. This too is new to Shadowed Country. He looks at two passages of his own writing, one in Thai and the other in English and sees the proxemic space between them as a reflection of his maimed mind:

But now writing in English translated from the Siamese original draft, he could see the obvious contrast of the two languages placed side by side. As opposed to English, Siamese has no punctuation marks, no capital letters, no sentences, Primo pondered, glancing at the pages of the two written languages. Siamese words are strung tightly together. At times one can say or write at the beginning without a noun. Such an omission relies on guesswork to be understood, whereas in English a sentence has a beginning and an end, the noun and the verb, or the verbs and a full stop. It must not rely on guessing or convoluted speculation. Each word is individual, with spaces in between. Yes, each word is individualistic, just like each of the farangs who have their own minds, their own opinions and their own mental spaces. Siamese words can be tightly knitted together into lines without breathing space unless one wants to make a gap at any chosen spot, just like most Siamese who are extremely gregarious, adoring ‘togetherness’ in what they do. If one seeks to be an individual, to be alone, to read alone, or even to think, it is considered an anomaly. How language reflects the minds of the peoples! Now I understand why Danny often taunted me with: ‘Don’t say it in that muddled, wailing and weakly way. The voice of the maimed mind makes me cringe! Say it in English; its grammatical order and discipline will certainly reform and reorganize your mind, believe me.’ (186-187)

In this passage, the epithet characterizing Prem is “Primo”, Danny’s nickname for him; he thinks in character, as he always does, depending on the epithet he is named by. His personality is fluid and in flux all the time. As “the monsoon man” (187), Prem smiles at the look of English written in a Thai way without punctuation or capitalization. As he shifts from one personality or persona to another, his mood changes. His old self dies and a new self takes over temporarily. His breakthrough regards the proxemic qualities of the two languages which he sees in terms remarkably similar to Geert Hofstede’s (1980) cultural dimensions of power
distance, individual versus the collective, uncertainty avoidance and masculine versus feminine
tone of voice. In a moment of insight, he now understands “what it was like to go from one
empty room to another, to be left alone without feeling lonely in this immense mansion
surrounded by shivering leafless trees, isolated by snow” (187). The death references are
unmistakable, as are the mythic tones of the grail story. He empathizes with Helmut, the dead
fish, and learns to be alone without being lonely in the death season of winter surrounded by
leafless trees in the forest. The mystery of the house, the grail castle, however, remains: “All
the while the mystery remained in the room in which the recluse stayed.” (187) Parzival-like,
he sees things he does not understand or respond to. He is undergoing a mystical experience
couched in the imagery of myth.

When Helmut opens the door to his secret chamber, Prem is surprised as he is
catched in the foolish act of being a “peeping tom” spying through the key hole of the door. He
is also surprised by Helmut’s (with that name’s medieval knighthly connotations) changed
appearance, dressed as a “grandee of the old world” (188). Prem asks himself “Whoever this
awesome personage could be” (188). The composer has just completed his last work, a tone
poem titled Tod (Death). Now Helmut is full of life, rejuvenated as a result of his composition,
to such an extent that Prem thinks of the previous vision he had of the composer moving
painfully as like a “nightmare” (189).

Prem’s reaction continues the suggestion or implication that he is undergoing a
transformation or metamorphosis in this mansion:

When the composer had been totally wrapped up in the creation called Death,
being aware of it in every breath he inhaled and exhaled, it had become an old familiar name.
But to the budding poet who had been trying to conjure up the shape and form of the romantic-
sounding tone poem it was staggering to know that it could encompass such a morbid theme.
(189-190)

To write about death, and one’s own death at that, is morbid to the Siamese
Prem. Like a grail knight, Prem stares at the composer who is standing in the doorway, a place
of transition, in a state of “dumb amazement” (190). For Prem, the theme of a dying man
“struggling with Death” makes death seem “tangible” (190). Such concreteness would be alien
to the Siamese Buddhist Prem. As they sit together drinking wine in celebration of the tone
poem’s completion, Prem wishes he is “worthy of the event and that he would not ask silly
questions and act clumsy and knock the glass over.” (190). Again, the grail echoes are there:
the glass/ grail, the foolishness of the grail knight, the wish to be “worthy” of receiving the
grail knowledge.

The initiation ceremony continues:

“What did you want to know?” Helmut inquired, tilting his head slightly. (190)
Prem reverts to a speech pattern reminiscent of Tatip’s dying speech pattern:

Oh, ai..I wanted to..to know what’s in this room, to..to see if there were any photographs, books, albums, things of Danny’s childhood.” (191)

Prem’s use of the word “childhood” stimulates the composer who is transformed, as in a trance, immediately back into another time and back to his tone poem which he now realizes cannot be completed:

Helmut pursed his lips as if to commit to himself an understanding of his own. His eyes were out of focus and he murmured in German what could be understood as: So it is childhood then, the recollection of it and the happy moments of his life, his memories of the loved ones. Death could not take control all the time; there must be moments when Death relaxes it grip. The transfiguration would be possible... (190)

Prem “watched in amazement a peculiar expression on his host’s face” (190). The epithet of “host” is only used in the novel in reference to Helmut; its Christian significance is another link with the grail – this time to the meal. When the composer excuses himself to change the ending of his tone poem, Prem thinks “morbidly”:

Every time I open my big mouth, the English and the German shudder for fear at what might come out next. (192)

He still does not understand the significance of what has just occurred; he has participated in Helmut’s creation of Death. The atmosphere outside transforms into a Brontë-esque (Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights is Prem’s favourite book) objective correlative of his inner state of mind:

He saw how the day had deteriorated, now being threatened by a snowstorm. The eves moaned and whined, the whole mansion shook and shuddered. The trees swayed and swirled with the fury. The tempest was lashing everything in its path. Prem tried to put his mind in order by using the techniques of Vipassana learned and practiced in Wat Borombopit. (192)

He realizes that the people of Isarn are happier than he is now, as he must go through the trials and tests of “culture conflict” (192). He remembers Kumjai telling him that this trial was “a sacrifice he was to make, following a dream.” (192). He now sees his mission is to pursue his dream of being a writer, not an academic. But he is immediately confronted by his awareness of the gap between himself and Helmut:
He [Helmut] was gifted, much encouraged and fully supported by his parents and teachers to follow his training and career in music. Moreover, the society in which he belonged provided the stimulus and the impetus that worked positively for him, not against him, whereas thinking Siamese such as writer and thinker Jit Pumisak had to be killed. Far-sighted leader and educator Pridi Panomyong had to flee the country to die in exile in France. Intellectual and educator Puey Ungpakorn had to escape to England, where he died. And writer Khamsing Srinok had to take flight across the Maekong River to Lao and sought asylum in Sweden, only to return to make a pact with the devil that he would be silent to stay alive. (192-193)

The mythic quest theme is stressed by Prem’s reference to Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* when he asks how he can survive in such a society that will not tolerate artistic or intellectual freedom or criticism:

> What cloak or camouflage must the little hobbit Frodo-Primo use to disguise his efforts for survival and reaching his goal? (193)

Later that night, Helmut calls out for Prem to help him as he is now too sick to medicate himself. As he leaves the composer’s room, he glances at “the disorder of the writing desk and the scattered papers on the floor”. He decides to “keep the door ajar” to help his “host” (194) if needs be.

There is a space left in the novel marking a shift of scene; the tone changes with shorter sentences breaking up the information and making the scene more distant from the reader:

Gradually the dawn made the outlines of the branches and snowy landscape visible. It was a bleak morning. Nothing moved; nothing broke the silence. At about ten o’clock the telephone rang. “Good morning,” Primo answered calmly. “Sorry, I can’t speak German. Can you speak English? Yes, he told me that you would drop in on us yesterday. Can you make it this morning? Please come as soon as you can and call his doctor for me too. Herr von Regnitz is dead.” (194)

Regnitz dies in the hiatus of the narrative. Prem’s response is cold on the telephone. While there are similarities to the way Tatip’s death is described, there are differences which mark the changes Prem has undergone in this part of his quest:

Before the outsiders could arrive, the little man put the house in order, then he covered the corpse with an eiderdown. Standing at the bedside, he looked sadly at the body. *It seems I have the knack of conveying death to people*, he feared. Then he touched Helmut’s forehead and brushed the snow-white hair so that the dead would be presentable to the visitors.

> “Goodbye, old man,” Primo whispered, and left the room. (194)
At first, Prem sees Regnitz’s body like he sees Tatip’s corpse: both are husks, devoid of any person or emotional tie. He recognizes the pattern of being the one who witnesses death, which he describes ambiguously as having the ‘knack of conveying death to people”. While he covers Tatip’s body with an old blanket, he pulls an eiderdown over Regnitz’s body. He makes both men’s corpses presentable to others. Things must look correct. The difference in the scene with Regnitz’s corpse is that Prem looks “sadly” at Regnitz and talks to his body. We hear his thoughts as he is with the dead now. The death-scape of blank snow is linked to Regnitz’s snow-white hair.

Sudham defamiliarizes the death scene by suppressing information which makes the reader respond to the strangeness of the words. He seemingly coldly makes coffee for the doctor and the conductor whose names we are not given, as in a romance. We assume that the conductor is the person Prem has informed about the death over the phone, in a distant way. He does not show any emotion, thus raising the doctor’s suspicions:

It was not only the foreigner’s passive tone of voice that bothered the doctor, who fidgeted, but also the seemingly calm, inscrutable Oriental face that aroused his annoyance. (196)

Prem’s *jai yen* manner, his cool appearance in the face of death, is culturally alien to the Germans. Prem sees that the composer’s death “weighed heavily on all of them” (195) He thinks that he should speak first as it would “break the spell”. We are still in the enchanted world of the grail-like story.

The gap Sudham creates in the text by not describing the last minutes of Regnitz’s life leads to the trial by ordeal which follows for the rest of the chapter in the novel. There are repercussions to this death, unlike in the death of the shaman. In a scene reminiscent of Kafka’s *The Trial*, Prem is interviewed by the police who are suspicious of his role in Regnitz’s death. Prem’s emotional detachment is the source of the police inspectors’ suspicions. Alone in the interrogation room with the composer who has now introduced himself as Wilhelm Hagenbach, Prem hears Tatip’s voice coming to his mind:

At that moment the insignificant little monkey heard the ancient seer say: “You’d wince at the sight of those good-looking big men. They’d remind you of your former self, your tall and strong stature, your golden hair and blue eyes which were lost to you in this life.” (198)

In this passage added to *Shadowed Country*, the links between the two deaths echo in a way that refers back to Prem’s previous life as Wealdon. The three deaths are being spun together here where Prem has his first independent memory of his previous life in India that has been foreshadowed in the novel’s prologue. At this stage of the trial, Prem is seeing with Etan’s eye; he is using his supernatural powers to deal with the police who he recognizes
as hostile (199). With his back up at the surliness of the interrogator, Prem makes another breakthrough:

For the first time in his life, the buffalo boy wanted to express his defiance, to stand up against the authority. The nature of the wild beast in him surged, rearing its dangerous head and sharp horns. To use his own devices, allowing the eyes of Etan to glare and with the horns in readiness for an attack, he was in his own element. (199-200)

In this passage added in *Shadowed Country*, Prem’s transformation into a wild beast suggests the mythic qualities he is drawing on to survive this ordeal and to buck at authority. He is the sacrificial animal fighting for survival in the ritual in which he refuses to be the victim.

In his interrogation, Prem adds more details about the death of Regnitz. For example, we learn that Regnitz explained why he was leaving his *Tod* unfinished: “How could I know Death for real until it comes to take me away. So I will leave it unfinished and when I lie dying, then I will know.” (202) This passage, with its allusion to William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*, is new to *Shadowed Country*. Other details emerge in Prem’s interrogation and subsequent conversation with Wilhelm: there is a suspicion that Prem assisted Regnitz’s death because the composer was left handed and the injection that killed him was in his left arm; Prem worries that he will be accused of murder. These issues are problematically left open-ended in the novel. Prem’s private knowledge is left secret, as part of an initiation ceremony or ritual perhaps. He senses Wilhelm is using him and plans to flee from Germany. In an echo from Keats’ “Ode to a Nightingale” (“‘Away! Away!’ Prem heard a cry”: 212) Sudham is representing Prem responding to the death and its aftermath in terms of Western Romantic literary traditions of death. Other more distant allusions are to D.H. Lawrence’s *Women in Love* with Gerald’s suicide by walking into the snow and Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus* with Adrian Leverkusen’s pact with the Nazis/Mephistopheles for his gift as a composer. Prem is learning to think as a Westerner; he now feels sadness for the dead, though he had known Regnitz for only three days: “What a tragedy to die in the arms of a stranger” (213), he laments. He contrasts Helmut’s created (assisted) artistic death (a tragedy full of artistic allusions) with the ways of death in Napo:

If Death could be made tangible, you would be tearing at it, protecting the old man from its approach. In Napo a mohpifa [witch doctor] would be throwing magic rice all over the room to ward off Death, but here you had nothing except bare hands and tears. (213)

The capitalization of death suggests its personification as much as it does its presence as an abstract concept. The lack of italicization in these words breaks the pattern of representing Prem’s internalized thoughts in that way. It suggests that the writer Sudham is directly addressing Prem in the second person for the first time in the novel. The pattern is stressed by the next sentences in the passage which revert to italics to represent a character’s inner thoughts. These thoughts end the chapter and the episode of a Western death scene:
My unguarded soul wants to fly free...to hover in the celestial dome of light...to soar upward, carried by the divine light. But beware, we must not go astray in this solitude...Oh, I am so weary from wandering. Could this possibly be death?

Look! Death! Death is exactly what I have perceived for Tod. Look! Die Verklärung...(213-214)

The weariness Prem (or Regnitz, if this passage is Prem’s insight into the composer’s mind or a memory of words actually spoken but suppressed in his police interrogation) feels in his spiritual wandering is viewed as a possible form of death. Real or actual death is perceived as the meaning of the tone poem Tod. The art is about the creative energy of death seen specifically in Romantic terms. The repeated allusion to Keats’ ode which is reminiscent of the poet’s pathetic attempt to fly “on the viewless wings of Poesy” strengthens this frame of reference which we are reminded of a few pages later when Prem tells Elizabeth, his lover, that he sees his relationship to her in terms of the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights which her dismissal of leads him to silence her “as if the wandering soul of Emily Brontë might hear.” (217) These Romantic layers suggest that Prem is seeing his experience through the eyes of Western artistic responses now. The last words in the chapter re-embody Richard Strauss’ tone poem Tod und Verklärung (Death and Transformation). The lesson of this experience for Prem is that he is in a “twilight zone somewhere between two worlds”. He addresses himself in his thoughts:

You see, while Lord Buddha preached detachment, the Europeans uphold involvement, desire and craving. One must crave to expand and produce, to make the world go round, so to speak. (215)

Regnitz’s craving for death and Prem’s involvement in that death have released and transformed Prem’s artistic powers. As a product of this experience, he writes A Cantata, “to give his German experience a form” (216), which wins first prize in a poetry competition and so is his first successful work of art: he has been transformed and has left behind his old life of failed poetry that he had tried to write up to the time of Regnitz’s death. He has learned to exploit the space between the two worlds of the West and the East and between life and death as a creative force. There is life after death when that death is transformed in the romantic image of art. Prem has learned to embrace the “morbid” perspective that had repelled him up to the time he became involved with Regnitz. His seemingly innocent question about childhood which inspired Regnitz to leave his tone poem unfinished and to see that Death could be transformed in the memory of previous episodes or forms of life and so could transform one’s whole life into a work of art seems to be an underground stream back to the Prologue of Shadowed Country with its echoes of Shakespeare and Proust. It also seems to voice Sudham’s own artistic vision in the novel. Later, Prem apparently uses his own childhood when writing Monsoon People, much as Sudham did when he wrote Monsoon Country.

In this central passage to the novel, Sudham seems to be creating a palimpsest by writing over the original text another text; the artistic process works by adding layers of
experience to enrich that experience and so transform the dead or old text. The text that remains concealed, and which may yet be revealed in a future life of Shadowed Country has much to do with the vaguely hinted at grail motif as much as it may relate to Prem’s physical actions of involvement at the time of the artist’s death which gives him life as an artist. The esoteric ritual that may have been enacted in Regnitz’s workshop remains a mystery and is a source of the deliberate romantic ambiguities Sudham is able to give to his work which still seems to exist in a “twilight zone” between fact and fiction, between the East and the West. Instead of Manora being Dani, it may be that Prem is the one who flies away at the moment of ritual death by means of a trick, albeit it an artistic one.

The background to this possibility of art as a way of surviving has been hinted at in Prem’s remembrance of the novelists, social critics and thinkers who had been chased out of Thailand for daring to think for themselves. The exile of the scapegoat is the only way to avoid physical or intellectual death. Any action by an intellectual to remedy the maimed mind of the Thai is met with by the threat of a violent death. When Prem returns to London, he learns of the violent suppression of the 1976 protests in Thailand. Danny’s refusal to care about the deaths of the protesters leads Prem to break with him through violence when he punches him in anger, thus breaking the Buddha’s rules. He has yet to learn how to deal with the death of the teacher or political death.

The Death of the Teacher

Kumjai, whose name incorporates the name of Prem’s actual father (Kum) and the Thai word jai (which means both “heart” and “mind”) is the teacher who awakens Prem’s thirst for knowledge in the village school. As an activist teacher, he wants his pupils to think for themselves and is hampered in this by the Thai education system that he is a part of. He wants to empower the villagers to take control of their environment and end the corruption that is destroying their land. He sees the “Power of Darkness” (74) as the ignorance of the peasants who do not think critically of their power relations with their exploiters. This is one of the manifestations of the shadowed quality of the novel’s title. As an agent of change, Kumjai uses his position of authority to lead the peasants in protests against their exploitation. He has a dream vision of the future from which he awakens to see that:

Change is inevitable and the agents of change could come in many forms, visible and invisible. Sometimes they arrive with a young man or woman wearing jeans, after having been in the Celestial City, or with a movie van, with plastic utensils and plastic bags, and sometimes with guns and grenades – the brutal change. (88)

He decides to do something about making his students aware of the power of change by sending Prem to school in the Celestial City (Krueng Thep or the City of Angels, known in the West as Bangkok) (89). In doing this, Kumjai sets in motion a train of events which will shape much of Prem’s life. The power of his being a student is a moral one which comes from the
reality that the *crue* or *ajarn* (teacher) in Thai culture often has more moral authority over the child than does the parent.

Kumjai’s vision and subsequent decision to save Prem comes immediately after the village bully and his gang had torn up the book of poems given to Prem by Kumjai as a prize for writing his own poem. This destruction of the book is described as a “ritual” (83) as though it marks his move back from an educated way to the way of the past, the cyclical life of suffering as a peasant:

> Under the roof of the school he had had a chance to learn from the rote learning system for which the teacher had been trained. But on the barren plain, in the wilderness, the primeval forces became paramount. When he finished Pathom Four, he said goodbye to the school. Now he had to enter another life – that of a reckless youth destined to follow the path of peasantry ruled by thieves, scarcity, superstition, floods, drought, sickness, poverty, exploitation and injustice to which his father and his forefathers before him had been subjected. (79)

Prem gathers the pages as though they were “precious stones” (83) just before Kumjai rescues him from the gang. These stones adumbrate the “David Stones” (668) or stories Prem gathers to use against Goliath-like Philistine corruption he struggles against in his adult life as a writer; his five stories that expose the corruption of the shadowed country which he uses to kill the “Dark Lord” of ignorance, the origin of corruption.

It seems to be a deliberate choice by Sudham to frame the teacher Kumjai’s experience in a blend of the spirit powers of Tatip the shaman and Regnitz the artist in representing Kumjai’s dream-vision. The (Hegelian) *Bildungsroman* characteristics of the novel point towards the role of the writer as much as the experience of its central character as educators. At the end of the novel, Prem becomes a teacher who, to finish his karmic cycle, encourages his students to express their own opinions and to have a voice in the school he has decided to build in the village “as a monument to the murdered teachers” (745) who had raised their voices against the violence and corruption. The lesson of allowing students to speak and interact with their teacher was learned while he studied literature at university. His university tutor, Michael Wilding (Michael Wil in *The Force of Karma* 2002 life of the text), had encouraged him to express his own opinions about Milton’s *Paradise Lost* as long as he could support his views with evidence and logic (622-623). As soon as he has learned this lesson, he learns of Kumjai’s death back in Isarn (623). The choice of the breakthrough text is appropriate; he had decided earlier in his life that he would not serve or rebel against the Dark Lord (231); the lesson Milton seems to suggest in his poem.

At first, Kumjai’s death, which takes up only one sentence in the text at this point, seems distanced and downplayed. Unlike with the deaths of Tatip and Regnitz, Prem was not there to witness his teacher’s murder. Charles Tregonning, one of Prem’s friends, keeps a journal in which we learn of the deaths of ten other teachers who had raised their voices against the exploitation of the peasants (631-632). This journal re-embodies an essay from an edition of
Tales of Thailand in its 2002 shape. Teachers in rural Isarn do face the threat of death whenever they decide to teach in an ethical way. This point is reinforced by the death of the teacher in other Thai novelists’ work, such as in Khamman Khonkhai’s The Teachers of Mad Dog Swamp (1978) where the teacher Piya is accused of being a Communist to silence his protests against the exploitation of the villagers (1978: 292) and is shot by a hired gunman. That novel ends:

Piya had no thought of danger, suspected nothing. His thoughts were only on the school, on his pupils, and on Duangdaw. He rode through the village and had started the ascent to the school when there was the crack of an old World War II rifle. Just one shot. The bullet plowed into the young teacher’s chest and through his body. His body was thrown back and off his bicycle, Ai Krong, and he lay still on the ground, blood gushing.

Duangdaw shrieked as she jumped at the sound of the rifle, as if she knew what had happened. The children streamed out, running one after the other, children and teacher dreading what they should find, heedless of danger to themselves.

‘Khun Piya! You’re gone from me!’ Duangdaw hugged the corpse to her, not caring who saw. The others stood, completely silent as if hypnotized. At last Caw Siang spoke.

‘Khru Piya is dead. Who is going to teach us now?’

‘I am here. I’ll be here with you always.’

The young woman cradled the body, now bereft of consciousness, as a little girl would cradle a beloved doll. She sat there surrounded by children who could not understand why someone like Khru Piya should be shot and killed. (1978: 302)

This emotion-filled pathetic climax is ambiguously charged. The gunman is not caught and the children are left with no explanation of why the assassination of such a good person, an ethical teacher, has taken place. Yet there is hope: an unidentified voice promises that the speaker will always be there to teach the children. While the speech format with its implicit cataphoric reference to the words that follow the recorded statement suggests that this is Piya’s beloved Duangdaw speaking, it could also be the spirit of the dead teacher speaking through her or the voice of the novelist who is clearly identifying with the dead teacher’s fate at this point. The cycle of death and life is here with the cradling of the dead body and the focus on the young children who are witnessing the end of the novel; but this cycle is not reinforced by the Thai world view, which has not been foregrounded in the novel. The novelist Khonkhai himself explained in his preface to the seventh printing of the novel that his aim was only to describe the causes of problems:

I have only tried to set out those conditions which create problems in our society so that the members of society may recognize and understand them. I have no answers to these problems. (1978: xiii)
He later left teaching and was promoted to the position of Deputy Secretary-General of the Teachers Council of Thailand as a part of the Thai Ministry of Education (xiv).

Sudham’s representation of the death of the teacher is more clearly Thai and so is more complex for a Western reader. Prem is researching the deaths of those who had returned to the village as he plans to write stories about them and so turn their deaths into art. We learn that he is writing the death of Mana from AIDS as a story about a female impersonator for his book Tales of Siam which is actually “The Impersonator: A ‘kratoey’ speaks” in Tales of Thailand (2002: 97-101).

The segue to the next paragraph may be awkward or not cohesive to a Western reader, but it seems to be deliberately so – Sudham keeps back Prem’s reasons for making the scene which gives Charles cause to question the appropriateness of his intentions:

Meanwhile, a re-enactment of the killing of Kumjai must be staged. When Charles heard of it, he remonstrated, “It’s rather ghoulish, isn’t it? Don’t do it.” Yet the willful writer determined to go ahead with the plan. (667)

The reader is given the plan after it has been made. Prem’s thinking out the plan is not represented in the text. The ensuing scene may look like a ghoulish farce that is intended to distance the reader from any emotional attachment to the description of the death. In this way, Sudham seems to distance himself from the nam nao (‘black water’ or soap opera) quality of the Khonkhai ending quoted above. The grammar of the segue is peculiarly Thai with the first word (‘Meanwhile”) seemingly a literal translation of nai khana tee or rawang tee. As a time adverbial, “meanwhile” often seems out of place when used by Thais in their written English. But when the polysynchronic aspects of Thai time are understood, the vagueness of the word hints at a relationship between the two deaths in the text. Kumjai’s death will also be absorbed in Prem’s book of stories as a story titled “The Gunman” (2005: 668. See Tales of Thailand: 80-85 for the story subtitled with a Buddhist frame as “Ignorance is a source of suffering”)

The dramatization of the killing is foregrounded, pushing the emotional impact of the death back away from the reader and from Prem:

For this [re-enactment], he sought help from Anucha to act as Kumjai. That fatal day the headmaster was leading his pupils from the school building along the ridge of the Mongkol Pond towards the village street to make a protest at the District Office against the Department of Forestry’s grant to a concessionaire to turn Chanlaiwood into a eucalyptus plantation. Where the hired gunman had awaited him, Prem stood askance in readiness to pull an imaginary trigger. (667)
As the new headmaster who replaced Kumjai, Anucha seems to be in a fertility ritual (as described for instance by Frazer in *The Golden Bough*) which sees him being crowned or given the new leader’s role by playing the part of the dying leader. Prem, the pupil, assumes the role of the killer; the student is the killer of the teacher in the ritual re-enactment. The next paragraph which continues from this point seems to be in the mode of a detective story, but one where the physical facts are already known:

Because Anucha, on that tragic day, had been assigned to protect seventy students at the far end of the march, he could not have noticed a man and a motorcyclist waiting at the spot where the road on the ridge dipped to meet the street. But Kumjai must have seen them, had perhaps smiled at his murderer and the accomplice, hoping that they would join the protest. As the spearhead of the protest march dipped with the road, Anucha had heard five gunshots. The children had screamed and ran wildly away from the scene while the motorcycle sped off, leaving the fatally wounded school teacher and its poisonous fumes behind. (667)

This scene is symbolic, even in the matter of factness of the series of events deductively reconstructed in it. Anucha at the end of the spear-like column is juxtaposed with Kumjai at the “spearhead”. The sacrificed teacher smiles at his killers, seeming to misunderstand their intentions as benevolent. In place of the one bullet that kills Khonkai’s Piya, there are five bullets that kill Kumjai. These five bullets symbolically represent the evil counterpart to the five “David Stones” or stories, one of which Prem is developing in this scene. The ceremonial and militant aspects of the protest are highlighted by the description of the protest as a “march”. The symbolism is reinforced by the “poisonous” fumes left behind by the killers’ motorcycle which was polluting the air with its carbon monoxide exhaust fumes.

Once the facts known to the participants on that day have been explained, the story is recounted for a second time. This repetition underscores the ritualistic aspect of the narrative event:

Following Charles’ advice, the enactors agreed not to involve the schoolchildren in the resurrection of the killing scene. And so the new headmaster alone, in Kumjai’s shoes, moved conspicuously to the dip of the road where the hired gunman and the motorcyclist awaited their victim. Prem trembled with the effort to channel his inner vision into an invisible laser beam so as to penetrate the heart of the murderer. Thus he saw and felt and suffered the evil deed. With the buffalo’s eye still held fast, Prem approached and shook the teacher’s hand and held it while they gazed emotionally at each other. “I could see who are the real killers but I would not waste a curse on them. The late Napo seer, Grandpa Tatip forbade me to. So instead I shall hound them in my own way,” Prem promised, making Charles the witness. (667-668)

In the second version of the event, Prem’s psychic powers, his Etan buffalo vision, is the centre of the story. The hand he shakes may be Anucha’s in the re-enactment, but it is also the symbolic hand of the dead Kumjai who is re-embodied in his successor Anucha.
Missing from the scene is any emotional response by Prem to the actual death he has had a vision of; he is focused on understanding the killer who performs the sacrifice, not the victim. There is no pathos for the grail-like dying god-king, the dead headmaster.

The deaths of Regnitz, Tatip and Kumjai are bound together in this scene. As a dramatic work of art about death, as a dramatized ritual, it recalls Regnitz’s tone poem Tod, while Tatip’s injunction against Prem using his spirit power to curse those who do wrong is repeated to explain why Prem does not seek to punish Kumjai’s killers. What Prem sees is not included in the novel; we do not read Prem’s story. Instead, it is diverted out of the text and into the story “The Gunman” already published in Sudham’s Tales of Thailand. Another similarity between the three deaths is that we do not see Kumjai dying, or the reactions of others to his death. What is resurrected here is not Kumjai but the scene in which the killing occurred; it is a dramatic resurrection scene without the victim. The person who comes to life in Prem’s artistic and spiritual vision is the killer. As one of the enactors, Prem is involved in the scene when it is repeated; his mind enters the mind of the killer through being in the same physical space where Kumjai had earlier died. The teacher’s death has been de-centered and distanced; there is no emotional response such as we find in the death of the teacher in Teachers of Mad Dog Swamp. We do not see the schoolchildren crying in Prem’s re-enacted drama as they have been excluded from the resurrection as if to suggest that their emotional responses would have interfered with Prem’s vision. Sudham foregrounds this perspective when he describes Prem’s vision in this scene as an “invisible laser beam” focused on one point only. The scene has significance as the impetus for a work of art or New Journalism, Prem’s story which he subsequently writes. As such, Kumjai’s death is turned into material which helps Prem develop his own artistic skills. In the story “The Gunman” in Sudham’s Tales of Thailand, this centering of Kumjai continues; he is not mentioned by name, although the scene of his assassination is the same as in the novel. The story is written in the first person, from the viewpoint of the killer who shows remorse when he reads of the teacher’s death in the newspaper. The killer in the short story decides to leave Thailand for Laos to avoid being killed himself. The lesson learned, as with Tatip and Regnitz, is from the living, not the dead. Suffering (dukkha) is a life experience, not a death one. The lives of the characters are significant in terms of how the experiences of the characters lead to their deaths. The characters return to life as works of art in Prem’s life and as characters in works of art in Sudham’s work, not as ghosts or vengeful spirits. The focus in Sudham’s vision is always on the life force where the force of karma works, not the fear of death. This intertextual chain of events is the cultural source of the mythic ritualistic quality of Sudham’s art. The reader of Shadowed Country is led exophorically out of the novel and perhaps back in time to other works by Sudham which change their meaning when read in the context of the novel. Nothing seems to die forever, at least for a Thai Buddhist novelist.

The Ecology of a Wasteland

The deaths of characters in Sudham’s novel are less significant in themselves and more significant as passage ways or transitions that enable Prem to grow as an artist and as
a teacher. As such they are proxemic markers that organize the text’s space in terms of the deaths of those close to Prem.

Sudham points the reader of the novel to read beyond or outside the text, to connect other stories already written by Sudham in order to understand the textual and cultural schemata being evoked by the writer. As with Prem’s five “David Stones”, the various works gain strength through their proxemic thematic closeness to one another while being textually distant from each other. In this organic movement, the novel explicates the stories as much as the stories explicate the novel. The previous lives of the stories which lead to the novel function in the same way as the lives of Tatip, Regnitz and Kumjai insofar as the prior lives of the art and the characters explains their significance in the novel. There is no linear path to a final goal or telos: the novels and the stories are always in a state of flux as they are refashioned and expanded in each other’s light, becoming parts of each other in an organic form that is particularly Thai in its shape.

The growth of Sudham’s oeuvre in part is achieved through the deaths of the artist, the shaman and the teacher, each of whose roles seems to be taken up by Sudham the creative writer. Just as Wealdon’s life in the Prologue set in the nineteenth century is absorbed in Prem’s experience, so are the lives of the archetypes of the shaman, the artist and the teacher. Prem’s previous experiences shape his life as he grows into the artist Sudham, just as, in an autobiographical sense, Sudham’s previous experiences in life and in his work grow into Prem’s life as a character who embodies Sudham. The karmic wheel is the archetype of a learning experience, as is suggested by Wealdon’s name: the wheel is the don or teacher. The wheel which never stops turning suggests the writer’s view of his art as not having an ending or a death, but a cycle. Each time he writes, he changes the relations of all his other works through what may be understood in terms of what David Bohm (1980) calls the implicate order: that everything is connected is a lesson of Buddhism and Thai animism.

When the lives of Tatip, Regnitz and Kumjai are placed together, they take on a wider mythic significance which is related to the land where Prem has grown as a buffalo boy who learns to live inside his own buffalo Etan’s eyes which are the source of his animistic visionary powers. What Prem sees and represents in his art, and what Sudham represents in the novel cycle with its intertextualized stories, is the “wasteland” (370, 508, 531, 666), the “cursed” (633) land, that is Isarn over which falls the shadow of the dark lord, a spirit power as much as a symbolic power representing corruption and political violence committed against the minds of the people of Isarn as students in the Thai education system and against the land itself which is destroyed by property developers. The mind and the land are inseparable or entwined aspects of the wasteland with its mythic echoes of Jessie L. Weston’s study of the Grail romances and with T.S. Eliot’s modernist epic mythic poem The Wasteland. Sudham, as Prem, sees Isarn as the “cursed land” (633) and seems to work to lift the curse through his own deeds which will work off the karma he has accrued as Wealdon.

As a teacher in Isarn at the end of the novel, Prem works to ensure that his students have “growing minds”, “a wholesome and a well developed mind”, not “stunted and deformed as his had been” (747). He returns to England occasionally to see the mythically and
epically suggestively named boy Priam who: must be free and untouched by a mind-maiming
method aimed to foster subservience and mindlessness which in turn permitted corruption to
progress punitively, enabling the Dark Lord to expand greatly and govern ruthlessly without
challenge, without trammels. (747)

The allusion to the myth of Troy in the child’s name links the ending of the
novel to a mythic structure of meaning. The destruction of the land as a result of corruption and
ignorance can only be fought with the education of the young. In performing this task, he is
maintaining what Gregory Bateson (1982) refers to as the “ecology of the mind”, the
destruction of which by the Dark Lord’s education system ensures that the cycle of dukkha
(101) or suffering continues as a spiritual death of the minds of its victims. The novel itself
both embodies Prem’s way, his education out of the darkness (585), and Sudham’s vision of his
role as a writer who embodies the teacher, the artist and the seer. As such, both character and
novelist create life out of death in a pattern of the karmic cycle.

Sudham’s educative and ecological themes are entwined in the cyclical shape of
his work. Change, understood in Buddhist terms as impermanence, comes as part of the cycle
of life and death. Prem leaves Isarn only to return with the force of karma on his side once he
has learned the lessons taught by the seer, the artist and the teacher. His survival is ensured
under the protection of the Mother Spirit until he has worked out his karma (745) through his
ecological acts of protecting the natural and mental environments of his village. Against the
“corruption” (747) of death is the “conception” (747) or birth of Prem’s plans to keep his child,
Priam, away from the Dark Lord who still rules the shadowed country where Prem works at
“nurturing the growing minds” (747) of his students which would otherwise be “stunted and
deformed” (747).

The formal significance of the typically Thai continually morphing shapes of the
novel is that the Thai view of life as the experience of impermanence as change is a symbolic
assertion of the hope that while things can change for the worse, they can also be changed for
the better through education and that writing is the novelist’s way of participating in the
process. The rooting of the novel’s growth in terms of the creative changes it embodies in each
of its new-born cyclical iterations seems, in the context of the ecology of the Thai mind, to
offer hope that while things remain in flux that change at all levels of life is possible. The
“death” of previous forms of the fictions that are embodied in Shadowed Country are
transformed into their next life in the novel. Inanimate things, even novels, have a life force for
the people of Isarn who see their environment animistically.

In conclusion: the beginnings of Shadowed Country in previous fictions allow
the writer to recycle and preserve his work. The beginnings and current endings are brought
together to create a larger space that is the printed version of the novel Shadowed Country. This
proxemic closeness of the re-embodied texts is a form of textual karma. Given Sudham’s
emphasis on saving the ecology of Isarn and his Thai conceptions of the proxemic closeness of
all things in time and space, his novel seems to be a major embodiment of Thai cultural values
which are based on the death and rebirth of language and art as much as of people. All things from the apparently dead past are absorbed, expanded, and changed: nothing is wasted. This is the karmic principle that guides Sudham’s vision of life and death as he shapes this vision into his reborn fictions.

Sudham’s essentially Thai vision of the novel as an art form shaped by death and rebirth, while seemingly foreign to a Western reader who expects novels to finish once they have been published and to conform in a way to Roland Barthes’ view of the “death of the writer” need to open themselves to the non-Western idea that things never die as such, once and for all, and that novels are open, not closed: while the author may die, the life force understood as the karmic creativity of the artist/ seer/ teacher who understands his role in terms that are firmly rooted in the soil from which he grows, means that the writer as artist lives on in his work which should be understood in ecological terms as part of the life/ death cycle which recognizes the proxemic closeness of the two forces as entangled in each other as part of the natural mythic cycle. This reading of the novel in terms of the social, cultural and religious ideas and beliefs that create, shape and reform its form and content suggests that a new way of reading and enjoying the new literatures of English is possible in terms of a way of seeing verbal art in the mythic patterns that are still alive in their elemental and real shapes as life is experienced in the Thailand of Pira Canning Sudham.

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