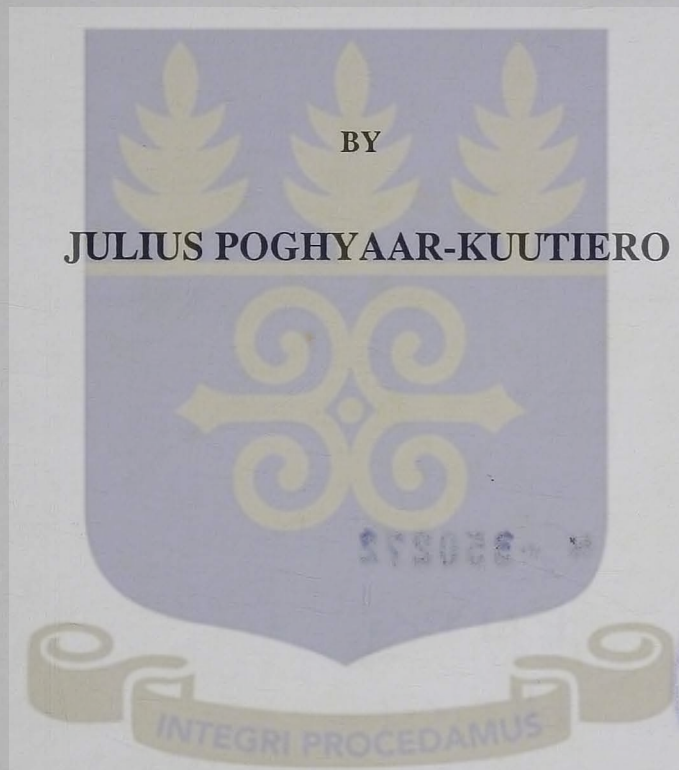


AESTHETICS AND FUNCTIONS OF PRAISE POETRY: A CASE STUDY OF A DAGARA TRADITION

BY

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**A dissertation presented to the Department of English,
University of Ghana, Legon, in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the award of the Master of
Philosophy in English.**

4TH MAY, 1997.

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
LEGON.**

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife, Mary

To Lillian, Eunice and Dominic

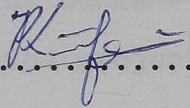
Vitus, Yvon and Renata.



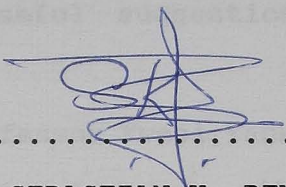
DECLARATION

I do solemnly declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that it has not been presented elsewhere for another degree. References to other works and quotations both written and oral have been acknowledged.

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I am much obliged to Mrs. Kari Dako too, for her useful comments. I also wish to thank Rev. Dr. Yvon Yangyuoru most sincerely for his encouraging support during my course of study at Legon. I am also thankful to Rev. Dr. Gervase Angsotinge for his critical and useful comments.

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Virginia Maaniasie, Rose DonIr, NaanmInzUmE KUnwõkole and Denisia DaabE. The rest are Messrs DõmEkũũ, Thomas Ba-InnimaahE, D£bgUr and Bernard WõbrmE.

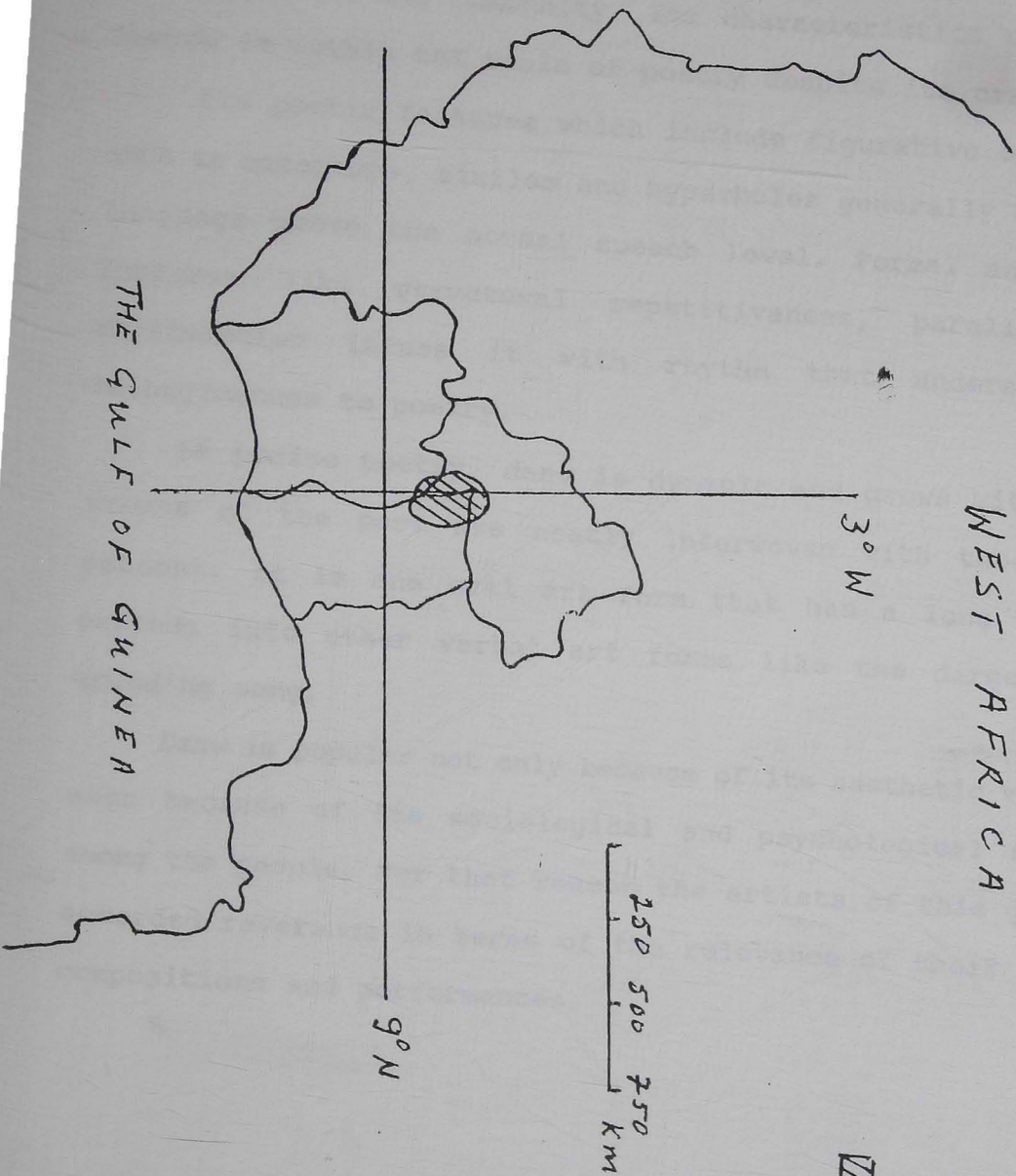
My sincere thanks also go to the Director of the Language Centre, Legon, Professor Mary Esther Kropp Dakubu for allowing me the use of the Centre's computer to process this text. I am grateful to Mrs. Doris Adjei and Mr. Seth Nii Moi Allotey, both at the Language Centre, University of Ghana, Legon, for processing the text. Thanks to my colleague, Abaaduko Adazabra for helping in the editing of this dissertation. My sincere thanks also go to Mr. Alfred Dome for his material support in the penultimate stages of this dissertation.

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JULIUS P. KUUTIERO,

MAY, 1997.





 RELATIVE POSITION
OF THE DAAABA

ABSTRACT

Danu is a popular art form among the Dagara. It is literally a praise song or chant performed to celebrate the exploits of an individual in the community. Its characteristics conveniently locate it within the realm of poetry despite its orality.

Its poetic features which include figurative expressions, such as metaphors, similes and hyperboles generally elevate its language above the normal speech level. Formal and prosodic features like structural repetitiveness, parallelism and alliteration infuse it with rhythm that underscores its belongingness to poetry.

As praise poetry, *danu* is dynamic and grows with time as events of the past are neatly interwoven with those of the present. It is one oral art form that has a long range and extends into other verbal art forms like the dirge and the grinding song.

Danu is popular not only because of its aesthetic value, but also because of its sociological and psychological functions among the people. For that reason the artists of this genre are accorded reverence in terms of the relevance of their creative compositions and performances.



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CHAPTER ONE

1.00 INTRODUCTION

1.01 ORAL LITERATURE: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

This study is focused on praise poetry, *danu*, located in the oral literature tradition of the Dagara people. The Dagara (sing. and pl.) who also speak Dagara, are mainly an agrarian people and they occupy almost entirely the Upper West Region of the Republic of Ghana and the south-eastern corner of the Republic of Burkina Faso. More will be said of them in the next chapter but at this point, I would like to dwell on a historical overview of the development of African oral literature of which the Dagara praise poetry, *danu* is a constituent part.

Courses on African folklore and oral literature can now be found in various universities in Africa and other parts of the world, especially in the United States of America (U.S). Apart from that, international conferences on African folklore and oral literature are organised and sponsored by various literary groups in Africa, Europe and the U.S. (c.f. Yankah 1985, p.1). With this current development in view, one may safely say that African oral literature is eventually being accorded its rightful place among the literary art forms.

But this was unthinkable in the nineteenth century when Western view of the African was so negative that Europeans could not imagine that the African was capable of "actually thinking and feeling, his imagination proving creative, having a sense and appreciation of poetic form of rhythm and rhyme!" (Seidel 1896, in Jahn 1968, p.55). Since the African was not capable of thinking in Siedel's Western view, it was certainly not expected

of him to have "literary pretensions" (Finnegan 1970 p. 27).

Nevertheless by the middle of the century, the unfortunate "popular European image of Africa" (Finnegan op. cit p.27) began to undergo a slight change as a result of the emergence of the findings of linguistic studies of specialists and missionaries on African languages. This study of the African languages was prompted by the evangelising movement of the West in Africa, aimed at "pacifying" and "civilising" Africa. To facilitate effective communication between themselves and their target groups potential African converts, the missionaries had to learn the languages of the Africans. In the process of learning some of them came up with the grammars and vocabularies on them (cf. Finnegan 1970, p. 28).

A case in point in the Dagara context is the development of *"Dagaare-English Dictionary"* in 1953 by Rev. J.B. Duran, one of the pioneer Catholic Missionaries who introduced Christianity to the Dagara population in 1929. (cf. P.P. Dery 1979, p.6). Others went further to collect proverbs, riddles and stories of the Africans. Again in the case of missionary movement among the Dagara, St. John Bosc's Press, Navrongo, published several Dagara Primers and Dagara short stories.

Missionaries and linguists collaborated closely and made many great collections. The ultimate outcome of their collections was the publication of the grammars, folktales, proverbs and riddles that shocked Europeans at home. In a remark on this surprised reaction of the Europeans Carl Meinhof said:

"the African whom we hardly credit with any deep feelings, is infinitely rich in fairy-tales [....] these are so like our own fairy tales" (Meinhof in

Jahn 1968, p.55).

If Meinhof's remark seems patronising Seidel's statement in the foreword to probably the first great anthology of African oral literature published in 1896 might be more embarrassing. It reads in part:

"A wild African! A black beast! Fancy him actually thinking and feeling, his imagination proving creative! More than that, even, fancy him having a sense and appreciation of poetic form of rhythm and rhyme! It sounds quite incredible, yet it is true".
(Op. Cit Seidel 1896 in Jahn 1968, p.55)

However, the resultant amazement arising from the realisation of this hitherto unknown world of the African, gave impetus to scholars of various philosophical schools to also research into African folklore in a bid to find the origin and characteristics of human culture and its development as was done in other parts of the world. (Okpewho 1992, p.5).

In this search, it was the evolutionists who first entered the field. These were disciples of Charles Darwin (1809 - 1882) who believed "that all biological species have over a long period been undergoing various changes until they have reached the forms in which we find them today". (Ibid. p.5). Darwin's compatriots and followers, Edward B. Taylor and James G. Frazer, believed in the fundamental "principle that there is one human race and one human mind spread out across the face of the earth (Okpewho Op. cit. p.5). So, for them, the examination of two cultures at the same stage of development would reveal the qualitative similarities of their folklore. In view of this the evolutionists pursued a comparative study of various cultures in order to prove

their point that humanity is one. Thus, Frazer who had begun his "research into the origins of magical and religious rituals among a small tribe in Italy" eventually expanded his scope to cover various cultures of the world including Africa.

He gathered a lot of research material from Africa through former students and some colleagues on colonial tour as administrators. Notable collaborators were Robert Rattray among the Akan in Ghana and Hausa of Nigeria, P. Amqury Talbot among the Ekoi of Nigeria and Rev. Henri Junod among the Tonga of South Africa. John Roscoe who worked among the Baganda of Uganda, and Andrew Dale who worked with Edwin Smith along the Ila of Zambia, were other contributors to Frazer's formidable collections of African folklore in *The Golden Bough* (1911 - 1936).

Encouraged by Frazer, Rattray and his colleagues also wrote books in which the various texts they had collected - folktales, songs, riddles, proverbs and other verbal art forms were examined. For instance, Rattray wrote several works which included *Some Folklore, Stories and Songs in Chinyanja* (1907) *Hausa Folklore, Customs, Proverbs Etc.* (1913); *Ashanti Proverbs: The Primitive Ethics of a Savage People*, (1916); *Akan-Ashanti Folktales*, (1930). Talbot also wrote *In the Shadow of the Bush* (1912), while Dale and Smith jointly authored *The Ila-speaking People of Northern Rhodesia*, (1920).

Although the evolution oriented ethnologists collected a lot of verbal art forms texts of Africa, they failed to recognise their literary significance. This was due to their unfortunate practice of selecting texts and examining them only to establish their primitivity of origin. They considered whatever folktales,

songs and their like as "survivals of earlier ones" (Okpewho 1992, p.6) handed down from generation to generation by mouth to this date. The evolutionists, further held that the texts were not even understood by their performers themselves since what they performed were fossils of the original ones authored in the dim past.

It is clear from their operational practice that the individual performer's style and skills in performance, were played down and were never considered as creative or innovative. This unfortunate attitude to collected texts led to the erroneous conclusion that the texts were not works of art and could not be regarded as literature.

Secondly, they contradicted themselves when they assumed that the texts had been transmitted word for word to the future generations and yet claimed that that the texts were communally owned. In other words, no individual could be cited as the author of any particular text. "These errors of judgement" Okpewho points out, "arose primarily because of the improper method of collecting and especially of recording the texts" (Ibid. p.7). A comparative approach to several versions of a text as Gordon Innes later adopted towards the Sundiata epic, would have revealed the creative skills of the individual performers. But concerned mainly with the concept of cultural development and origin of cultural ideas, the evolutionists failed to closely examine the texts and thus missed the chance of being credited with pioneering the study of oral literature in Africa.

The diffusionists were another group of anthropologists who were interested in cultural historical development. These were

so named because of their belief that culture is diffused from one source to other parts of the world through contact and association. Contrary to the evolutionists who held that cultural change was vertical the diffusionists believed that change is horizontal. For instance, in their view, if two stories from two different cultures show similarities it is not because people all over the world think alike but because, at one time or the other, one culture must have borrowed the ideas of the other through contact.

As it was generally believed by Western Scholars that the origins of various cultural forms would be found in India, a search was conducted to locate the lines or conduits of the flow of influence from the Indo-European culture to the other cultures. To facilitate effective search the world was demarcated into cultural zones where people were classified according to the similarities in the languages, belief systems, climate and so on (Ibid. p.7).

In terms of their contribution to oral literature, the diffusionists mainly collected a lot of folktales from various cultures and published them especially under the influence of the German brothers, Jacob and Wilhelm Grim . In consonance with the arrogance and prejudice of their time the Grimms in their *Household Tales* expressed their view that African folktales that bear similarities with European ones must have been derived from the latter. This erroneous assumption about African tales was carried over from the generation of the Grimms to this modern era by the American diffusionist, Stith Thompson. For Thompson, Africans borrowed European tales during the heinous slave trade

era, hence the similarities between some Africa stories and European ones.

Later diffusionist scholars such as Richard Dorson, William Bascom and Alan Dundes have also succeeded in classifying tale-types or motifs but they could have done more for oral literature in Africa especially, had they not been obsessed with the quest for origin of folktales.

But if like the evolutionists, the diffusionists did not do much for oral literature, the functionalists who later entered the field of cultural studies did make an impact. Bronislaw Malinowski and his notable contemporaries, Radcliffe Brown and Franz Boas infused scientific empiricism into anthropological investigations.

Malinowski denounced the practice of assuming that people everywhere think alike and have the same pattern of behaviour before going into examine the folktales for instance, of a people for confirmation. For him the function of these folklores to a particular culture was what was relevant for better understanding of the culture in question.

In view of this Malinowski stressed the need for sociologists to relate whatever is recorded to the "social context" (Ibid. p.10). This implies taking into consideration as Bascom stated:

"(1) when and where the various forms of folklore are told; (2) who tells them, whether or not they are privately owned and who composes the audience; (3) dramatic devices employed by the narrator, such as gestures, facial expressions, pantomime, impersonation, or mimicry; (4) audience participation in the form of laughter, assent or other responses,

running criticism or encouragement of the narrator, singing or dancing or cutting out parts in the tale; (5) categories of folklore recognised by the people themselves; and (6) attitudes of the people toward these categories (Bascom 1965 in Okpewho 1992,p.10).

While considering these functionalist guidelines as a breakthrough in the study of folklore and for that matter, oral literature, it may be said that the functionalists however failed to critically analyse the artistic components of the texts and performers. They thus recorded their texts in prose leaving out oral stylistic elements like repetition, idiophones, exclamations and the use of musical instruments and further neglected to indicate what the combined effect of all these elements was on the performance. The failure to highlight some of these features in folklore performances denied the earlier recognition of this art form as a literary genre.

In spite of that shortcoming, it may still be said that the sociologists' appreciation of "the artistic quality of oral texts has led to the use of such terms as 'verbal art' and 'oral art' in describing the literature" (ibid. p.10). The guidelines have also been employed by a few other scholars such as Daniel Biebuyck (1978) and with Mateene (1969) on Zairean folktales. Similarly, Dan Ben-Amos employed them in his works (1971 and 1972) on the Bini of Nigeria.

Apart from the foregoing approaches to the study of culture which used folklore as a means of reaching their goals, was the psycho-analytic approach based on the rivalling Freudian and Jungian theories. While Rattray (1930) and Herskovitz (1934)

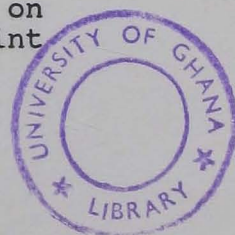
reflect Freudian psycho-analytic theory, Radin (1952) reflects that of Jung (Finnegan 1970: 45).

The structuralist approach encouraged by Emile Durkheim was also applied by Levi-Strauss (Okpewho 1992, p.178 ff) in analysing myths. But all these approaches fell short of treating the various texts encountered as works of art. Thus, African verbal performances irrespective of their sophistication and quality, remained unrecognised as oral literature.

However, the entry of the musicologists (c.f. Finnegan, 1970, p.42) into the African world of songs brought in its wake a ray of hope. Some sensitive musicologists observed poetry in the words they sometimes had to match with the music they had recorded. They were often struck by the poetic usages of the words. Their shift of emphasis from traditional to the new and topical (Ibid. p.42) was a welcome move as it showed the dynamic nature of African songs whether ephemeral or popular. The Johannesburg based African Music Society stimulated by the enthusiasm of Hugh Tracey in oral art and music made a lot of recordings of oral art forms and publicised the results of the scientific study conducted on them (Finnegan Op. cit. p.42). By their efforts the musicologists created the awareness that African art forms were inherently poetic.

Finnegan's in-depth study of the Limba folktales enabled her to state emphatically in her *Limba Stories and Story-Telling*, (1967) that:

"The story tellers (among the Limba of Sierra Leone) are all individuals', individuals who perform on specific individual occasions. There is no joint



common 'folk' authorship or set form of performance dictated by blind tradition. The stories are naturally composed and enacted within the limits of the social background of Limba life and literary conventions; but each individual performer has his own idiosyncrasies and unique fund of experience, interest and skills." (Finnegan 1967, p.17)

Taking such a firm stand on the contentious issue of individual authorship as against common authorship of African art forms which was the position of many scholars, was a bold step on her part. Since the "individual artistic skills" (Okpewho Op. cit. 1992, p.16), "personal concerns and beliefs" (Angsotinge 1986, p.329) and setting can result in an entirely different performance or narrative event from what is supposedly communally owned, it is possible to talk of individual authorship of any of the art forms.

Finnegan's second book *Oral Literature in Africa*, (1970) is even more comprehensive and impressive even though again, her controversial position that there is no epic tradition in Sub-Saharan Africa has been hotly disputed. Nevertheless, her contribution to oral literature has been immense for she has two other books: *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context*, (1977) and *Oral Tradition and Verbal Arts* (1992) to her credit apart from many other learned papers on the subject.

Gordon Innes' contribution to the study of African verbal arts has been his approach to recording oral texts through his *Sunjata: Three Mandinka Versions*, (1974) and two other books - *Kaabu and Fuluda: Historical Narratives of the Gambia Mandinka* (1976) and *Kelefa Saane: His Career Recounted by Two Mandinka Bards* (1978).

So if today African oral literature appears to have gained more grounds as a literary genre than before, it is because some researchers - Africans and non-Africans, who saw the literariness of the African verbal arts as synonymous to or as an oral variation of the written literature in vogue particularly in literate cultures, endeavoured to project it to world view.

1.02 REAPPRAISAL OF DEFINITION OF GENRE

Having considered the views of the various schools of thought on oral arts of Africa from the early nineteenth century onwards to the point of entry of the African scholars, it may be appropriate to reappraise what contemporary scholars of oral literature say it is and what distinguishes it from written literature.

Ruth Finnegan by way of definition says this about oral literature:

"Oral literature is by definition dependent on a performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion - there is no other way in which it can be realised as a literary product" (Finnegan 1970, p.2).

Isidore Okpewho tersely defines the subject as: "literature delivered by mouth" (1992, p.3). On the other hand, Kwesi Yankah who prefers the term "aural literature" (Yankah 1985, p.114) defines the non-written literature in these words:

"Non-written literature may be portrayed essentially as an acoustic phenomenon, the channel for whose transmission may or may not be the oral medium. Aural literature encompasses oral forms of lore, but is also a reminder that the world of sound in which predominantly illiterate cultures live is not that of the spoken only, but also one in which word-bound

sound is traced to 'talking' instruments" (Ibid. pp. 114-115).

While Finnegan and Okpewho lay stress on verbal performance of the artist, Yankah goes beyond that to include the acoustic perception from other media other than the human voice. But Nandwa and Bukenya see oral literature as:

"those utterances, whether spoken recited or sung, whose composition and performance exhibit to an appreciable degree the artistic characteristics of accurate observation, vivid imagination and ingenious expressions." (Nandwa and Bukenya 1983, p.1)

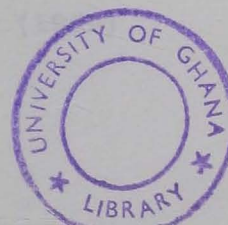
This definition is quite elaborate but like those of Finnegan and Okpewho and many others, it is silent on instrumentals such as drums, xylophones, and horns as channels or oral literature. These instruments effectively play out what could have been verbalised. They are thus competent surrogates of the human voice and Yankah (Ibid. p.122) describes them as "substitutive systems" while Theodore Stern (1957, p.492) calls them "abridgment systems." The ability of these instruments to replace the human voice is because their tones are tuned to correspond with the tonal languages of the people who use them (c.f. Finnegan 1970, p.482; Okpewho 1992, p.255) and are therefore important aspects of the oral literary tradition of Africa especially.

The concept of orality presupposes a binary opposition between it and writtenness. A written piece of work has physical tangibility and is easily perceived by sight and recognised as such, as its contents of verbal expressions are graphically represented on paper or any such surface. Since it is tangible

it is permanent and it can be distributed or transmitted by replication. Thus writtenness applied to literature which according to the Western canonical classification comprises prose, poetry and drama, implies that written literature has the features mentioned above.

The genesis of written literature seems so remote to the modern generations of literate cultures that there is the tendency to think that all the poems, stories and songs encountered in books have always been written and have never ever been transmitted from generation to generation by way of mouth - a hallmark of oral tradition. Hence it is difficult for some people of the predominantly literate cultures to accept the notion of another aspect of literature that is oral.

This rejection however, does not make oral literature unreal. Its primordial quality as well as the fact that it is a precursor of written literature cannot be denied. Nor can the dynamism and vibrancy of oral literature among both the lettered and unlettered societies be ignored. But this is against the backdrop of its ephemeral nature since it lacks tangible and permanent physical presence. Because it has no "tangible existence" (Finnegan 1970, p.2) exact copies cannot be made of it for distribution and transmission like written literature, in spite of the current methods of recording. As Finnegan puts it, oral literature depends on "repeated performances" for existence. Without its oral realisation and direct rendition by singer or speaker, an unwritten literary piece cannot easily be said to have any continued or independent existence at all (Finnegan Ibid. p.2).



Performance not only sustains unwritten literature, but facilitates its attainment of "true fulfilment" as a work of art for in oral performance:

"expressiveness of tone, gesture, facial expression, dramatic use of pause, and rhythm, the interplay of passion, dignity or humour receptivity to the reactions of audience etc. [---] are not mere embellishments superadded to the already existent literary work [---] but as an intergral as well as flexible part of its full realisation as a work of art" (Ibid. p.3).

Those who fail to take these histrionics as delineated above into consideration but depend on the words alone miss the opportunity of appreciating the essential elements of the oral literature performance and run the risk of making erroneous statements like J.L. Dohne who wrote of the Zulu poetry thus:

" [---] nothing like poetry or song exists - no meter, no rhyme, nothing that interests or soothes the feelings or arrests the passion."

(Dohne 1857 in O.R. Dathorne 1974, p.61)

Of course, this notion has long been discredited as Dohne's conclusion had been based on not only ignorance but incorrect theoretical assumptions of his time which viewed "metre and rhyme as essential defining characteristics of poetical language" (Anyidoho, 1977, p.13).

To talk of repeated performance invariably implies talking of repeated composition too since the two appear to have a siamese twins relationship. According to Milman Parry's and Albert B. Lord's oral formulaic theory, oral composition and performance are contemporaneous. This means that while performance is going on, composition is taking place simultaneously. As Lord succinctly put in *Singer of Tales*, (1960)

"an oral poem is not composed for, but in performance."

Meanwhile it is worthwhile noting that the term 'oral literature' has had many variants since the anthropologists began to probe into the history of human cultural development in the early nineteenth century. These variants include 'folklore' first used by William John Thoms in a letter to the 'Athenaeum' (Dundes 1965, p.4 in Okpewho 1992, p.4). But folklore may now be seen to be an umbrella term that covers both material and oral culture of society. 'Verbal art' came from William Bascom in 1949 while Utley suggested 'folk literature.' On the other hand Herskovitz oscillates between 'spoken art' and 'oral art.' Greenway in 1964 had proposed the phrase 'literature among the primitives' but Ruth Finnegan coming after Wellek and Warren preferred 'oral literature'. She observed no conflict "in the juxtapositioning of 'oral and literature' since the equivalents of literature in such languages as German and Russian make no suggestion of the written word" (Yankah 1985, p.117). Kwesi Yankah's position on his use of the term 'aural literature' has been commented on above already.

As expected, each proposer of these varied terms has a particular interest or emphasis in regard to this unwritten literature. While some coin pejorative terms in genuine response to the prejudice they harbour against it, others are more concerned with emphasising some aspects of the unwritten literature. However, one thing that is common to most is that they recognise the literariness of the oral performance that they so name. In that regard, the term 'oral literature' is quite appropriate in classifying all verbal art forms as well as what

emanates from instruments such as drums, xylophones and horns. But to eschew monotony in the use of the term, positive variants of oral literature will be resorted to in this study.

1.03 NEW TRENDS

Notwithstanding what has been stated above it was really the direct involvement of the African Scholars researching into their own traditions that took the study of African oral literature to greater heights (Okpewho 1970, p.12). According to Okpewho, these Africans knew their language and were aware of the beautiful expressions in them even before they became aware of the beauty in expressions in other languages they learnt later. They were thus better equipped to perform better than the Europeans most of whom did not know the African languages well and depended on native translators in the task of recording African oral art. And as Angsotinge said of Melville J. and Frances S. Herskovits who worked among the Fon of Benin "recent studies seem to indicate that the Herskovitses did not do as much intensive fieldwork as had been thought. It would seem most of the fieldwork was done by their assistants" who collected stories in Fon and translated them into French for the Herskovitses to categorise on the basis of behavioural pattern of the narrator. (Angsotinge 1986, p.66).

Still on the difference in approach between the European scholars and their African counterparts in the recording of African verbal art Okpewho had this to say:

"The difference between such scholars and their European

counterparts were inevitably strong. Whereas many Europeans treated African culture and everything that came from it as 'primitive' or inferior to their own, the African scholars approached this culture with a feeling of understanding and pride and whereas the foreigners saved much trouble by eliminating from the texts what they did not understand, the native scholar took the trouble to explain the meaning and effectiveness of various techniques in the original texts which give their artistic qualities" (Okpewho Op.cit. p.42).

What Okpewho has said of the African scholars recording of their oral art forms can be seen demonstrated in the works of even the pioneering works of Akagame of Rwanda, S. Adeboye Babalola of Nigeria, J.H.K. Nketia of Ghana and Daniel P. Kunene of South Africa. These pioneers have researched into aspects of their respective cultures and have written not only on their functions but on their aesthetics as well. Indeed Babalola's *The Content and Form of Yoruba Ijala*, (1966) could be said to have come in response to the call made by J. Berry (1961) to his African colleagues to make a more stylistic and analytic study of their languages. This call may be seen as a clear admission of failure by foreigners to effectively analyse the African art forms. The reasons for the failure were not remote. They were simply the prejudices the West had about the African and the insufficiency in the mastery of African languages and knowledge of the African world-view. Hence Babalola bereft of the limitations of the foreigner produced a work that has been acclaimed as very successful in bringing out the poetic artistry of the Ijala chants.

In a similar vein, Kunene's book *Heroic Poetry of the Basotho* (1971) marked another milestone in the development of the study of African oral literature. Inspired firstly by Milman

Parry and Albert B. Lord's research in the heroic poetics of Greece, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* and the Yugoslav songs, and secondly by the spirit of nationalism (Okpewho Op. cit: 14), Kunene undertook a research into the Sotho heroic poetry that culminated in the publication of his book.

The book among other things discusses the structure of the Sotho language, explains the Sotho concept of heroism and proceeds to analyse the praise - names which Kunene prefers to call 'eulogues'. It also deals with the issue of repetition in heroic poetry on the basis of Parry-Lord's oral formulaic theory and furthermore, examines how the heroic style in the oral tradition may influence a Sotho poet with Western education.

In fact, much earlier than Babalola's and Kunene's publications was Nketia's *Funeral Dirges of the Akan People* published in 1955. This book not only dealt with the form, content and function of the Akan dirges sung by unprofessional female chanters, but it also discussed the literary artistry inherent in them.

Thus ever since the entry of Kagame, Nketia, Babalola, and Kunene in the field of oral literature, many more African Scholars have followed them. These include Kofi Awoonor of Ghana whose *Guardians of the Sacred Word* (1974) comprises a selection of oral poetry from notable traditional poets of his Ewe culture, which he translated and edited. A formidable poet in his own right, Awoonor applied the richness of his creative experience to show the poetic aesthetics in the literature of his people in translation (Okpewho Op. cit, p.14).

J.P. Clark of *The Ozidi Saga* fame won acclaim in his

approach to African oral performance recording. Clark's book published in 1977, focuses on the performance aspect in the oral narrative event. Thus Okpewho is quite right in saying that "the usefulness of Clark's work is that it draws attention to the fact that oral narratives are produced in circumstances different from those in which, say, novels are written and must be judged in different terms" (Okpewho Op. Cit. p.15).

Impressed with the performances of the pioneer African scholars in oral literature studies, an appreciable number of younger scholars have developed an interest for it and have entered the field researching into the literary forms of their people and others. In this connection mention may be made of the Malian A. Hampate Ba for his part in the translation of heroic tales of the Bambara into French, the Guinean D.T. Niane for making a classic translation of the Sundiata epic into French and Birago Diop of Senegal for also translating Wolof folklore into French.

In a similar vein Mazisi Kunene, inspired by Thomas Mofolo's book on Shaka, came out with an epic narrative entitled *Emperor Shaka The Great*, (1979) to be followed by another epic narrative, *Anthem of the Decades*, (1981). But Kunene's works were preceded by Okot p'Bitek's *Hare and Hornhill*, (1978), a translation of Ugandan folktales. Okot's earlier works such as *Song of Lawino/Song of Ocol*, (1966/67) and *The Horn of My Love*, (1974) are well grounded on Acholi oral song tradition.

Apart from Nketia, Awoonor and Adali-Mortty, there is a younger generation of researchers in Ghana who have written their dissertations on various aspects of oral literature and have

continued to investigate and publish learned papers on the subject. Notable among these scholars are Kofi Anyidoho, Kwesi Yankah and Kofi Agovi who have been active in this field and have also taught courses on oral literature at the University of Ghana, Legon. Anyidoho who has established himself as one of the leading poets in Africa has several collections of poems rooted in the oral literary tradition especially of the Ewe.

As regards Dagara oral literature especially, a lot of guided long essays have been written on various topics by students of the School of Ghana Languages, Ajumako, now a department in the newly created University College of Education at Winneba. I have written a similar essay on xylophone texts of the Dagara titled *Dagaaba Gyilbie*, (1984). Bob Dery and Mark Ali also have to their credit several volumes of poetry.

The fact that all the aforesaid literature is written in Dagara, limits the readership to the few who are literate in the language. As a result, hardly anything is known of Dagara literature to the outside world beyond the Dagara land. Not even the Catholic Church's liturgy which has made so much use of the Dagara art forms like songs, proverbs and idiomatic expressions, has been able to project their literary qualities to popular view simply because of the language limitation.

In recent times, however, some Dagara scholars such as Sebastian K. Bemile, Dannabang Kuwabong, and Gervase Angsotinge have brought into focus at least the nature of Dagara folktales. Both Bemile and Kuwabong came out with a collection of folktales each titled *The Wisdom Which Surpasses That of the King*, (1983) and *Naa Kɔnga: A Collection of Dagaaba Folktales*, (1992)

respectively. Angsotinge's work, *The Wisdom of the Ancestors: An Analysis of the Oral Narratives of the Dagaaba of Northern Ghana*, (1986) which is a doctoral dissertation is a comprehensive one that analyses in depth the Dagara folktale events as vehicles of knowledge, wisdom and morality among other human values. Jack Goody's work, *The Myth of the Bagre*, (1972), may be said to be an impressive work that relates to Dagara oral literature. The Bagre incantation is poetic in form even as Goody has appropriately written it and has moreover stated in his commentary that "the recitation is accompanied by a rhythmic beat ..." (Goody, Op. cit: 58). The leader beats out the rhythm and those present do the same with stones or by tapping calabashes. It is little wonder indeed that sensitive Africans have recognised its poetic qualities and have anthologised a portion of it in *A Selection of African Poetry*, (1976) edited by Senanu and Vincent.

But James Saanchi's Master's dissertation titled, *The Dagaaba Dirge: A Study of its Structure and Style*, (1992) has made a critical evaluation of the Dagara dirge tradition. Indeed, it is one study that has discussed at length the theme of praise - the subject of this thesis. Saanchi's treatment of the theme of praise is however, confined to the domain of the dirge tradition. Michel Strumph had in a similar thesis, *The Dramatic Elements of the LoDagaa Funeral*, (1978) also dealt mainly with the dramatic nature of the Dagara funeral celebration as a way of reconciling the bereaved community to the loss of one of its members.

1.04 COMPONENTS OF ORAL LITERATURE

Oral literature like the written counterpart is wide ranging and its numerous aspects are not easily categorised under the western canonical divisions of prose, poetry and drama. William Bascom who at first thought it was enough to categorise genres like myths, legends and folktales under prose narratives found later that he had to modify his classification and alter his categories to two instead of three because the three categories did not appear to be distinct in other cultures. (Bascom 1965a, p.5 in Angsotinge 1986, pp.63-64). The Herskovitses who worked among the Fon of the Republic of Benin as well Daniel Biebuyck who worked among the Nyanga of Zaire, like many other researchers in African folklore encountered the problem of categorisation.

When it comes to grouping the various verbal art forms under prose, poetry or drama, it even becomes more difficult for the main reason that they are fluid and tend to overlap. For instance within the structures of story-telling and oratory which Finnegan (1970) places under prose, are elements that belong to the realm of poetry or drama. For an effective story to be told, dramatisation, mimicry and other histrionics have to be employed. It is this overlapping phenomenon that Lestrade observed in the Bantu oral literature and remarked:

"The distinction between prose and verse is a small one[---] the border -line between them is extremely difficult to ascertain and define." (Lestrade 1937, p.306)

The thin line of difference Lestrade found to be that:



Prose tends to be less emotionally charged, less moving in content and full-throated in expression than verse; and also - but only in the second place - less formal in structure, less rhythmical in movement, less metrically balanced." (Ibid. p. 306)

Taking Lestrade's observation in view, one may go along with Finnegan's classifications - that put stories of various kinds, proverbs, riddles and oratory under prose and panegyric, or praise poetry, lament, religious poetry, work songs and children's play songs and others under poetry while consigning events such as masquerades and re-enactment of hunting experiences and other related performances to the field of drama. Under poetry, incantations, the epic and songs of all types can be classified. But the inclusion of songs under poetry sometimes creates doubts in some people's minds.

Such people may have come from cultures that have broken with oral narrative tradition a long time ago for them to realise it even existed. But if they are Africans, the formal introduction to western literature in books might have convinced them that only those poems found in the printed page constitute poetry (Anyidoho 1977, p.15). However, a close look at ballads such as "Lord Randal" and "Fair Margaret and Sweet William", such scholars might have read, will show that these ballads belong to the oral tradition of the English and Scottish bards, sung by minstrels in the medieval times (Finnegan 1979, p.10). As Awoonor has said, "Poetry is part of the tradition of song" (Awoonor 1975, p.24) and are hardly separable thus "song as an art form in Africa may properly be regarded as a fusion of two basically distinct art forms: music and poetry." (Ibid. p.18)

As poetry has always had a strong appeal to sensitive people, it is not surprising that oral poetry has had a lot of attention in recent times from various scholars since Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord formulated the much celebrated oral formulaic theory in the 1930's (Dandatti Abdul Kadir, 1981, p. 18). Researchers have looked at oral forms to see if they have "such features as marked and repetitive rhythm, music, lineation, strophic form, metaphorical expressions, or local evaluation to decide whether to label any case as 'poetry' or as 'prose'" (Finnegan 1992, p. 140). Researchers have also been stimulated to research into the various aspects of African oral poetry and a significant corpus of works is now available on the subject.

Among the popular genres in oral poetry affected by researchers is panegyric or heroic poetry also known as praise poetry in less aristocratic societies. Fascinated and inspired by the works of others, past and present in this field of research I have been made aware of the aesthetic appeal and cultural richness of the Dagara oral poetry. I am therefore urged by the inspiration I have had from others and the desire to contribute to the academic debate on the nature of African oral poetry from the perspective of the Dagara praise poetry.

As a Dagara myself, I have grown up among my people and have been very familiar with the Dagara oral art forms. I have also actively participated in the performances of some of them especially in story-telling sessions.

1.05 METHODOLOGY

In order to make a useful contribution to literature in this

study, I propose to make an investigation into the poetry of the Dagara to identify the praise elements from among them. This study thus involves investigating for the motivating factors that stimulate praise poetry composition. Along side that an enquiry is made on the mode of composition of this creative art. Associated with the mode of composition is the composer - performer concept. The study therefore attempts to find out whether composition of praise poems is limited to a special class of people or whether it is open to everyone in the Dagara community to compose and perform at will.

Furthermore, the conditions or situations that provide appropriate environment for the performance of praise poetry are also looked into. Similarly, the constitution of the audience and the audience rapport with the poet-performer, is also examined.

A literary and stylistic analysis is made of the praise poems to validate their belongingness to the realm of poetry. In other words the natural beauty, the aesthetic appeal of these creative verbal compositions are examined to explicate the Dagara love for them.

Apart from the aesthetic appeal that praise poetry has, what functional roles does it have for the society in which it operates? What role has it had in the past and what are its prospects for the future? These questions are duly addressed in the study.

Not much research work has been carried out on Dagara oral literature. The few comprehensive ones have been cited above already and I consider this study a modest attempt to throw light on the nature of the Dagara oral poetry. In view of this, praise

poems of various kinds have been collected from notable praise poets within the area of study for analysis. Some of the songs were recorded during live performances while others, particularly the clan appellations were either sung or chanted on request for recording.

Interviews were also conducted with the poets to obtain more information about them and their art. Other knowledgeable individuals in the community were consulted for their views on some aspects of the Dagara culture in relation to praise poetry.

In collecting the material for this work various problems were encountered. The first of these was meeting the poets as they are engaged in live performances since it is during such occasions the artists strive to put up their best. This problem was solved through attending functions such as festivals, weddings and funerals which I believed the artists could not miss. Another problem was the reluctance of some respondents to freely provide relevant information on various aspects of the Dagara culture. Some often felt they were unnecessarily divulging cultural secrets to outsiders through this research. It often took a lot of persuasion to make them more helpful.

Probably the greatest problem encountered has been to translate the various texts from Dagara into intelligible and impressive poetry in English. Certain expressions defied translation and some appear to have lost their meaning to even the artists who use them.

Despite these short-comings, it may be said that an effort has been made to make the translation meaningful. But before approaching the nature of the Dagara praise poetry it is

CHAPTER TWO

2.00 THE DAGARA

2.01 IDENTITY

The people on whom this investigation is focused are the Dagara who occupy the Lawra-Nandom District, part of the Jirapa-Lambusie District and part of the Tumu District, all in the Upper West Region of the Republic of Ghana. The investigation also covers the Dagara of the south-west corner of the Republic of Burkina Faso who are separated from their clansmen by an imposed international boundary. The Dagara are part of that ethnic group known as Dagaaba in Ghana. It is a member of the Mole-Dagbane linguistic group otherwise called 'Mabia' group of languages (Bodomo, 1993, p. 20).

British colonial administrators such as Captain Moutray Read, Duncan Johnstone and Eyre-Smith including the Scholar, Jack Goody who toured parts of the area under study, had given various labels to the Dagara in an attempt to make a distinction between them and their immediate southern neighbours, the Dɛgabɛ. Using levels of matrilineal cleavages and inheritance systems among these groups, Goody particularly sought to show how distant the Dagara are from what he called 'Dagaba'. In the same vein, he tried to show how close the former are to the Lobi, an ethnic group in the Republic of La Cote d'Ivoire (c.f. Der 1989; Lentz 1995).

While the colonial administration began calling the Dagara "Lobi-Dagarti" from 1903, (Der Op. cit. p. 1) Goody introduced new labels like Lo-Dagaa, Lopiel, and Losaala for the Dagara

(Goody, 1956 p. 21). Interestingly, even though he had said that he could not find a tribe calling itself "Lobi" (Ibid, p. 16) he felt the Dagara were Lobi. So playing on the terms 'Lo' and 'dagaa', which he claimed are 'directional', Goody managed to associate the Dagara with the Lobi. He preferred to disregard the people's term of reference to themselves - 'Dagara' arguing that the term "was a recent adoption [---] taken over as a name of internal reference" (Ibid, p. 25).

The oral traditions of the people show that the Dagara migrated from Dagbon to where they now occupy. Der after a thorough study has agreed with the claims of some clan elders that the Dagara might have migrated from Yendi Dabari in Dagbon between 1476 and 1500, the period during which Na Nyagse was consolidating the Dagbon Kingdom rather forcefully and thus creating "the condition which made the Dagara to breakaway" (Der Op. cit, p. 12).

Having left Dagbon, they settled at various points in their north-westerly journey and by "the early decades of the sixteenth century, groups were settling [---] in the Wa district" or on its fringes like Nadoli, Sabuli and Bure" (Der Ibid. p.12). Pressure for more fertile lands as a result of population increase, compelled further migration up north and between 1660 and 1700, according to Der, the first Dagara settlers of Nandom-Zenuo, Piiru and Langmure had already established themselves there. Other Dagara groups had crossed the Black Volta at various points into what is now the Republic of Burkina Faso, and settled at many places including Dissin, Dano and Diebougou. Meanwhile some Dagara had remained around Wa, Nadoli and Jirapa. These, through

intermarriages and acculturation from other ethnic groups such as the Yeri and More from Yatenga who later settled among them, gave rise to a new breed of people now referred to as the Dagaaba (Der Op. cit. p. 20).

Gabriel Tuurey (1982) had in a contrary vein held that the Dagara of Nandom-Hamile-Dissin whom he called 'Lor-Dagaba' are "a new breed of people who drew from both Lobi and Mole cultures" (Tuure, 1982; p. 33). By that he meant that the Dagara are products of a mixed union of Mole and Lobi.

In that regard one is inclined to say that Tuurey had taken over the view of Goody. He had apparently ignored the migration history of the Dagara as well as the patrilineal relationship between what may be called Southern Dagara and the Northern Dagara, in his attempt at identifying the 'Mole-speaking community' in the Upper West Region of Ghana. It is not for nothing that up to date, the Iwaala, Ikɔɔla and Itɔɔla clans of the Southern Dagara see the Kusiele, Ganɛ and Bɛkɔɔnɛ clans of the Northern Dagara as their respective branches. They recognise that inspite of the variation in the dialects they speak, they belong to a common stock. The next section focuses on the socio-cultural practices of the Dagara whose praise-poetry is the major concern in this study.

2.02 OCCUPATION AND SOCIAL LIFE

The Dagara land lies within the Savannah zone typical for its low grass, short and sparse trees and multiple cluster of shrubs. It is a region that experiences two climactic seasons:

wet and dry seasons. The wet season commences between the latter part of April and early May and ends between October and November. During this period most people are engaged in farming activities.

As a typical agrarian community, the Dagara depend on land for their livelihood. For this reason, land is upheld as a sacred entity which must not be desecrated, say, by spilling human blood on it or by performing the sex act in the open. Perpetrators of such acts are punished and ritual cleansing performed on the land to appease the Tengan (Earth Goddess) lest the entire community suffers for the indiscretion of the culprits.

The Tengan has a priest in the person of the Tengan-sob who ministers to her. He is usually the first settler of that particular district or his successor. It is this individual who allocates portions of land to other family heads as they also come to settle in the district, to sustain their families through farming. The land is held in trust for the living and generations yet unborn. Following the death of the trustees of the land the land is referred to as ancestral land. This means that the land belongs to the dead, the living and posterity. For this reason, it is not sold but may be allocated to non-members of the community for temporary use. (C.f. Konings 1986 p. 145).

Generally the Dagara are subsistence farmers and the use of simple hand tools such as the hoe is the rule. In recent times however, some farmers have been practising mechanised farming by the engagement of tractors on their land. To boost increase in produce by acre, fertilizers have often been relied upon. By this method of land cultivation it is often possible to go beyond the

traditional subsistence farming level to a light commercial agricultural practice.

Crops cultivated include millet, sorghum and maize. These cereals constitute the main crop among the Dagara as it is from them their popular `saab (better known in urban areas by its Hausa name tuo-zaafi) is made. *Dãã*, the local beer also known as `pito' is brewed principally from sorghum. Other crops farmed on a relatively lower scale are groundnuts, beans, rice, bambara beans, yam, and sweet-potato. The degree of cultivating these crops determine whether they are intended for house-hold consumption or whether they are meant for the market. Occasionally however, subsistence crops are sold for some contingency reasons.

Invariably, crop farming has been based on the old cultural practice known as shifting cultivation. In this system, the farmer moves to cultivate a rested piece of land while abandoning the currently exhausted farm land to fallow for several years, to refertilise itself for farming next time around. Pressure on land these days does not allow for long periods of fallow though it is still a persistent practice. Suggestion from agricultural officers to adopt crop rotation instead of the former appears to be slow in catching on with the people.

Apart from crop farming, the Dagara rear animals and poultry. Cattle, sheep, and goats were the traditional livestock, the large holding of which enhanced the social status of the individual in the Dagara society and earned him praise songs from local bards. In recent times however, there has been a change of

attitude in the husbandry of cattle especially.

Owing to frequent theft of cattle particularly during the dry season when they go far from home and unherded, in search of food and water, most cattle owners failing to get cow-herds for their cattle in the dry season prefer to sell off the animals and invest the proceeds in some commercial venture such as operating a grinding mill or building houses in the towns for renting.

Consequently, there has been a drop in the numerical strength of cattle, sheep and goats, but a significant increase in the number of pigs, the rearing of which has lately caught on favourably with most families. The rearing of poultry on the other hand, has not always been accorded the seriousness it deserves. It is rather treated as a pastime by most people who may own a number of hens and guinea-fowls. Ducks are not very common and may be found reared in a few houses in a village.

In spite of the rather indifferent attitude towards poultry farming among the Dagara, rearing generally provides an economic support to the people. For instance, to have a lot of cows or sheep is to count oneself among the rich in the community and since wealth goes with prestige, one's social standing is correspondingly raised. That apart, the possession of livestock is very relevant for various cultural practices such as marriage and funeral rites.

In terms of marriage, for instance, a maximum of three heads of young cattle, two hens and a guinea-fowl may form part of a bride wealth offered the family of the bride. Similarly, various animals and fowls are featured at the Dagara funerals for various reasons (Naayule 1974, p.15).

Again animals and hens are featured prominently in the traditional religion of the people. While a chicken or a hen may be ritually slaughtered initially to establish contact with the spirit world, a goat, sheep or a cow may be sacrificed either in thanks-giving or for propitiation.

In this farming community every adult is expected to be involved in farming. That is why skills in this respect are instilled in the young by encouraging them to accompany the adults to the farm to learn from them practically. This enables the young not only to know the cultivation of any crop but also to acquaint themselves with the farmlands their families own. Ignorance of one's ancestral land could bring about land dispute in future.

Konings (1986) has said of the Builsa thus: "the seasonal nature of agricultural labour requirements and the uneven demands of the farming schedule have given rise to all sorts of specialisms and secondary occupations that provide additional income during the agricultural off-season [---]" (Konings 1986, p. 152). So may one say of the Dagara. Some members among them have special knowledge in other fields which they give expression to along side farming. These include *wobru* (weaving), *pɛnu* (carving), *saan* (smithing), *gyil* (xylophone playing), *lanɲi* (dirge singing), *tĩĩ-Ib* (herbal practice) *bag-bɔɔ* (divination), *mɛb* (building/pottery) and *dā-dɔɔ* (pito brewing).

Though in some of these special areas one may find both sexes involved, there are others that tend to be gender specific. These include smithing, carving and xylophone playing which are male specific specialities. Pito brewing is one area that can be

said to be exclusively for female. Men are practically absent in this field though there has been the isolated case of a man brewing pito under the direction of a female cripple in Nandom.

In the other special fields there are both sexes. For example men may weave straw hats, cotton cloths and cages for hens while women weave baskets, and sleeping mats. Women are also now exposed to cloth weaving through formal education and they appear to be doing better than the men both in numbers and in skills. Again both men and women are engaged in creating objects out of earth. The making of pots, jars and other earthen wares falls within the domain of women, while the building of houses and granaries is a skill some men are endowed with.

There are some men and women who are very much endowed with the special knowledge of entertaining others with creative verbal expressions in singing, or chanting. They are the group this study is interested in and much will be said about them later. Suffice it to say that they are well respected people in the society who are not found wanting whenever a situation demands their performance.

Much of the services rendered by these specialists as Angsotinge has said, has not been commercialised by the Dagara. "Instead they use whatever skill they have to serve the community and in return ask for a small commission" (Angsotinge 1986, p. 31). The extended family system which makes every member of the community a relative may have been the cause of members' reluctance to commercialise their services to one another but to depend on 'commissions' and reciprocal services from the beneficiaries of their performance. In fact, rendering services

on the basis of reciprocity is very common in farming. For example, a number of people will go in a team at the mere invitation of another to work happily on the farm of the latter's in-law, or maternal uncle, without expecting any reward, other than a light refreshment at the end of the task, and the hope that each of them may one day also have a similar company to work on his or his relative's farm.

It must however be said that there is the tendency to shift from that traditional good will gesture of delivering free services, among the younger generations who have been subjects of inculturation as a result of contacts with other cultures outside the Dagara land. For instance, several praise songs recorded for this study had to be paid for in cash either before or after the performance.

As farming is the mainstay of the Dagara, most talented people seem inclined to play down their special talents commented on above and get absorbed in the all involving agriculture during the rainy season. It is therefore during the dry season that these special skills are given much expression. A traditional healer, a diviner, a xylophonist or a dirge singer may however not suspend his practice in the rainy season because of farming. This is simply because they deal with emergency situations.

But one industry that thrives the whole year round is 'pito' brewing. This is so because as a refreshing drink, 'pito' is constantly in demand. During the farming season for instance, farmers who can afford it go with a quantity of it to the farm to supplement the drinking water they would take to refresh themselves mid-way during the work. After farm work they may go

to the source of the 'pito' to relax there with their colleagues drinking and discussing issues that interest them.

If a man has friends to help him on his farm or roof a hut as the case may be, he may ask his wife to brew 'pito' as refreshment for them. But apart from serving people who have been engaged in tiresome work, this drink also serves the purpose of other people who just wish to relax and enjoy talking and listening to people and learning a thing or two from them. For as the saying goes "dãã dion I'n yã zanU zie", a pito bar is a place of learning. So for this reason, one may go to buy a pot of 'pito' and join a group that has been there already.

Pito is also brewed for festive occasions such as weddings and anniversary celebrations. It may also be provided for mourners at a funeral celebration. Its availability in generous quantity at such occasions is usually very welcome.

Luckily, almost every Dagara woman can brew it. Right from the early teens a girl begins to assist her adult group involved in brewing. So by the time she reaches adulthood she has learnt the processing of the drink. A woman can establish herself very well as a pito brewer depending on the quality of the drink she produces. If the quality is up to the expectation of customers she entices many more customers from other pito houses to hers and could become very rich in the long run.

As many customers converge at good pito houses, those houses with time become centres of interest for a student of oral poetry. This is so because among the customers are itinerant local bards who visit drinking bars to solicit money and 'pito'

through singing praises of people. I have had an opportunity of recording one such praise poem and will be analysing its contents later in this study.

Apart from 'Pito' brewing which goes on normally throughout the seasons, market centres attract patronage weekly too. Attendance in the dry season is usually much greater as most people, free from the burdensome demands of their farms, find the markets, places of recuperation from exhaustion and places of social intercourse. With the lean season behind them, brisk buying and selling take place at this point of convergence of many people of different age groups. It is thus a unique place of social interaction and affords opportunities for courtships between potential couples.

The height of such a social mix is the celebration of the market day in the form of *bɛwaa*, *bɛmɛ* and *nuru lob*, cultural dances the third being exclusively a female choral performance. This situation provides opportunities for the creative oral artists to give expression to new compositions on various societal issues including praise songs and songs of abuse. The nature of some of the praise songs will be examined later.

Besides the weekly markets that bring people together in great numbers, there are other religious, and social occasions that are normally slated for the dry season apparently for greater participation and to avoid inconveniences such as rain disruption of the programme. Some of these occasions are the *bagr* festival when new members are initiated into the various stages of the *bagr* cult, (c.f. Goody, 1972), the *Kɔbɛmɛ* cultural festival of the Lawra traditional area and the *Kakube* festival

of the Nandom traditional area.

There are also Christian festivals such as priestly ordinations and anniversary celebrations which are organised during the dry season. Similarly, marriage feasts even though they occur quite often in the course of the calendar year, reach a peak from two to three months before the farming season begins. This is when most of the young men preparing to take wives return from the southern region of Ghana they have been to after the previous farming season ostensibly to earn money and prepare adequately for their intended marriages.

All these occasions or celebrations usually attract people from far and near. They are occasions that naturally call for eulogies too, and the oral artists are always present to enthrall the audiences with their performances. Songs of praise or 'eulogues' (Kunene 1971, p. xxii) are performed for deserving groups or individuals in the society. The purpose and nature of such songs will be considered in later discussions.

So far all the social occasions that bring people together, as seen above may be said to be optional in regard to individual participation. A member of the Dagara community could choose not to attend any of the social functions and may not breach any norm. However, one may be exposing oneself to criticism for failure to attend a funeral without good reason for the "death of any clansman concerns all [---]" (Goody 1956, p.75).

The Dagara have a saying that "a nIrsaale I na mē yɔgVagbɛra", the human being is like a branch of the creeping pumpkin that extends to a far distance but remains part of the plant. This means that one's relatives are not just those in the

house or neighbourhood but also those beyond and who one may not even know. And since it is binding on everyone to attend the funerals of relatives, people are urged to attend funerals of members of the Dagara community generally though the deceased may not have been known to the individual mourners or sympathisers. For this and other allied reasons funerals are always well attended. As will be seen later in connection with patriclan and matriclan systems, a web of interrelationships is structured by them and no individual Dagara is left out unrelated to the other members of the community.

The Dagara funeral celebration is a rite of passage appropriately performed to consign the deceased to the world of the ancestors. It normally begins at the occurrence of death. There is no deferment of rites performance but if it is necessitated by an epidemic such as cerebrium spinal meningitis (C.S.M.) which often breaks out in the region, the corpse is immediately interred and the normal rites performed when the dangers of the epidemic are no more.

Rite of passage for the Dagara dead may be said to be a ceremonial drama and Strumpf Mitchel (1975) has ably delineated its various component parts and actors. Among these actors are the xylophone poets and the dirge singers. These are usually principal characters in this ceremonial drama and it is they who interest us most in this study. Though their roles as collective groups are well defined the individual xylophonist or eulogist will have to compete with other colleagues to get a chance to perform. In their performances there is always the deliberate attempt to soothe the pain of loss of the bereaved in an

imaginative way and praises may be showered on the members of deceased's clans. These praises couched in poetic language will be examined later. But a brief attention may now be drawn on the clan systems of the Dagara which apparently are central to the praise poetry of the people. It often happens that whatever good or bad is said of anybody it is linked up with his family and clan.

2.03 CLAN SYSTEMS

The Dagara have a dual clan system which includes *Yiilu*, patriclan and *Bɛlu* matriclan and since the Dagara society is more patrilocal in terms of inheritance and virilocal in terms of marriage, the patriclan system is dominant and it shall be discussed first.

The term *yiilu* is a derivative of *yir*, which literally means the physical house which people may live. But *yir* has an extended meaning - that is, the community of individual members of a family. This is what Tengan (1994, p.4) calls "Social House" and may be seen, as Kuukure (1985, pp. 33-34) put it, at three levels - primary, secondary, and tertiary. These three levels of the "Social House" may be explained as follows:

Looking at the three-tier structure of the *yir*, the first, the primary level, is constituted by a man and his wife and children or the man and his brothers and their wives and children as the case may be, living together in the physical house. The senior man is the *yirsob*, owner of the house and if this group of people happen to be the first to settle at the particular place the senior becomes the *tengan-sob* as well as *yirsob*.

As the eldest in the family he is considered the link between his living family members and the ancestors and thus makes sacrifices on behalf of his living family. He is also the custodian of the family lands and property such as cattle and further plays judicial roles in times of internal clash of interests.

With time, overpopulation in the house makes it necessary for some leading members of the family to consider building their own houses. This they may do close by the first house and begin to exercise some of the functions of the founding father, as they are now also *Yiedem*, house owners. However, the founding father still remains the link between them and the ancestors and the custodian of the family property.

As the population increases in both the first house and in the other fraternal houses, more homes are built, usually in close vicinity of those already there. With time, a large village develops, but the people, particularly the male population, continue to regard one another as brothers who have descended from one ancestor.

At this stage, it may be said the secondary level of the *Yir* has been attained. For if the founding father of the settlement is of the Kusiele clan and the other *yiedem* who no longer stay in his physical house identify themselves with him they are also Kusiele and so will their offspring be.

The tertiary level is brought about by the dispersal of members of the clan to various parts of the region through migration.

It is this phenomenon that brings about the concept of *yiilu*

since at the secondary level members at one settlement may know one another personally. At the tertiary stage however, time and distance create the problem of members of an agnatic group knowing one another as in the other two stages. Apart from that, the numbers will have multiplied over the years thus making it quite impossible for one to know every member of one's patrilineage or clan.

In terms of the number of clans among the Dagara, Tengan (1994, p.12) suggests that there were originally nine, namely: Bɛkʊɔnɛ, Kpɪɛlɛ, Mɛtʊɔlɛ, Bimbiile, Nabɛglɛ, Ganɛ, Naayiile or Tɪɛdeme, Bɪrfʊɔlɛ and Bataanɛ. But the number could have been less in view of the fact that Nabɛglɛ and Naayiile are considered fissioned out branches of the Tɪɛdeme clan while Mɛtʊɔlɛ and Ganɛ are also closely related clans.

Debatable as their original number is, there however now exist twenty-four of them which can be conveniently put into seven groups thus:

A		B	
Kpɪɛlɛ	Yirpaalɛ	Tɪɛdeme	Zagɛ
Kusiele	Puryiile	Nabɛglɛ	Nayiile
Kʊsɛlbɛ	Kʊwɛrɛ	Dikpɪɛlɛ	Nakyɪɛlɛ
C		D	
Mɛtʊɔlɛ	Bɪrfʊɔlɛ	Bɛkʊɔnɛ	Bimbiile
Ganɛ	Bakaalɛ	Kpanyan	Bataanɛ
Gbaanɛ	BɛnyɪInɛ		
Bɛrwʊɔlɛ	Yɔn-yʊɔlɛ		

Some of these clans such as Kusiele and Nabɛglɛ can be found among the Dagaaba to the south of the area of study, under quite different names as mentioned earlier. As an exogamous people, the Dagaara engage in inter-clan marriages. A man and a woman from the same patriclan cannot marry unless they look for their matches elsewhere beyond their own clan. This of course is because of the people's strong belief that members of a patriclan are "brothers" and "sisters".

In what is well-known as a typical acephalous society - one without a centralised government comparable to that of the Dagomba and the Asantes before the advent of the British colonial administration (Goody, 1956), the Yiilu system appears to have been a major political organisational structure of the people. The interrelationships among clans did not only create a brotherhood but evolved a joking relationship that acted as an effective emotional and social control mechanism among the people.

The joking relationship known variously as *Lɔnlɔɔrɔ*, *tampɛl-lɔb* and *dɛnɔ* (c.f. Tengan 1994 p. 40) may exist between two clans. For example, Kpiɛlɛ jokes with Gbaanɛ, Kusiele jokes with Hayore while Bɛkɔɔnɛ has Bimbiile/Kpanyanɛ as its joking partner, just to mention a few. Apart from the joking relationship among the matriclans, are the joking partnership between a woman and her husband's clansmen and clanswomen, joking ties between or among villages and similarly, joking partnership between or among peer groups. In times of crisis. Inter-village tension may be diffused by this mechanism just as an emotional tension such as the loss of a dear one can be mitigated by a

tampɛl lɔbrɛ, (ash thrower) one who soothes another's emotional crisis by physically encountering the former with ash-symbolic of fire burnt cold.

Though an important social control mechanism, joking relationship does not have that institutionalised coercive force that commands reverence and demands obedience from members of a particular community. Among the Dagara as among the Talensi (Fortes, 1932) the office of the *tengan-sob*, "the custodian of the Earth Shrine" (KuuKure 1985, p.38) comes in here.

The *tengan-sob* who is also "the priest of the Earth Divinity" (Ibid. p.38) is normally the lineage head "that traditionally first occupied the land and on his death he is succeeded by the oldest surviving male of the lineage" (Ibid. p.38). In this respect, he wields power and exercises it over all clan heads within his "parish" (Goody 1956, p. 91) or settlement as a result of the common allegiance to the Earth Shrine. By the advent of the colonial intrusion, the office of the *tengan-sob* was fast becoming not only a religious one but a civil authority similar in some ways to a modern chiefdom, in spite of the egalitarian nature of the Dagara. A bit more will be said about the religious nature of the *tengan-sob* later. But to round off the discussion on clanship a little may be said of the matriclan system.

The *bɛlɔ*, matriclan system as Angsotinge (1986; p. 38) has rightly observed, exists among the Dagara occupying the stretch of land from the Lawra-Nandom District, parts of the Jirapa-Lambusie district and Sisala District of Tumu in Ghana, to Dano in the Republic of Burkina Faso. Members of a matriclan as Dery

has put it are "people[...] born to a group of mothers who trace their descent to a common ancestress" (Dery 1987, p. 5). They are people with "a sense of some remote connections to some legendary ancestress" (Angsotinge Op.cit. p.38).

Like the *Yiilu* system, anyone born of Dagara woman falls within one of the seven matrilineages that exist within the system. These are *SOme*, *M&da*, *SUNda*, *Kpogda*, *HI&n Dabire* and *Kambire*. Members of each *b&lu* are supposed to be blood relations. But this claim is not only undermined by the fact that the Dagara society is more patrilineal than matrilineal in terms of inheritance, though Tengan (1994, p.i) disputes it, but also by the fact that endogamy is encouraged in its system. For example it is possible for a man and a woman belonging to one matriclan to marry.

Unlike *yiilu* which forms a kind of political unit, *b&lu* apparently has no political significance. It does not form a corporate body with a common property such as land that it can exercise some particular rights over. It may in a relatively limited way, exercise rights over some moveable property such as live stock that is inherited through the maternal line.

Again, members of a matriclan have no specific geographical location as defineable as the patriclan's. Women members of a matriclan are scattered all over the region in which it operates and beyond because they marry men from far and near and these men may not even be Dagara.

Even though *b&lu* may not be as politically important as *yiilu*, they perform significant social functions such as diffusing tension among people through the joking relation system

as seen above, that exists among the matriclans. For example, the Sɔmɛ joke with the Kpogdari (Kpogda - singular). Apart from that, the individual finding himself among various clans where his is absent is able to exploit the matrilineage system to situate himself for security reasons and other privileges.

Furthermore, in recent times, community leaders realizing the rather emotional attachment of people to the system, have exploited it by way of arousing that pride of belonging to a particular matriclan, to raise generous sums of money for either church or community development projects.

It is also interesting to note that though one's *bɛlɔ* is not one's name, it was imposed as a surname on the Dagara of Burkina Faso by the French colonial administration even as the British colonial administrators and Jack Goody imposed the names Lobi and LoDagaa on the Dagara of Lawra and Nandom. Up to date, even the intellectual community of the Dagara of Burkina Faso still use their respective *bɛlɔ* as personal names.

In conclusion it is proper to say that the dual clanship system among the Dagara leaves no one isolated in the social matrix. The Dagara society is an egalitarian community whose members are each his brother's keeper because of the lineage systems. And because members are proud of their various clan systems they celebrate them in praise poetry either by chant or by song. Some of these praise poems on the individual clans will be critically examined for both their aesthetic and functional values.

2.04 RELIGIOUS WORLD-VIEW

The world-view of the Dagara can be summarised thus in the words of Kuukure:

"The world is the creation of God, one with order, with life animation, source of fertility and survival for man. Man defines for himself a central position in the creation and does not hide his sentiment of belongingness to the universe. His world view is anthropocentric, he sees the world in terms of man's benefit and destiny. It provides centres for means of communication with the invisible. His world affirmation therefore, is no reason for doubt in his interest in the invisible. In fact it is precisely the invisible that accentuates his interest in the world. In this view he is not much interested in what happens to the world as such, but what happens to man in the world." (Kuukure 1985, p. 56).

The Dagara belief in *Naarmn*, God, is central to all that they do or do not do and their profession of this belief is manifested in the following creation story from the "Black Bagre" supposedly recounted by one of the first two Dagara ancestors:

"God told us,
that the child
and the man,
he created them
and the girl
he created
and the woman,
he created them all" (Black Bagre 3520-28)
(Goody 1972, p.268)

God's creative prowess is further elaborated in "Black Bagre"

4117-4126:

"It was God
that created man
and the beings of the wild
and the fowl
and the leaves
and the animals
and all things
and stones
and guardians
and deities"

(Ibid pp. 275-276)

The universality of God's creation is made clear in the proclamation above. He is not only the creator of man but the creator of every object, and the elements, and the spirits. God is also seen as providence, providing the needs of man and the other living creatures, while maintaining order in nature, such as the alternation of season, day and night, sun and moon - all for the good of man.

The omnipotence of God is acknowledged in expressions like "NaanmIn (ŋmIn) Kpɛŋ zaa sob", God possessor of all power, "ŋmIn nI naa", God is King. Theophoric names like ŋmInkpɛŋ, God's power, or God's might (Kuukure 1985, p. 45) and ŋmInfaŋ, God's strength (ibid) further emphasise the omnipotence of God. Overwhelmed by God's creation names such as ŋmIn tome, God's work, ŋmIn banfɔ, God's Knowledge, are given to children at birth.

Though in stressful situations such as the loss of a dear

one it is normal to hear seemingly blasphemous expressions like "ŊmIn bɛ Ka I", there's no God, the Dagara is conscious of the constant presence of God in their lives even when he appears most remote.

God is thus immanent and transcendent, in the perception of the Dagara. He is transcendent in so far as he is incomprehensible - no one can have full knowledge of him. This is succinctly expressed in a xylophone text by a renowned Dagara oral poet, BɛrgyIrɛ when he asked rhetorically "Ãã pãã baŋ NaanmIn?", who by any chance knows God? He is a supreme invisible Spirit that cannot be seen though he may privilege a most favoured one to have a glimpse of a particular nature of his. For instance the Dagara believe that the privileged ancestor Tɔbile had the singular chance of seeing God as a wise old man reclining on a cow's hide:-

"The old man
was lying there,
They saw him
On a cow's hide"

(Black Bagre - 506-508, Goody 1972, p.230).

Despite his invisibility his presence is felt in his creation giving rise to a theophoric name like ŊmInbome, things of God. And since God's creation is everywhere manifested the attribute of omnipresence is added to his nature and expressed in a saying like "Bon za bɛ Irɛ ŊmIn puor'e," nothing happens behind God's back.

Though the omnipresence of God is acknowledged, the Dagara

have no doubt that God has a specific home. One of God's attributes - *Sazu-ŋmɔn* as Kuukure says suggests that God's abode is the heavens. The "Black Bagre" (477ff: Goody 1972, p.230) also suggests the mythical meeting of God and Tɔbile took place above the earth. The myth recounts that Tɔbile was assisted by a spider to climb the spider's web to the residence of God. Generally speaking however, God is said to be in the abode of the *Kpɔmɛ*, the ancestors, known as *Kpɔmɛtɛn* or *Dapar*, "place almost the counterpart of this earth with similar social structures" (KuuKure op.cit.p. 47). The precise location of "Dapar" or "Kpɔmɛtɛn" is however, elusive.

The God of the Dagara according to the "Black Bagre" account has a wife "a wise old woman" (Black Bagre 647, p. 252) rather unlike the Christian Trinity God in that respect as they share virtually every attribute. In his wisdom, he chose to stay away from men in order to carry on his work (White Bagre 6052-6076; pp. 197-198) but to keep man in line, he sent agents to assist him. These agents may also punish him when he strays from the norms of society established by God through tradition.

Among these agents are *Tɛŋgan*, Earth Deity, *Saa (-ŋmɔn)* Rain Deity, *Kula-/Baa(-ŋmɔn)* River Deity. Others are *Kɔntɔmɛ* (Plural), "Being(s) of the wild" (Goody 1972, p. 5) *Sɪgrɪ* Guardian spirits and *Kpɔmɛ*, ancestors. Ironically, to these are shrines established with attendant priests and congregations, while there is no shrine anywhere specifically dedicated to *Naaymɔn*.

To a question why God has no shrine a respondent replied that God is everywhere and knows everything, so wherever and whenever anybody cries to him he listens and will help if he

wants. It is also a practice in the Dagara sacrifices that every praise, thanks giving or supplication due God is sent through the *ŋmɔɛ*, deities of the particular shrines. Attributes such as *Sazu-ŋmɔɛ*, God of the Sky, *Naaymɔɛ Gandaa*, Heroic God, *Naaymɔɛ Kpɛŋzaa-sob*, Almighty God are often heard at various shrines of God's agents and it is generally assumed that he is the ultimate target audience of the sacrifice.

Apart from that, decorum demands that whatever is said or offered by a subordinate passes through an intermediary to the senior personality intended. So to set up a shrine directly for the service of *Naaymɔɛ* would be down right effrontery (c.f. Kuukure 1985, p. 91). It is thus out of complete awe and submission and deep respect to God the Dagara prefer to approach him through intermediaries who they consider closer to God than mere men.

The Dagara believe that God's intermediaries are vested with limited powers from God himself since they belong to the spirit world. They can more easily approach God on their behalf than man himself. So the multiplicity of deities' shrines which misled the Europeans into believing that the Dagara were polytheists were indeed channels of communication with God.

Among the intermediaries the Tengan appears to be the most important - Tengan is female and the principal deity of the geographical location of every settlement. The apparent primacy of Tengan is based on the assumption that she is the deity of the physical environment - the earth on which man depends for his livelihood - food, home, wealth, security. It is also the land which he calls his *teɲ* which may be viewed at various levels -

village, town, country, and universe. When he dies he will be interred in the earth crust. It is in view of this Kuukure says:

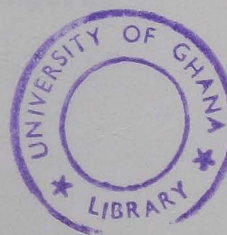
"The world, the universe par excellence and in the concrete is, for the Dagaaba, the settlement a ritual area specified further by Tengan (Earth Shrine). The Dagao's settlement is therefore, his *teng*, his country is his *teng* unspecified" (Kuukure. 1985, p. 54).

There is subsequently an emotional attachment to land especially as *Tengan* a motherly goddess is bounteous as long as their 'parishioners' keep her statutes. Acts of lawlessness including desecration of the land through spilling blood, sorcery and sex in the fields arouse the wrath of *Tengan* and she often resorts to retributive action on the community through drought or pestilence of some kind until the offenders are identified and punished accordingly by her priest, the *tengan-sob*.

The *tengan-sob* usually the first settler or his successor as seen above erects a shrine for the Earth Deity in a "grove situated in a central part of the settlement where sacrifices are carried out" (Ibid. p.17). He deals with mainly spiritual matters though of course such matters often extend over other civil issues and depending on how he conducts his affairs could become the most influential personality in his community.

Saa (ImIn), the Rain Deity is the male partner of *Tengan*. *Saa* fertilizes *Tengan* for continuity of life on earth as shown in this account of the "Black Bagre" (454-463).

"Earth and rain
the rain is male



and the earth is female

When the time comes

see the rain;

its penis rises

and bursts forth.

See the earth,

a fully grown maiden

who is about to bear"

(Goody 1972, p. 229).

So in union with *Tengan*, *Saa* sustains life on earth by constantly making it possible for people to cultivate the land for food. At the request of his 'spouse' *Saa* can effect a drought in the event of a serious offence against her. *Saa* is also very much feared for his instant killing of his offenders. A misdemeanour against *Saa* is punished with a lightning strike that can result in death depending on the degree of the offence. That is why the Dagara say "*Saa bε kUrε zagla ε*", the rain does not kill for nothing.

A victim of the Wrath of *Saa* must be left untouched where the incident occurs until the appropriate purification rites are carried out by a *Saa-sob* or *SadUg-sob*, priest of the Rain Deity. Failure to observe this injunction exposes one to a fate similar to the victim's. Though *Saa* shrines may be found in several homes in a village, the *Kpɛlɛ* patriclan members are generally recognised as the priests of *Saa*. They are proud to be associated with the Rain Deity and their identification with this vengeful god is complete when they say this in their appellation:

"Kyɛ tɪɛ a lɛr ka kyɛb"

One who strikes a tree and
no axe dares strike.

This simply means no one lays claim on what belongs to the rain without dire consequences. The Kusiele clan being the first off-shoot of the Kpɪɛɪɛ are wont to use the above expression too in their appellation as will be seen later.

Kula-ŋmɪn or *Baa ŋmɪn*, the River Deity like the *Tengan* and *Saa*, is generous in sustaining life by providing essentials like drinking water, fish and other edible water creatures. But he is also "an executing agent of God" (Op.cit KuuKure, 1985; p. 63) when he disposes of offenders through drowning or through the sharp teeth of crocodiles or some other water body.

Other supernatural agents are the *Tan*, hill deity, and the *Kɔntɔmɛ*, beings of the wild. The Dagara believe their ancestors were taught most of the technology they have now by the *Kɔntɔmɛ*. Some people are also alleged to have been abducted and possessed by beings of the wild who endowed them with special skills such as of healing or of black-smithing to practise on their return home.

On the other hand others are said too to have been made mad and unproductive. This implies there are good beings of the wild who teach man the skills of meaningful survival, and bad spirits who tend to plague man's life by being too exacting in their demands, driving him in the long run to destruction. Shrines have often been set up for these possessive *Kɔntɔmɛ* especially those

behind the possessed herbal practitioners. To remain sane and effective at their practice, the herbal practitioners must religiously observe the statutes established by their spiritual mentors.

2.05 ANCESTRAL VENERATION

Ancestral veneration among the Dagara was viewed with suspicion by the early Christian missionaries who worked among them. Naturally, converts to Christianity were urged to stop the practice of what was thought to be an ancestral worship and to destroy the paraphernalia related to it.

Some of the Dagara who like their fellow Africans elsewhere that embraced the new religion did abandon the traditional honouring of the *Kpɔmɛ*, the "living-dead" (Mbiti 1969; p. 74) and took to the new way of worship. But those who have up to date stuck to the traditional Dagara religion maintain that they do not worship but honour the ancestors who they do not regard as gods. They consider them as heroes who lived responsible and righteous lives before they went to *Kpɔmɛ ten*, heaven, close to God.

The deep respect they have for the ancestors is rooted in the Dagara natural reverence for elders. Though invisible the ancestors are considered close at hand and ought to be given the recognition and respect they deserve. More importantly, the Dagara believe that the ancestors are close to God and can use that proximity to him to gain favours for their earthly brethren in areas of good health, fecundity, bounteous harvest, wealth and peace. (C.f. Mbiti 1969, p.69).

Related to the first two reasons is the reality of the individual Dagara's aspiration to being accorded a reciprocal gesture of honour from both the *vɔvɛ*, (the living) and the *Kpɔmɛ*, (ancestors) when he too dies. Indeed, a man who disregards doing honour to his ancestors by failing to erect shrines for them and performing the necessary rites due them at the appropriate time, risks retributive action from the offended *Kpɔmɛ*. To avoid earthly punishment and possible rejection from the community of ancestors in the hereafter, therefore, one has to show deference to them, who though dead physically, still live on the spiritual plane. The impact distinguished ancestors made in their life time on society, either as founding fathers of clans or war-lords is often celebrated in the clans praise poetry as will be seen later.

But the question of ancestral veneration brings to mind the issue of *Lɛbwaa*, rebirth or reincarnation in the Dagara context. The Dagara believe in this concept and the circumstantial names like *Dɛr*, *Dɛrbɛ*, *Dɛrpɔg*, *Yɔɔra*, *Kpantol* prove the point in regard to infants. A successive loss of babies of the same sex is often assumed to be a case of reincarnation confronting the mother. In the case of the Akans and other ethnic groups in Ghana as Sarpong (1974, p. 39) says funny names are given such children to make it hard to return to the other world.

It is also believed that an ancestor can be reborn. Such recycled ancestors are believed to be those who felt they did not complete their earthly missions before they were overtaken by events and thus seek a second mandate from God to finish them. Such an ancestor usually announces his return by persistent

crying so that a diviner may reveal his identity through consultation. It may also turn out that it is not a rebirth of an ancestor but that a particular ancestor insists on being the child's guardian spirit - *Sigra*. In either case the child is named after the putative ancestor.

2.06 NON-HUMAN RELATIVES

Earlier on in this chapter mention was made of the role of domestic animals in the socio-economic life of the Dagara. If they provided some economic and social security to their owners, some wild animals, birds and water denizens for some reasons are personified and elevated to the level of blood relatives. In this vein they tend to rise above their natural state and become symbols of the clans that have totemic relations with them. (Ibid 62).

Reasons for such relationship are usually salvific and are located in the migration histories of the various clans that have established such 'fraternal' linkages with beasts of the wild. As Tengan has observed:

"Strongly suggested in these foundation stories is the experience of salvation. In most of the cases the non-human relative of the social house plays a very significant role as saviour of some human members of it." (Tengan, Op. cit. p.29).

In other words, "the choice of totemic object is supposed to be based on some historic event linking the forefather of the totemic group with the totem" (Sarpong, Op.cit p. 63).

It is in this light we may see the various clans such as Kusiele, Gbaane, Bɛkʋɔnɛ and Tiele in relation to their non-human

relatives - python, antelope, well fish, and monkey respectively. They have been recognised as members of the respective clans and therefore may not be harmed or eaten by their clan's men.

The importance of the totems known as *dVmE* or *sIgrI* is further shown in the clan appellations. Clan members ascribe appealing qualities of their *sIgrI* to themselves in praise songs. In the analysis of praise songs we shall deal with them in depth. But one thing that the phenomenon of man and non-human relationship has shown is "the harmony that is sought with nature through this attempt to stretch the boundaries of the social house beyond the human realm to the physical cosmos. (Tengan Op. cit. p.30)

In conclusion it may be said that the worldview of the Dagara extends beyond the domain of personal relationship with one another. They identify themselves with God and with his agents, - the Earth deity, Rain deity and other spiritual forces such as both the friendly beings of the wild and the malevolent ones. The spirits of trees and other objects are also recognised as forces that can either make or mar their lives.

Furthermore, the Dagara identify with their ancestors in a very profound way manifested in their devotion to them. This devotion is not limited to just ritual performances but how responsive lineage members are to one another's needs. An ancestor may feel dishonoured and becomes vindictive if socio-economic responsibilities among lineage members are flouted. And from the lineage ties examined already, it is difficult to tell who is not a relative that one has responsibility towards. As Tengan has said "due to the intermeshing of relationships that

can be established by the male and female principles of the *yir* and *bɛlɔ* respectively, it is very rare that a Dagara finds himself or herself unrelated to another" (Tengan Op. cit. p. 45).

The various aspects of the Dagara - their history, social and occupational life, religion and world view that have been discussed above, are reflected in their praise poems and hopefully with this knowledge of the cultural background of the people, one can better appreciate their praise poems as one encounters them. The next chapter deals with the nature and content of the Dagara praise poems.

CHAPTER THREE

3.00 THE NATURE AND CONTENT OF DAGARA PRAISE POEMS

The Dagara as a people, have their own tradition of praise poetry. It may not be as formal as the panegyrics of aristocratic communities like the Zulu and the Akan known respectively as 'izibongo' and 'apae', but it plays an equally significant role among the people. In later discussions, the roles and functions of the Dagara praise poems known as *danU*, will be examined, but for the moment, their general nature and characteristics and as works of art, will be highlighted.

DanU which means 'praise' or 'praises' is derived from the verb *danI*, to praise. As a work of art, a *danU* may be chanted as in the case of performing a clan appellation, or be sung in the case of a personal praise poem. When it is chanted, it is done in an assertive voice that rises above the normal speech level and at fast pace. (C.f. Yankah 1983, p. 387). The poet as he does so, focuses his gaze directly on the object of praise, with occasional glances at the audience to solicit approval of his performance. Clan appellations are well known, and as the praised may have heard them many times it is often necessary for the poet to indulge in some acting to make his performance impressive.

DanU must have an individual as an object of adulation or admiration, usually based on the individual's supposed personal achievements or contribution to his society's development. In a way, it tends to have a theme similar to a love song which may, however, focus more on the physical beauty of the lover being praised. Indeed in some praise songs the physical comeliness of the individual is lauded in addition to his exploits. An example

is this piece by Charlie Guy in honour of Lucio Kuutiero:

1A. Nadoli Lucio

Bibil baala mē pērū wūo a

Bibigbili mē dāā yuor'a ah!

ZIn-Ka-vIēlū-kū-sōbr-bie

GanI-ganū-wul-nIbē-ganū.

1B. Lucio Nadūli

Slim like the sheep-skin bag

Calm like a pot of 'pito'

Son-of-the-handsome-one-whose charm

-Strikes-the-witches-dead

One-whose-graceful-steps-inspire-others

to-walk-with-dignity.

The thrust of *danū*, however, is to show admiration for the achievements or exploits of the praised in whichever sphere of endeavour.

Since *danū* performance is premised on the element of admiration and appreciation, it must be performed by the admirer. This admirer essentially is the poet - a wordsmith and one with the gift of song. He usually sees things worthy of praise where the ordinary people may see nothing. But there are times when an individual Dagara does not wait for an admirer to sing his praises. Such a situation could be on the farm where the individual is able to defeat his colleagues in a farming contest. He would indulge in self-praise to impress upon his colleagues

and other passers-by that he is a great farmer and a worthy son of his patriclan.

Another situation could be a funeral ground where a *laykone*, dirgist, would praise himself as he introduces himself to the mourners. In fact, this particular practice is so common and is actually normal for a eulogist in such a setting. A eulogist often has to compete with others to get a chance to perform at a funeral. Such a competition may demand high credentials to get an advantage over others.

The phenomenon of self-praise is definitely not peculiar to the Dagara alone but is practised in many cultures also. It is common among some Southern African ethnic groups. As Finnegan said, "Self-praises by boys at initiation as among the Sotho or the Galla, are an important aspect of the claim to adulthood". (Finnegan 1970, p. 119). The Bahima of Ankole in Uganda are also noted for self praise. As Okpewho said:

"a man composes and performs praises of himself after a successful battle with an enemy, especially in a cattle raid". (Okpewho 1992, p. 142).

The Igbos of eastern Nigeria are also well known for self-praising during the taking of titles (Ibid. p.142). However, as Okpewho pointed out, praise of others is more common and even more rewarding in material terms. For instance, if the object of praise is satisfied with the poet's performance, he rewards him according to his means and degree of satisfaction.

Much as human beings are often the objects of praise songs,

non-humans also get praised. In this respect, cattle appear to enjoy this privilege more than other animals especially among cattle rearing communities in eastern and Southern Africa. Praise songs are composed for cattle and a typical one among the Sothos is the long praise poem in honour of the bull named `Maphatshe. (Kunene 1971, p. 133 ff).

In a similar vein the Dagara herdboys have praise songs for each of their fighting cattle. This runs contrary to Jack Goody's view that there is "little emphasis on cattle song" [...] (Goody 1956, p. 30) among the Dagara whom he labelled Lo-dagaa (Goody op. cit. p. 21). The first thing herdboys do when they meet with their cattle is to arrange a fight between some of their leading fighting cattle. As the cattle fight each cowboy sings the praise of his cow or bull to encourage it to win the fight. After the fight, the cowboys also engage in a wrestling contest which they call *nii gbɛɛ pagfɔ*, "covering the hoof prints of the cows". The following is one such praise songs of a cow called Nagnale:

2.A. Nagnale, Nagnale

NU ɔb tããkɛrɛ dem baarɪ

A lɛ bɛ wa sɛgɛ

U wob lɛrɲmaarɛ kpɪɛr'I tɔgr.

Tuure tuure tuure

Kpɛ kããgyɛlɛ pɔɔ ɪag yi

FU sãã dɔg fɛ na

A viɛlɔ yeɛ bɛ Ka bei?

Nakɪɪnɛ ben mɔɔ pɔɔ

Viire yɔɔr saa pɔbr U

YizInE zIn' yir

I ɲmɔŋmɔlɔ nɔɔr kɔrE suur

Mɔbaa pɔɔ zĩĩle woo

Kpakyyog pɔɔ zĩĩle woo

PIEŋ PIEŋ PEIŋ.

2B. Nagnale Nagnale

Ate up someone's sheanuts

Not contented with that

She marched into the thicket with broken axes

Marching through the thicket

She walked into guinea-fowl eggs

Were you born beautiful in vain?

The cowherd is drenched by rain

In the field

The naughty, idle boy sits at home

Provoking anger

Red one of the mɔbaa

Red one of Kpakyyog

Conquer, conquer, conquer.

In this praise song the cowherd portrays the cow as a powerful beast that is not easily satisfied and would use its power to overcome obstacles in its way. The song also points out one of the problems of cowherding - the cowherd often gets drenched by rain in the fields.

Apart from the praise songs of fighting cows are praise poems of totemic beasts earlier on referred to as non-human

relatives. The Gbaanɛ clan says this of its totemic animal, the antelope.

2A. Walpiel nyɔtuɔn

Zagri yir kpɛ muɔ

Walpiel ilɛ gāgāā

Zagri ilɛ tuo daar

Wɛpula ban gaanu

Tisɔg nadɛr ku dɔ pɔg.

2B. Stripe-nosed Antelope

One who abandons home to live in the bush

Antelope of the protruding horns

One who would rather bear wood than horns

The grey bush that glides with majesty

The night bull that would not be exchanged for a wife.

The Gbaanɛ claim they are children of an antelope that had transformed itself into a beautiful woman and got married to a womanizer. By some stroke of luck its true identity was uncovered and it became permanently human even though it still loved the woods. Its offspring, being so unusual, were scorned by their half brothers and they thus drew closer to their mother resulting in the creation of their own clan out of their father's Bɛrwɔ clan.

Hence, in the above praise poem the Gbaanɛ clan identifies itself with the antelope. The members of the clan praise the physical beauty of the beast. They praise the way it runs and see its

wandering in the woods as a virtue. These so-called virtues of the animal, they bestow upon themselves as human kindred of the antelope.

One other feature of the praise poems is the elevated language usually employed in them. Generally, praise poems are couched in a lofty language embellished with proverbs, metaphors, exaggerations, symbolisms and other figurative forms. Stylistic devices such as paralellism, repetition and archaism are also found in the Dagara praise poems.

The loftiness of the language is usually intended to impress the object of praise and the audience with the view to getting as much reward as possible. As such, words, images and other verbal and non-verbal ingredients such as gestures, are deliberately chosen in their composition and performance. The following praise song of Rt. Rev. Bemile composed and performed by Charlie Guy of whom more will be said in the next chapter, is an example of a praise song in exalted language.

3A. Paulii ε Bεmilε

Yɔwaarma Bεmilε

Lomaalzie Bεmilε

Din din din ti mine ten

TanI tiε a lεr bε ka kyεb ε

TanI ka ε a san bεsogre i.

3.B Paul also called Bemile

Bemile Mother of showers

Bemile the transformer



You whose din din din voice is heard
While you shower in distant lands
You who thunder at a tree
And no axe dares strike
You whose thunder defies any query.

The patron in this respect is a member of the Kpɛɛɛ clan which claims filial relationship with Saa, the Rain Deity. As a son of Saa, the attributes of rain, thunder and lightning, fecundity, growth and peace are conferred on him. By his elevation to the bishopric, he has proved himself a worthy son of the deity, who when he lays his hands on anything, claims it for his own. It is only his children who can have a share of such a thing claimed by Saa. Thus, when lightning strikes a tree, it is assumed that Saa has claimed it and it is only a member of the Kpɛɛɛ clan that can make use of its wood without any retributive action from the Rain Deity. The supposed vengefulness of Saa has already been mentioned. No one questions his actions as the eighth line says:

"You whose thunder defies any query".

Apart from the colourful use of language, the poet makes historical references in his praise poems. In this respect, great deeds accomplished by the patron's forbears are recounted. The names of the distinguished and heroic ancestors are mentioned. As has been said already the effect of such glorification of the past heroes is to make the praised elated with the knowledge that

he is a scion of such great ancestors. The praise poems often as Finnegan (1970, p.142) points out, serve to consolidate values such as status and birth where they are important in an aristocracy. They establish in the case of royal leadership, the leader's right to office as his roots are declaimed in public.

In the following praise song the poet, Virginia Maaniasie sought to show that the object of praise Naa Puoure of Nandom was legitimate ruler of his people:

- 4A. Aã mInE nEbE dan dI naalU
Kaa nIbE zie?
BEkUOnE nEbE dan dI naalU
Kaa nIbE zie
DanyE nI aña dan dI naalU
Kaa a nIbE zie
Kyir'u dan dI naalU
Kaa nIbE zie
BOrO yi woo, dI naalU
Kaa nIbE zie
UurbaalE KonKuu woo, dI' naalU
Kaa nIbE zie
A vurbaalE Moro nU dI a naalU
Kaa nIbE zie
PolKuu woo, dI a naalU
Kaa nIbE zie
Puoure woo dI a naalU
Kaa nIbE zie

DI a naalU kaa nIbE zie

4B. Who in their royal reign

Cared for the people?

The BSkUOnE in their reign

Cared for the people

It was DanyE who reigned

And cared for the people

Kyiiir had reigned

And cared for the people.

BOrO came to reign

And cared for the people

KOkUu the UurbaalE

Reigned and cared for the people

MOrO the UurbaalE ruled

And cared for the people

POLKUU reigned from the chair

And cared for the people

Puoure reign now

And care for the people

Reign and care for the people.

Apparently, besides the theme of admiration is also the voice of appeal to the incumbent chief to emulate his noble predecessors in addressing the welfare concerns of the people. Among the Dagara, the elder is esteemed because he is concerned about members of his household. But his respect and authority could be undermined if he is found to be selfish and uninterested

in them hence the subtle warning to be alive to his responsibilities towards his subjects.

If the forbears of the praised were noted for the possession of some particular feat such as esoteric powers, they will be recounted by the poet if he has grasp of the ancestry of the praised. Members of the Kusiele clan in the past were noted for their mystical power. Thus, in their praise songs one is wont to hear expressions such as:

5A. Kusiele gben

Nadole nI bE bOndaar

Dakyin-migr-ganE

KV=lo-sole

DOpure-waar-sEviEli

Masuur-zIE-na-san-pOg-bE

Dibaali di-yiE-KpiErbe

KpE-dionlEb-yi-tul

BE-nyE-KyOgrE-na-kyOgrI-Kuū

5B. Kusiele the lion

Nadole of the war arrows

He who strides majestically on walls

In contempt of beaten paths.

He who is resplendent in

In dawa-dawa robes

The red fungus, the scare of women

Hero of the narrow room and of the anteroom

He who would leave a room walking backwards

He who men imitate
At their own peril.

The 'Kusiele' is here metaphorically associated with the physically powerful lion, because of his supposed physical strength and daring into perilous adventures. The Kusiele *bɔɔdaar* were said to be very poisonous arrows that pursued their targets when shot, until they hit them. They never left the bow in vain, it was claimed for they were 'extraordinary' arrows. The Kusiele mystical power also made it possible, it was alledged, for one to vanish from sight to any destination while striding on a wall. The same power could transform the ordinary dawa-dawa leaves into charming robes of deception. The Kusiele thus saw themselves as epitome of physical and esoteric powers as symbolised by the lion and the mystical acts they performed.

One other feature of the Dagara praise poetry is that it spills over into other verbal art forms. As Yankah has noted:

"it is indeed yet to be known if there is a restricted genre in any African culture which is locally acknowledged to hold a monopoly over 'praise'."
(Yankah 1983, p.390)

In fact, it is particularly true of the Dagara oral art for praise poetry can be found pervading the various forms especially dirges and marriage songs.

The following is part of a dirge chanted by Ambrose Daayen an accomplished dirge and xylophone poet of Nandom, Goziir. The piece is replete with praises to a deceased man:



6A. BURŋmaa woo woo
BURŋmaa woo woo
A yir baar'a woo
DCC-KUCra-KU-ŋmaa-gyil woo
De-mɛ-niŋ woo
Wul-mɛ-a-vuo-ĩ-tɔl yee
Nidaar-kaŋ woo
BIɛl'-mɛ-sɔr woo
DCC-KUCra-KU-ŋmaa-gyil woo
A puo faa nɪ mUO aa!

6B. Crown-bird alas, alas
Crown-bird alas, alas
The house has fallen alas
The distinguished farmer who surmounts obstacles, alas
Blazer of the path, alas
Blazer of the path, alas
Show me the way to go, alas
The future is lost, alas
Supportive companion of my journey, alas
Distinguished farmer who surmounts obstacles, alas
Weeds have seized the farm.

The crown-bird is viewed with awe among the Dagara, so for the deceased to have been called crown-bird implies that he was a powerful and accomplished man in his community at least. A hardworking and prosperous farmer, he was also a benevolent leader of his people. Now that he has died, the problems of the

community will overwhelm them as the last line euphemistically puts it - "weeds have seized the farm".

While funerals give birth to dirges, marriages are festive and hilarious occasions that are celebrated with songs of joy and merry dancing. One of such songs I recorded at a wedding reads as follows:

7A. Nadole bɔŋ daari, oo

NI maal' tɛr a bie, oo

Nadole Sɛvɛli biiri

NI maal' tɛr a bie oo

Walpiel baŋ-ganv nyɛn nv

Ti bie ŋa bɛ baŋ kɔ ɛ.

7B. Nadole of the war arrows

Take good care of the child

Nadole children of the charming robes

Take good care of the child

She is an off-shoot of the majestic antelope

This our child knows no hunger.

In this song the entire Kusiele clan of the bridegroom is called upon to take proper care of the bride who has never experienced hardships in her antelope clan - Gbaanɛ home. While at it, the singers however subtly appealed to the Kusiele sense of pride by the appellation:

"Nadole of the war arrows

Nadole, children of the charming robes".

The groom's family as well as the general audience are reminded of the dignified roots of the bride where there is no want. The underlying nuance of the song is that the Kusiele are lucky to be proud husbands of such a lady of high birth. But one indirection that may also be discerned from the piece is that the Kusiele, from the point of view of the singers, are not particularly keen about caring for their wives. It is a mild criticism of the groom's clan which ironically may induce its members to offer 'gifts' to the singers to stop them from making any more unfavourable comments on the clan.

In the context of mystical or ritual performances, it is common to find epithets of praise to God, deities and ancestors. In the performance of libation, for instance, it is normal to invoke the pantheon of Gods in the Dagara cosmology as well as the ancestral spirits at the centre of celebration.

This invocatory part of a libation ritual performed by a *tengan-sob* *Dɛbgor*, to request rain in the wake of a prolonged drought is one such example.

8A. *ĩ saa NaagmInI*

BUmBuUrɛ za ŋmInI

Tendaa za ŋmInI

Saazu ŋmInI

Naabile ŋmInI

Iag-mhaarU ŋmInI

Iag-tUlu ŋmInI

KUŋ mhaarU nI aŋa

A fU bie bɛrɛ kUrɛ fU

Sag UU wa de

Nandɔm BarU

A Tanbɛrɛ nI a Tanli

NI wa na?

KUŋ nI aŋa

NI de mhaa kɔkɔr

ĩ saakUm ZɛnUŋ

NI a yɛbr za

NI m nIm a daparɛ za

NI na saga NI bie buɔlu

ɛ sag wa de KUŋ mhaarU

8B. God my Father

God of creation

God of the universe

God of the sky

God of men

God of peace

God of adversity

This is cold water

Your child is offering You

Please, accept.

Tengan (Earth Goddess) of Nandom

The BarU (River Gods) of Nandom

The Gods of the Hills

Have you come?

This is cold water
May it quench your thirst
My grandsire Zɛnɔɔ
And his brothers
You and all the host of heaven
Please, kindly respond to your child's plea
And accept this cold water.

The attributes to God in this text are quite obvious as they are the usual conventional appellations accorded Him across cultures. God is acknowledged the source of all creation and, therefore, He is automatically the father of all. His supremacy over everything is unequivocally expressed in the appellative epithets given. And since in comparison to Him the other deities and ancestors are subordinates, it is significant to note that no appellations have been accorded them.

In Christian worship, too, praise is central to the liturgy. In this part of a preface of the Catholic Mass sung by Rev. Vitalis Kogme are lines of praise to God:

9A. Tenzu Naanmɪnɪ
FU barka yaga
Tenɔvɔla pɔɔ Naanmɪnɪ
FU barka yaga
Bɔn-iri zaa Naanmɪnɪ
FU barka yaga
FU kpɛnɔ na gaŋ a
TI nyɛ maalɔ dɪa.

BUn-Iagri NaanmInI

FU barka yaga

BUn-Kyeni NaanmInI

FU barka yaga

BUnvuri NaanmInI

FU barka yaga

FU kpEnU na gan a

TI nyE maalU dia

ĩ yEbri

ĩ ire nI a NaanmIn yuor

ĩ dannE nI a NaanmIn yuor

ĩ kyaarE nI a Naanmin yuor

U na I a Sonuu

Sonuu zaa sob

A yiele ...

9B. God of the universe

Many thanks

God of Heaven

Many thanks

God of creation

Many thanks

For your might

We stand blessed to day

God of all that fly

Many thanks

God of all that walk

Many thanks

God of all that crawl

Many thanks

For your might

We stand blessed today.

Brethren,

I am extolling God's name

I am praising God's name

I am proclaiming God's name

As He is Holiness

The Father of Holiness

Singing ...

It is interesting to note that this Preface of Fr. Kogme is so much like the libation piece before it, both in content and in structure. That Fr. Kogme's piece is heavily influenced by the Dagara libation pouring tradition cannot be denied.

Looking back at the nature of Dagara praise poetry it is appropriate to place it in the milieu of the better known praise poetry of other cultures. There is hardly any departure from the rest in terms of general characteristic features.

3.01 DAGARA PRAISE POEMS AS POETRY

In the early part of the chapter the general characteristics of the praise poems were highlighted. This section will appreciate the major types of praise songs or chants of the

Dagara. Among these are *Yir danU* (clan appellations) *danU*, (personal praise songs) *ni&r danU* (grinding songs) *laghI* (dirges) and *detaa yielu*, (marriage songs).

As said already, aspects of praise poems tend to extend into other art forms. None of the art forms seems to be free from this influence, particularly the clan appellation, with exception of folktales which deal with the world of fantasy, and their close allies - riddles and proverbs. Even in ordinary discourse it is normal to hear an individual digress or plunge into either self praise or praising another for one reason or another.

It must be mentioned at this point that Dagara praise songs and chants are generally not controlled by any rhyme scheme. Lines are not necessarily patterned in such a manner that the last words rhyme as used to be one of the norms for judging good literary poetry. As Zurmi said of the Hausa oral praise song.

"The end of lines do not necessarily rhyme and not have regular length, and even along the lines there is no established order or regularity in the metre".
(Zurmi 1981, p.96).

This holds true for the form of Dagara praise songs. But one can talk of internal rhyme along the lines which is further accentuated by repetitions and in some cases by musical accompaniment, for example, from a drum, xylophone or *p&nh*, raft zither. These appear to be the metrical requirements a singer needs to structure his song. They could not be much more different from the songs of the Mande of which Charles Bird made this observation:

"The essential metrical requirement is that the singer keeps in rhythm with his instrumental accompaniment. He may therefore form lines of one syllable or fifty syllables, depending very much on his virtuosity in rapid speech and his subtlety in weaving the rhythm of his language around those of his instruments". (Bird, in Dorson 1972, p.283).

Praise poems have the qualities that set them apart from prose. As poetry they have greater richness and concentration, they are also more evocative and emotive and hence memorable (c.f. Cope 1968, p. 38) But one thing that brings about the achievement of these qualities is the use of imagery in various forms, further reinforced by repetitions of various types. These stylistic devices are namely, rhyme, rhythm, alliteration and parallelism. But as pointed out elsewhere, rhyme and metre are only incidental and not consciously aimed at in Dagara poetry.

Dagara praise poems however abound in images as may be seen in the following Kusiele clan appellation:

10A. Kusiele gben daa

Nadole nI bE bɔŋdaar

Dakyin migr dannE

KU lo sole

Dɔpure Vaar sEviɛli

Māsuur-zIE na saŋ pUɔ

Dibaali diyIɛ kpIɛrbe

KpE dion lEb yi tul

Bɛ nyE KyɔgrE na

Na kyɔgrI kũũ.

10B. Kusiele the lion

Nadole of the war arrows
He who strides majestically on walls
In contempt of beaten paths
He who is resplendently dressed
In dawa-dawa leaves
The red fungus, scare of women
Hero of the narrow room and the anteroom
He who exits walking backwards
He whom men imitate
At their own peril.

Take also the following appellation of the Kpɛlɛ clan, one from which the Kusiele clan fissioned out. This praise poem is replete with images of various types, too.

11A. Yɔrwaar na kyɔg laar

Sabir been lo maali zie
Nabɔɔ ulu lo ganj saa
Zilige saa kyɔg dani
DI kɔ naab sabie warmɛ
Tani tiɛ a lɛr ka kyɛb
Tani a san bɛ sogre
Dinj diŋ diŋ ti mine taten
Bɛlli Kone ti mine taten
Kyug pula na maali zie
Salom pula Kyinkyin ganj siɛrɛ
Wɛgya pula wɛgya kyɔɔrɛ siɛrɛ

Yipaal kpɛrbe kũ kpɛ dabuo

Peɛ puɔ saab ŋmaa kone

- 11B.** The sudden rain that may be collected in bowls
 One rain drop that transforms the land
 The Nabuo dew that surpasses rain fall
 Dawn rain whose collection evokes praise
 He who thunders at a tree
 And no axe dares strike again
 He whose thunder defies any query
 Din din din while raining elsewhere
 Deceptively rumbling while raining elsewhere
 White sky, wearer of the *Kymkym* cloth
 Wearer of the white as well as the striped cloth
 He whose residence is eternally new
 He who eats *saab* from a basket to his regret.

3.02 STYLISTIC DEVICES

The Bɛkɔɔnɛ clan appellation also offers us a whole lot of images which we will be examining presently. But here is the Dagara version and its translation:

- 12A.** Vurbaa lo laar Tɔm
 Vurbaa bayɛlɔ
 Tɪntɪra nyɛ paal baa
 Tɪntɪra baa nyɛ kɔ gbaali
 Kyakyāpɔla nyɛ paal baa
 Kyakyāpɔla nyɛ saŋ baa

Zag yɛlɔ nyɔmɛɛ

Bayɛlɔ mɛmɛɛ

Zakorikori za ɲmɛr laar

Bayɛlɔ bule zɔm kɔ ɔb

Bulbɛ zɔm kɔ ɔb

Bayɛlɔ bule zɔmbɔl kɔ tɛr kɔbr.

12B. The Vur river that occupied Tɔm

Vur river the (Bayɛlɔ) sprawling river

A river overflowing with the tintira fish

A river of tintira fish that defies harvest

A river overflowing with egret droppings

A river defiled by egret droppings

A vast court of children

Bayɛlɔ crawling with children

The snatching crowd that shatters the food bowl

Bayɛlɔ well fish that will not be eaten

The mysterious well fish that will not be eaten

Bayɛlɔ the well of fat, boneless fish.

Certainly, the commonest imagery employed in the praise poems is the metaphor. The clan appellations like the Southern Bantu praise poems are a concatenation of "praise names and praise verses" (Finnegan 1970, p. 128) couched in metaphors. Take for instance the following lines from the Kusiele praise poem:

"Kusiele, the lion

The red fungus, scare of women".

The association with the lion stems from the so called bravery and physical strength of the members of the Kusiele clan. These qualities of the Kusiele are synonymous with those qualities that make the lion the 'King of the beasts'. *Mansuur*, fungus which is often a growth on a tree emits smoke which is alleged to be dangerous to pregnant women. The smoke could cause a miscarriage and may further endanger the life of the woman. The 'Kusiele' is thus seen as this kind of growth that is a danger to weaker men.

Similarly, a member of the Kpɛɛɛ clan is saluted as

Yɔrwaar na Kyɔg laar
or Sabir been lo maali zie.

The sudden rain that may be collected in bowls
or One rain drop that transforms the land.

Elsewhere the relationship between the Kpɛɛɛ clan and the Rain Deity, *Saa*, has been explained, suffice it to say that all the attributes of rain are accorded the members of this clan, especially those who distinguish themselves.

Metaphorical addresses such as

13A. Walpie nyɔtuɔn

Wɛpɔlaban gaanɔ

Tɪnsɔg nadɛr.

- 13B.** Stripe-nosed antelope
Majestic-walking greywood
Night-bull.

are accorded members of the antelope clan, the Gbaanɛ. So are terms like:

- 14A.** Vurbaa kpɛlaar Tɔm
Bayɛlɔ
Bɔrɔmaa Kɔkɔr ɔɪɛl kɔ̃ laŋ baŋ

- 14B.** Vur river that has occupied Tɔm
Bayɛlɔ (wide river)
The Crown-bird whose Pretty neck needs
wear no band.

And as the Mɛtɔɔlɛ clan members are addressed as

- 15A.** Tanzu-gbelizɪr
Mangarka
Mɔ̃baagyimur

- 15B.** Redbells of the hill (a fetish)
crocodile
Dragon fly

the Dikpɛlɛ clan members who regard the monkey as their totemic animal affect being referred to as

16A. Bɛsɔbɔn-ɛ-di-gaŋ-a-sɔb,
Nyanyubaalɔ-sa pɛŋfɔ
Sɔgzɪɛ-wa-wɪɛ

16B. One who (eats) takes more than the owner;
Better-to-steal-than-borrow
Red locusts that invade the farm.

It is interesting that these attributes that allude to the negative behaviour of the monkey are proudly accepted by the Dikpɪɛɪɛ and the Tiele clans as laudatory epithets. But the reason they give for that is that, they consider the monkey as a non-human relative who saved their clans from total annihilation from the hands of slave raiders.

Other metaphorical praise names are:

17A. Tambɔg tuo gaŋ Kone
Tɪntɪra baa.

17B. The perilous pond one crosses with dire consequences
Tmtra fish river.

Apparently by use of the metaphors "the hero is figuratively transformed into a series of entities that are perfect embodiments of the traits highlighted in the hero" as Yankah has said. "This may be a particular species of bird, snake, tree, or other relevant objects and phenomena" (Yankah 1983, p.39). As we

have seen the Bɛkʊŋɛ make allusions to the awesomeness of 'BURŋmaa', the crown-bird while the Kusiele associate their power with that of the lion. But the Kpɛlɛ who believe they are descendants of the Rain deity, Saa, lay claims to the rain attributes.

Along with metaphors are hyperboles that further exaggerate the deeds of heroes. In the Kusiele praise poem are the following praise lines:

18A. Dakyinmigr ganɛ

Kʊ lo sole

Dɔpurevaar sɛviɛli

18B. He who strides majestically on walls

in contempt of beaten paths

He who is resplendent in dawa-dawa leaves.

It is certainly impossible for one to reach places by walking constantly on walls nor are dawa-dawa leaves anything to be by in terms of clothes to make one gorgeous in. Leaves are certainly not clothes to wear, let alone to look resplendent in them. The expressions have meanings that may be found elsewhere.

19A. Kyākyāpʊla nyɛ paal baa

19B. "A river overflowing with egret droppings"

is also hyperbolically used in the Bɛkʊŋɛ appellation and so are the following expressions in the Kpɛlɛ praise poem:

20A. Sabir been lo Maali ten

Nabuo ulu lo gan saa

20B. One rain drop that transforms the land

Nabuo mist that surpasses rain fall.

The praise poems are also replete with personifications. For instance, the monkey is given a human voice to say as the DiKpɛɛ appellations have it:

21A. Bɛ so bon ɛ di gan a sob

Nyanyubaalu sa pɛŋfu

sogzɛ wa wɛ.

21B. He who (eats) takes more than the owner

Stealing is better than borrowing

Red locusts that invade the farm.

Similarly, rain is spoken of in the Kpɛɛ appellation in human terms. For instance expressions that allude to it such as:

22A. Kyɛ tɛ a lɛr ka kyɛb

Wɛgya pula wɛgya kyuoɔrɛ siɛrɛ.

22B. He who strikes a tree and no axe

dares strike again.

Wearer of the white and striped cloth.

give it human personality. It is spoken of as literally striking a tree with an implement as a man would. It is also said to be arrayed in cloths as if it were a woman. But indeed, the cloth refers to the clouds in the sky. A grey sky is a 'white cloth' for instance.

It is interesting that while metaphorical expressions accord the heroes praised, qualities of animals and sometimes phenomena, personification transforms beasts and other things into human beings.

One other stylistic device that features prominently in Dagara praise poems is parallelism. This structural device is a type of repetition in which an element is altered while the syntactic structure remains similar for instance:

23A. Kyākyāpula nyε paal baa.

Kyākyāpula nyε san baa.

23B. A river overflowing with egret droppings

A river defiled by egret droppings

And also:

24A. Bayεlɔ bule zɔm kɔ ɔb

Bulbɛ zɔm kɔ ɔb

24B. Bayεlɔ well fish that will not be eaten

Mysterious well fish that will not be eaten.

In these examples which come from the Bεkɔɔnε clan appellations, the second line in each case tends to expand and deepen the

understanding of the first line. As in the latter pair, "mysterious well" throws more light on the nature of "Bayɛlɔ well" that makes the fish in it inaccessible for consumption.

The praise songs of Charlie Guy have numerous parallel constructions as may be seen in the following:

25A. Tanzuule gbelzɪr'ɔ ɪɛɛ

Lb zɔŋmaa gbelzur'ɔ ɪɛɛ

Mɔbaa gyimur'u ɪɛɛ

Tanɪ man K'ɔ dɔɪɛ

Tanɪ gbor K'ɔ dɔɪɛ

Kpɛ a gbor wa de nɪɛ

ɪmaa a gbor wa faa nɪɛ

Mɔbaa taa wa sɔɪɛ ɪ

Gyimur taa wa sɔɪɛ ɪ

25B. Red-bells of the Hills speaks

Red-bells of the short-tailed crocodile speaks

Dragonfly of the riverside speaks

Command the river to stretch out

Command the canoe to stretch out

Board the canoe and convey people

Steer the canoe to save people

River-side, do not shy away

Dragonfly, do not shy away.

With the exception of the first three lines which are of one set the rest are in pairs as may be observed. There is syntactic as well as rhythmic balancing of one line against the other in each pair just as there is that agreement among the first three lines. Apparently the stanza is thus structured, through a conscious effort to achieve the musical effect it has attained by skillfully varying some key-words in either the triplet or the couplets. For example in the couplet -

"Kpɛ a gbor wa de nɪɛ"

"ɪmaa a gbor wa faa nɪɛ"

ɪmaa and *faa* stand in alternation to *Kpɛ* and *de* and their semantic function has been to throw more light on the actions stipulated in the first line by carrying them further "Steer the boat to save people".

One type of repetition that is common in the Dagara maiden songs and has been extended to personal praise songs is the refrain. The lead singer sings the verse while the chorus takes up the refrain. This is amply demonstrated by Madam Rose DOnIr in her praise song dedicated to Rt. Rev. Bemile of Wa Catholic Diocese. The following are a few verses with their attendant refrains.

26A. YaanI yee, yaanI yee

Bisob Paul woo yee

Waa yaani.

Refrain: Yaani yee
Bisob Paul woe yee
waa yaani.

Kokoguule Kandeme bie

LOB a NaanmIn yelbir

Laari a tendaa za.

Refrain: U mUOlE,
LOB a NaanmIn yelbir
Laari a tendaa yee.

26B. Welcome, welcome

Bishop Paul

Welcome.

Refrain: Welcome
Bishop Paul
Welcome.

Son of Kandeme of Kokoligu

Broadcast the word of God

Throughout the world.

Refrain: He should announce,
Broadcast the word of God

Throughout the world.

It is quite clear from these lines that the refrain appropriates almost entirely what the verses say. Much of the difference between the verse and the refrain may be found in the first line of the verse which always goes a step further than the preceding one in the movement of the praise song.

However, there are instances when a refrain may vary completely in structure and rhythmic movement from the verses as may be seen in Bede Bongne's farewell song to Rt. Rev. Kpiebaya on apostolic transfer from Wa to Tamale. Though a praise song, its slow movement and rather sombre tone evokes sadness as a dirge is wont to do. The following is the twelveth stanza of the song and its accompanying refrain:

27A. Faara-mInɛ, BradamInɛ

SitamInɛ, e e

A ti nakyIn-kara

Bɛ ir'u na

ɛ ti I ɲmIn na?

Refrain: Aa hîî, aa!

A dɛ Irɛ nImbaalɔ

Aa hîî, aa!

A dɛ Irɛ nImbaalɔ.

27B. (Rev.) Fathers, Brothers

(Rev.) Sisters

Our chief cow-herd
He has been taken away
And what shall we do?

Refrain: Aa hîî, aa!

It's so pathetic

Aa hîî, aa!

It's so pathetic.

"Aa hîî, aa!" is an expression of lament over the loss of some one dear and is often heard on funeral grounds. Its use here shows the sense of loss felt by the poet and those he speaks for under the circumstance. The repetition in the refrain itself further emphasises the point.

An inescapable feature of the Dagara praise poem is the complex compounding of words to weave laudatory epithets. Lawrence A. Boadi who observed this phenomenon in the Akan oral poetry too had remarked that:

"the high-sounding words so common a feature of the poems are the product of a technique of stringing words together probably involving a process peculiar to the strategy of oral poetry in the Akan" (Boadi 1989, p. 189).

This observation may not only be true of the Akan oral art but it also holds for the oral poetry of Africa in general as examples from its various regions portray. The apparent similarities in strings of words that constitute praise names of

heroes and heroines in various African praise poems suggest a common technique in creating laudatory epithets.

Reduced to writing such strings of words that make up a name could take up half a line or more on a foolscap sheet of paper. Take the following Gbaanɛ epithets for example:

29A. Gbongbor-daa-kũ-sɔr-zʊmɛ
wɛ-sɔg-nadɛr-kũ-dɔ-pɔg.

29B. The-hyena-who-will-not-subject
himself-to-abuse.
The-bull-of-the-forest-who-will-not
be-exchanged-for-a-wife.

Also consider the following praise names of the Bimbiile clan:

30A. (i) Zagri-daar-mɔ gbaglɛ
(ii) Zagri-zɔ-mɔ-tɪɪ
(iii) Pɔgsɪrkʊra-dɔg-bɪɛɛ

30B. (i) He-who-would-make-fire-with-bones
rather-than-wood
(ii) He-who-would-cook-charcoal-rather
than-flour
(iii) He-whose-birth-put-the-spinster-to-bed.

Other laudatory names created through the process of

nominalisation of various word classes stringed up include:

31A. (i) Bvɔŋmaa-kɔkɔr-ɔɪɛl-kɔ-ɪaŋ-baŋ

(ii) ŋmantuo-saab-kyɪɪnɪ-kone

(iii) Zazul-kɔblɔ-nɔ-bɛr-yon

(iv) ZVm-been-ŋma-da-yɪɛrmɛ

31B. (i) The crown-bird whose-elegant-neck
needs-wear-no-band

(ii) Meal-of-the-bitter-calabash-that-one
eats-to-one's-consternation

(iii) One-who-caterpillar-like-sloughs-off-his-skin

(iv) One-fish-that-is-sold-to-acquire-garments.

The complex nature of the word compounding is manifested in the lexical units that link up to form a praise phrase. Some epithets for instance are created from a combination of nouns, and verbs, or nouns, adjectives and verbs and so on. For example: "zagre-zɔ mɔ tɪɪ" is literally a verb + noun + verb + noun combination as a surface structure. But analysed at the level of its deep structure as attempted in the translation [30B (ii)] the combination would show to be more complex. In *Kyug-pula-tamtɪɛrɛ*, (ace archer of the moon-lit night), the combination is that of noun + adjective + noun. *tamtɪɛrɛ*, (ace archer), a noun derived from the compounding of *tam* (bow) a noun and *tɪɛrɛ* (shooter) another noun which is itself a derivative of the verb *tɛ* (to shoot).

Similar combinations also constitute the following Kusiele

praise phrases:

31A. (i) PIE-pɔɔ-saab-ɲmaa-kone

(ii) Tãã-kpɛɛ-lar-wĩɛ

31B. (i) He-who-eats-"saab"-from-a-basket
to-his-regret

(ii) The-great-shea-tree-that-overshadows
the-forest.

While the first phrase is a noun + preposition + noun + verb + verb combination, the other has a combination of noun + adjective + verb + noun. Besides the syntactic structures such as phrases and clauses that these multiple compounds create, they also "function as units of metrical pattern" (Boadi, Ibid., p.189); within them, internal rhyming can be discerned. The above is true of the Dagara original text but not apparent in the English translation.

3.03 PERSONAL PRAISE POEMS

Our discussion in the main, has centred on clan appellations which are generally stereo-typical among the people. Their composition dates back to the distant past and it is impossible to identify their composers. Their transmission to this generation has been through repeated performances by bards of past generations and their continuity into the next generations depends largely on the performers of the art today.

Clan appellations have actually become communal property and

modern oral poets exploit elements from this communal holding to garnish their own creations. Like the bards before them, the contemporary oral poets such as Bede Bongne and Charlie Guy weave songs of praise for members of the community, particularly those who have distinguished themselves one way or the other.

The refreshing thing about the modern poets and their works is that it is possible to identify the individual oral poet behind the composition of a particular praise poem in honour of an individual patron. This is because they introduce themselves in their songs as they perform and as they mention the names of the patrons they honour, these praise songs are made more personal than the clan appellations which deal with the clan members collectively. That is in spite of the fact that exploits of one's ancestors as found in the clan appellations, are usually mentioned in the personal praise poems. But the reason is that the Dagara believe that one's achievements cannot be divorced from those of one's forbears. It is the past that inspires the present to attain worthwhile success. Thus in Madam Rose DOnIr's praise song to Rt. Rev. Bemile, she alludes to the inspiration of the patron's clan totem-Rain and other ancestral spirits as the sources of the bishop's success in these lines:

- 32A. (a) Salom gan kyUOrE bie
(b) TanI tIE a lEr ka kyEb bie
(c) Kokoguule Kandeme bie
(d) VurbaalE, DuolaarI nyIE na ...

- 32B. (a) Son of the striped-cloth Sky

- (b) Son of one who thunders at a tree and no
axe dares strike again
- (c) Son of Kandeme of Kokoligu
- (d) Upshoot of Vurbaa Duolaar.

References are also made to living role models that the poet believes were inspirational to the patron in the following stanzas:

33A. (i) TI puori aabisob Dër
Na to a tome
TI wɛl'I gUO a.

(ii) Bisob Kpiebaya
MI tō a tome
TI ar'I saazu

33B. (i) We greet Archbishop Dery
Who worked zealously
Till his retirement

(ii) Bishop Kpiebaya
Too has worked hard
And earned promotion.

In a similar vein, another female oral poet Konwokole said this of Naa Puoure of Nandom in his praise song:

34A. (i) Zukpuole biirgaŋ-a=nāa

Gaŋ-a-yuor lɛ

(ii) ȩ waa bile bile

Kyɛ ȩ wog la ba yuor yɛlɛ

(iii) Bayɛlɛ yir puo

Bambaala ku di tuo togtog.

34B. (i) The children of Zukpor are great
princes of high renown.

(ii) While a child

I heard of the greatness of their name

(iii) In the house of Bayɛlu

The poor is free from suffering.

Zukpor and Bayɛlu are typical praise names of members of the Bɛkɔɔnɛ clan. The point the poet seems to be making by referring to them is that Naa Puoure could not have been so successful if he were not a member of the Bɛkɔɔnɛ clan.

Personal praise poems of course, celebrate the achievements of the targeted patrons. For instance, in praising Rt. Rev. Bemile, the poet Bede Bongne paid tribute to his patron's abundant patience, intelligence and tenacity in undertaking difficult tasks, in these words:

35A. Dɛrbaa nɛn kanyir sob mɪ ɔb

Baŋ-a-zaa-kʊ-baŋgu-bie

Kpaar mɪ mii na a fʊ dɪ bʊn kãã

To-tabe nɪ a dɪ-tabe yoo!

35B. The patient one eats the rat (meat)

Child of the wise one to whom nothing is hidden

To eat oily food the occiput must be sore

Consumption level is determined by industry.

Rose Dɔnɪr in her praise of the same personality paid tribute to the bishop's high level of education and choice of vocation.

36A. Fʊ vuole nɪ a gan pʊɔ

Fʊ vuole na

Wa yi Naanmɪn tome zu.

36B. You studied the book

You studied

Until you came upon God's vineyard.

In the regime of the dirge which is closely related to praise poems because of the theme of praise inherent in it, tribute is also paid to the deceased for his industry and achievements while alive. It is in this light that Ambrose Daayen sang this dirge at the funeral of Andrina Beyuo of Goziir:

37A. Woo, woo BulmhaarU woo
Woo, bul-kinyu-yee
ĩ kɔkɔr ko na yee
DɔɔkUɔra pɔg woo
A puo man nɪ vaara vab yee
Pɔg kŭ bɛr ʊtɔ bie yee
Pɔg na lɛn'ʊtɔ bile yee
Pɔg kŭ da kal woo
Pɔg kŭ la ɦɦĩ yee
Pɔg na barɔ dɔɔ been kul'a

37B. Alas! alas! eternal fount, alas!
Alas, one whose spring water sustains me
My throat is dry alas.
Worthy spouse of a distinguished farmer
It's time to clear the farm of debris
A mother of the other's child
A mother who would lick the other's young-clean
A woman who would buy no dawa-dawa
A woman who would deride none
A wife who would know one man only
Has gone home.

The dead woman's dedication to running a good home, respect to all and fidelity to her husband are all lauded in the dirge.

Similarly, Bernard Worbmɛ, a versatile xylophonist and dirgist who is currently attached to the Ghana Dance Ensemble said this of his late friend Kobom who had also worked as a xylophone instructor at the University of Ghana, Legon, before

him:

38A. woo, woo, tɪ mVUr gVba bie V kul

Woo, woo, kombɛ, nɪ mVUr ŋmɪɛrɛ bie V kul

Woo, a tãākɛr na pɔr lo

Aã daŋ tŭɔ a V nuu tome tō?

Ankaalɛ Nandomɛ woo

Aã na lɛ kyɔ gyili

KV nɪ nɪ Iag?

38B. Alas, alas, praise the expert's son as he goes home

Alas, alas eulogists, praise the expert's son as he
goes home

Alas this unripe shea-fruit that has fallen

Who could compete with him in his field?

Nandom citizens in Accra

Who will enthrall you with xylophone music

To dance?

The theme of praise extends to the domain of marriage songs. In marriage songs the singer makes sure that there are sufficient songs of praise to last the day. Most of them are usually focused on the bride, extolling her virtues. These songs usually coming from the bride's female relatives, it is not surprising that they are intended to enhance the personal image of the lady and her entire clan. For instance, the following song tells of the magnetic attraction of the belle - the bride that held the groom spell-bound at their first encounter.

39A. Kurema (Valeria) kyen na tɔl

Bɛkʊɔnɛ dɛble nyɛ yee

Kyen gu ŋmɛli kaa, olo

ŋmɛli kaa naa lo, yee

Baŋ gu tiɛ siɛ bɛlɛ gbêgbe.

39B. As Kurema (Valeria) walked past

The Bɛkʊɔnɛ youth saw her

And kept glancing back

Kept glancing back and would have fallen

And so stood akimbo gazing at her.

But as if to pooh-pooh the idea of marriage, as a result of the so-called inadequacies of husbands, songs like this are also sung:

40A. Iɛɛŋa sɪrbɛ bɛ kyãã tɛr kulu e

Yɛdɛbr ti sag

Bɛ nyɔgr nʊʊr iaŋ ti guole.

40B. Nowadays marriage is hopeless

Were brothers to agree

We should be rearing poultry for them.

Such songs may be seen in the context of, *danɔ* as criticism of the domineering males in the Dagara community. A song such as the one just cited is an attack on all men rather than the bridegroom and his clan's men only. It calls for male self-appraisal in

terms of their socio-economic relations with their female counterparts; an appraisal that would put both sexes at par.

It is important to point out that the stylistic features that operate in the clan appellations equally feature in the other types of praise songs. Imagery, allusion, metaphors, personification, repetition and parallelism including other stylistic forms are found in them. For example, in text 37A. we find a metaphor in the word *'bulmhaarU'* where the deceased woman is given the qualities of an eternal spring of life. The dryness of the throat as expressed in line three of the text which runs: "I kɔkɔr kɔna, yee!" is a symbol of the cessation of services she used to render to her neighbours. Similarly, *puo* (farm) also symbolises the services she rendered when alive.

Again, while line seven runs anti-thetically to line six, lines eight and nine are also in parallel relations. It can also be observed that the second half of the text displays repetition of the word *'pɔg'* at sentence initial. Though *'pɔg'* literally means *'woman'* it is apparently used here as a pun meaning *'mother'*, *'woman'* and *'wife'* as shown in the translation in 37B. A conspicuous feature in this text is the interjection *'woo'* and *'yee'* which have appeared in almost all the lines are interjections that express grief and since they express an "idea in sound" (Okpewho 1992, 92) they could be seen as ideophones. Their presence in this text does not only portray the grief of the dirgist but also establishes a rhyme scheme that enhances the text's musicality.

In text 39A., the third and fourth lines which run thus:

"Kyen gu ŋmɛli kaa alo

ŋmɛli kaa naa lo yee"

are an example of a type of parallelism called chiasmus. This is a situation in which "the first half of one line corresponds to the second half of another and vice versa" (Schapera 1965, p.19). Such stylistic features are generally common to all types of praise songs or poems. However, personal praise poems tend to have what could be called a formal structure.

A personal praise poem may open with a salutation to the audience which should normally include the object of praise. Then follows a declaration of intent; who does the poet want to praise and why the praise? The poem proceeds with self introduction of the poet. In introducing himself the poet may mention his name and fall on his clan appellations for credentials. The function of these credentials is to advise the audience on the pedigree of the poet.

What comes next comprises the compliments he has to pay to the object of praise. This may be considered the body of the text. No matter what is said in this section of the poem, the conclusion may carry a message of caution against complacency or over zealousness, or an appeal for support of the praised and a plea for divine blessings on the patron.

The structure outlined here is definitely not the format all the praise poets stick to. There are minor variations in the individual's approach to the performance which has to do with the individual's style and the euphoria of the moment. But the elements that constitute the framework of the poem however are

present though they may have been arranged in a different order during performance. The differences in approach rather than being a weakness in this art form, are its forte because they infuse variety, creativity and originality into praise poetry composition and performance. Sticking to a specific format has the tendency of stifling initiative and imagination which are relevant qualities of an oral poet to say the least.

Among the Dagara, an oral poet is almost necessarily a praise poet. As said elsewhere above, there is hardly any oral art form that is not permeated by the element of praise. With the exception of folk-tales, proverbs and riddles, the rest are related to praise poems. In the next chapter, our discussion will centre on the author and performer of the praise poetry among the Dagara. Among other things that will be touched on will be the role and relevance of the praise poet in the community.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.00 THE PRAISE POET

The Dagara oral poet invariably is a praise poet as far as praise poetry, *danu*, runs through most of the oral genres such as dirges or songs of lament, grinding chants, xylophone texts and maiden songs he may perform. Such a person usually has as Okpewho says "a more than average sense of what is beautiful and exciting a high capacity for expressing oneself with effective idioms and images, and a deep interest in practising a particular type of art" (Okpewho 1992, p.20); these set him apart from other members of the community. These sensibilities, I believe, are further sharpened by years of training even though some Dagara artists tend to think they just grew up knowing a particular art without years of apprenticeship.

4.01 TRAINING OF AN ORAL POET

Though the Dagara often speak of an accomplished poet such as a xylophonist as being "born with" special knowledge of xylophone playing, one still believes that it is necessary for even such a gifted individual to undergo a period of apprenticeship to smoothen the rough edges so that he may be a refined poet of much accomplishment.

A course of training for an oral poet, and for that matter a praise poet, is informal. That is to say he is not trained in any systematic and organised institution such as a school set up for that purpose. One is trained by observing, listening and practising what one has seen accomplished performers do in one's

cultural environment. As Okpewho puts it:

"Informal training entails a kind of loose attachment whereby the future artist happens to live or move in an environment in which a particular kind of oral art is practised and simply absorbs the skill in it as time goes on." (Okpewho, Op. cit. p. 21).

Various artists interviewed on their course of training have confessed to having gone through this system of training. None went through a systematic training programme laid down by any art specialist for the benefit of future oral poets. But one thing common to most of them was that they came from families with a tradition of one art form or the other.

The late BɛrgyIrɛ of Nandom Puffien, who was a renowned xylophonist and dirge cantor, was one example. He emerged from a family of xylophonists and dirge cantors to become the greatest of them all in the area. BɛrgyIrɛ was not only a great poet but also an excellent xylophone maker and a diviner. But he was best known for his extraordinary skills in xylophone playing beautifully accompanied with songs. His performances were so spectacular that he was invited to funerals and feasts and even to private homes to perform. It is thus not surprising that various versions of his xylophone texts and accompanying songs are available on audio-tapes.

Another artist who is making a name as a composer and singer is Bede MaanIasIɛ Bongne, a blind man of about forty years of age. Bede comes from Kukya, a village lying to the east of Ko near Nandom. He too belongs to a family of musicians and apart from composing, stirring church songs and playing the xylophone, Bede composes and sings praise songs and other related songs on various themes. Seeing how well his songs particularly of social

comments have gone down with his audiences, he has taken a bold step to have them recorded in a musical studio and sold out to the public.

Yeldaa Vincent de Paul, better known as Charlie Guy is one other oral performer with a musical family background. He learnt to play the xylophone at an early age and before long was performing for moonlit night dances in the village square in Ko. He however soon discovered that praise singing was his real vocation and thus took to that. Charlie Guy is the itinerant type that would go in search of patrons rather than wait to be invited by them as Bede does.

Among the popular female oral artists I contacted were Rose DOnIr and Virginia MaanIasIE who compose and sing songs of various types. For instance, they both sing grinding songs, praise songs, dirges, and songs on current topical issues such as AIDS, teenage pregnancy and bush burning. Like their male counterparts these ladies come from homes whose members are quite familiar with performing in public. Indeed Virginia had this to say in one of her grinding songs:

- 1A. A ban fU ŋa I na wule
 I saayir a yi
 A banfU ŋa I na wule
 I mayir a yi
 I sãã mInɛ, yee
 Daŋ danI nIbɛ dUrnyɛ puɔ
 I mamInɛ dannɛ danbie dUrnyɛ puɔ
 Maa mI na yi yee

I danɛ ni a danbie durnyɛ pɔɔ.

1B. The talent I now display
Is from my father's house
This talent I now display
Is from my mother's house
My fathers yee
Sang songs of praise at gatherings
My mothers have sung songs of praise
at gatherings
I on my part
I am singing songs of praise
at gatherings.

This obviously is an acknowledgement of the sources of the singer's poetic talents displayed during performances. Though one may have been born into a family of performers one may not necessarily become a performer without first being interested in the art. It is the interest that will dispose a person with the latent talents of the art practised around him to endeavour to develop it.

A person wishing to develop his talents in a chosen art must use his eyes and ears in observing closely and retaining the relevant details of what he has absorbed in his memory. And as Nketia (1973, p.88) puts it he must acquire his own technique of learning. "Imagination to select relevant materials from the large amount available" as Okpewho says, "will make a praise singer increase his store of knowledge" with time (Okpewho Op.

cit. p.22).

The account of a Xhosa 'imbongi' on the subject of oral artist training in the Xhosa tradition as recorded by Scheub, is very relevant here, for it corresponds with the training of the *Dandan* (praiser) in the Dagara tradition:

"There's no place to learn 'izibongo' except to hear someone saying 'izibongo', and then you learn one word there and then you hear somebody again at a certain place saying 'izibongo' and you [---] become an 'imbongi' because of your interest when hearing the people saying these things. And then you begin to wish to do as they do [---]" (Scheub 1975, p.22).

My investigation has shown that most people tend to take the period of training for granted simply because of the informal manner by which a poet goes through his preparation. There are some oral artists who would say they just began to sing dirges, praise songs or play the xylophone without prior preparation. In a question to Charlie Guy as to how he came to know the various clan appellations so well, he responded that they came to him naturally as he performed. He did not remember when he ever sat down trying to memorise any clan appellation. "God feeds me with the right words as I sing", he said.

In a similar vein a cousin of late B&rgyIr& who grew up with him in response to a question as to how and for how long B&rgyIr& learnt to play the xylophone so well had this to say:

"B&rgyIr& was born with the xylophone. He did not have to learn it. He only needed to be old enough to play at funerals. Even as a child he had begun making his own xylophone and would sit playing it for a long time. When he was old enough to make real xylophones, they were so good that everybody wanted to buy a

xylophone from him."

BɛrgyIrɛ himself in an interview with one of his early patrons Rev. G. Sentu said this about his poetic vocation:

"What God has given me is the xylophone. I don't do anything except play it. But when people who have other professions come into xylophone playing, I consider that it is my job they want to seize".

Of course, for those who knew him, BɛrgyIrɛ did not consider xylophone playing merely as a vocation but a profession and even though he practised farming and doubled as a diviner and a herbalist he tended to depend on the xylophone for his livelihood. Though he has not said anything about his training as an oral artist one can deduce from his cousin's words quoted above that he trained strenuously to become the most revered and sought after xylophonist among his people - the Dagara.

Bede Bongne who went into singing when he lost his sight during his seventh year of schooling, also said like Charlie Guy that, singing came naturally to him through God's grace. Apparently, this phenomenon of so called divine inspiration claimed by these oral poets is not peculiar to them alone. Finnegan (1977 p. 170ff) reported of a similar claim by oral poets among the Fijians, Eskimos and the Yugoslavs. Anyidoho (1983 p.179) too observed it among the Ewe practitioners of the art.

However, Thomas Ba-Innimaaeh, who read Sociology at the University of Ghana, Legon and is now a District Administrator,

in an interview with me conceded that he had a long time informal preparation at home towards his vocation of singing.

Thomas' older brother according to him, was a singer who entertained his community with scintillating songs accompanied by the 'Koni' - a locally made string musical instrument similar to the 'gogyi'. Thomas became fond of this instrument and would secretly practise playing and singing with it in the absence of his brother. The brother eventually found him out and fearing that Thomas might spoil his 'Koni' scolded him and forbade him using it again. But the eager novice finding himself so much attached to the 'Koni' kept bringing it out from its hidden place to play until the owner got fed up and left Thomas alone.

Now that he was free to use the instrument he spent much of his leisure time practising playing and singing. He eventually became very good at singing with the 'Koni' and was often invited by young men to accompany them on their communal farming trips to play for them as they work. He also accompanied them when they went on courtship. Of course his role was to keep the group merry with good music. His brother got to realise that Thomas sang and played the 'Koni' better than he, and thus often referred to him as 'master' and allowed him to take his place in the Takpo village square to entertain the community.

Though now an administrator, Thomas still finds time to entertain the public with his many compositions accompanied by the 'Koni'. Even though he has acquired modern musical gadgets any modern music-maker will be proud to own, he still plays the 'Koni' especially for the rural population.

May be, Thomas' level of formal education made it possible for him to easily accept that before he graduated into giving public performances he had had to train adequately. But even though some of the Dagara oral artist believe their gift of song came directly from divine sources, the fact remains that there has been self training no matter how minimal, before they became masters of their art. As Saanchi said of the Dagaaba dirgist:

"The ability to perform dirges may also be acquired through constant practice [---] though without some innate poetic endowment, one may never become a great dirger". (Saanchi 1992, p.35)

Before a young xylophonist can make his debut at a funeral, he must have mastered the art of playing the xylophone. Not only that, but he must also be able to play the instrument in harmony with the dirge singers and the drummer. Discord on the part of any of the three parties will ruin the particular funeral session and it is incumbent upon the xylophonist to make the session a success as the leader of the three performers. Inability of a xylophonist to do this implies that he is half baked and is not recognised as a *guba*, an expert.

The Dagara funeral is complex and rich in rituals. As a rite of passage performed for the beloved departed, it draws many people together and among them are usually the best oral artists such as the xylophone poets and the dirgists. As such the funeral ground offers the ideal place for these top oral artists to show their class by distinguishing themselves in their performances. And so it is also the most appropriate place for the apprentice xylophonist to graduate into a full fledged xylophone poet. He

may not be expected to mark his 'graduation' with his own composition as the Sotho youth is enjoined to do at his initiation (Finnegan 1970, p.140), but he will be expected to greatly impress his audience - the mourners, to be worthy of the title 'guba', expert or specialist.

Dirge singers making their debut in funeral setting are usually surrounded by their relatives and friends to give him support to come out well in their performances. The response of the supporters gives a graduating dirgist more confidence and self-assurance in whatever he says. A poor response from the mourners easily erodes the confidence of the nervous novice and exposes him to ridicule from more accomplished dirgists who may emerge to humiliate him by pointing out his weaknesses.

The impression a performer makes on his audience in his first public performance determines the category to which he may be classified. An excellent performance gives one a place among the 'gabr', experts, while an uninspired performance consigns one to the class of mediocre poets that does not pull any crowd.

4.02 PATRONAGE

Related to the training and preparation of the praise poet is the issue of patronage. Apparently the type of praise poet available in the community is suggestive of the kind of patronage he will have. For example, a woman that has specialised in grinding songs may have her household mainly as her patrons, while a dirge singer will have mourners as his patrons. Similarly the general practitioner of praise poetry will have the general

public as well as selected individuals to minister to.

Some types of praise songs have a limited scope and a typical example is the grinding song as it is limited to domestic issues. A woman grinding grain may sing in praise of her husband and if he is satisfied with her performance may reward her with a guinea fowl struck against the mill-stone or present her some other kind of gift. A specialist in this art does not go from house to house grinding grain and showering praises on people for the sake of rewards. Grinding itself is a tedious task whenever there is a domestic or commercial need for flour. Therefore, to lighten the burden and even make it pleasureable, women who have the gift of song usually burst into a praise song in honour of their husbands and other respectable members of their households. Enoch Mvula writing on Tumbuka pounding songs observed that

"[---] the song medium gives the women artistic license to freely express their attitudes and apprehensions [---]."

(Mvula 1985,p.98)

It is true of the Dagara women who perform the grinding songs, to pour their hearts out on domestic issues. The tendency however is to praise individuals who they feel deserve to be so honoured with the hope of earning a reward. Unfortunately, grinding songs in spite of their creativeness are not one art form that can bring much remuneration to their performers because of their basically domestic nature.

Interestingly, in the wake of the proliferation of modern grinding mills which have threatened to kill this soul stirring

art form, traditional authorities have encouraged housewives with exceptional skills of the art, to mount makeshift grinding stones to perform in public, during the annual Nandom Kakube festival. In view of this art form becoming public, its hitherto narrow thematic scope has tended to broaden in relation to its wider audience. Themes now extend from comments on domestic issues to embrace other social issues like chieftaincy. By widening its scope, the patronage is also enlarged as the following extracts from Madam KUNwokole's song show. In her opening lines she addresses herself to the Nandom Naa thus:

2A. Ī Naa nU zIna

K'a ĩ wa k'a wa bɛl Nyɛ

A Dɔmɛ Puoure

Naa' tō buɔl mɛ a ka bɪɪ?

A kakube tigri na

Ka ĩ wa ka ĩ wa bɛl nyɛ.

2B. It's my chief

I've come today to see

Was it not Dɔmɛ Puoure

Who sent for me?

Is it not the Kakube festival

I've come to attend?

By that opening address, Madam Konwokole has adopted Naa Puoure as her patron but, she further stretches out for patronage from the entire BɛkUɔnɛ clan of which Naa Puoure is a member, by

praising the clan in these words:

3A. Bayɛlɔ yir pɔɔ na

K'a ɲa mɪ kpɛ dion kyɛ kuli

Zukpuole biiri ɲaŋ-a-naa-ɲaŋ yuorɪ lɛ

ĩ waa bile kyɛ

ĩ wɔŋ l'a ba yuor yɛlɛ

Bayɛlɛ yir pɔɔ

Bambaala kũ dɪ tuo togtogi

3B. It's in the Bayɛlɛ's house

The stranger finds solace

The children of Zukpor are peerless royals of renown

Even as a child

I heard the greatness of their name

In the house of Bayɛlɛ

The poor suffer not at all.

In subsequent verses the poet solicits the patronage of the rest of the audience by commending them in advance for their generally generous nature. Of course, the audience responded appreciatively like the other before them by offering various sums of money to the performer. Apparently it is only in situation such as this that an artist of this speciality may make a little money from her creative performances.

Patronage for poets that perform praise songs among the Dagara is public. Strictly speaking, there are no privately owned

praise singers as may be said of the *Kwadwumfo* of the Akan courts in Southern Ghana, the *Maruka* of Northern Nigeria who sing for the royal emir. There are no royal praise singers like *imbongi* of the Xhosa and Zulu Courts of Southern Africa or the *Umusizi* of Rwanda.

The *Kwadwumfo*, like the *imbongi* performs on state occasions for the King who is the ultimate patron and provider of his economic needs. The case where Mandinka - speaking griots of the Western Sudanese state such as Mali, Guinea, Senegal and Gambia who were traditionally attached to royal families is well known. Probably the most celebrated of these griots has been Balla Fasseka Kouyate, the personal griot of the Malian King Sundiata (Niane 1965, p.1). Court poets of his kind are what Okpewho described as being "owned" by their mentors since they must say the 'right' thing to maintain both their social and political positions at court.

The Dagara praise poet cannot lay claims to being a private performer for any royalty. Chieftaincy is a relatively new institution, created in the wake of colonial rule in their part of the world. The farthest one can go is to claim "semi-private patronage" (Okpewho 1992, p.27) when a praise poet is specifically invited to grace particular occasions such as initiation rites, and weddings. In such situation the poet showers praises on the hosts in a bid to claim much gifts from them.

The privilege of enjoying semi-private patronage of course, goes with noted impressive performances. Thus the more accomplished

praise poets such as Bede Bongne, get such patronage. Bede has been invited to various festive occasions to do honour to the subjects of the feasts with song. He wins presents for his performances and though they may not be exactly princely they are usually much richer than what a lowly placed poet would get.

So apart from the incident of semi-private patronage, it is public patronage that holds sway among the Dagara as mentioned already. That means the praise poets generally operate on free-lance basis. They are more active during festive occasions such as the Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter and also during other church festive occasions like priestly ordinations and jubilee celebrations. They also turn up at marriage feasts and *bagr*, an esoteric cult initiation ceremony.

At such occasions the praise poets' ultimate hope would be to catch the eye of the hosts and/or the guests of honour to sing their praises. Such personalities are expected to be more generous under circumstances like these. Other prominent members of the community at the feast are usually targets of adulation for the purpose of making money. Like the Hausa itinerant *maroka*, a free-lance praise singer would approach any group of revellers at the feast either on their invitation or of his own volition, to praise them for a fee. Where the members of the group are well known to him, he would proceed to sing their individual praises in turns, and they are expected to show their appreciation by dishing out money to the singer. On the other hand, if the purported audience are strangers, the poet might request that they identify themselves by name, village of origin and clan. These aspects of one's identity are enough for the virtuoso to

weave long and impressive praise songs for his subjects of praise.

Market places and 'pito' drinking bars are also locations where wandering praise poets often visit for the purpose of performing for audiences, to be remunerated in either cash or kind. Generally, drinking groups are the major targets of such itinerant singers; they more than those making sales in the market, are better predisposed to listen to songs by bards.

So it was that Charlie Guy wandered into a drinking house one afternoon and my younger brother who acted as my research assistant became his subject of praise. I reproduce a portion of the praise song Charlie sang in honour of him:

4A. NI ban mǎá bɛ bʊnɛ ɪɛɛ ɪ
 MI kyɛɪɛ ɪ yɛlbɪɛ vʊla
 ɪ yɛlbɪɛ Naanmɛn n'ʊ kʊ mɛ
 Maa wa nyɛ ɪ na tʊɔna yel
 Pɪɛ pʊɔ-saab-nmaa-zɔrɛ-ma
 Yɛlmɪna ɛ Lucio
 Bɔɔdaarma Lucio
 Kandem ma Lucio
 Nadoli Lucio
 Bibil-baala mɛ pɛrʊ wʊɔ a
 Bibi gbili mɛ dǎǎ-yuor a aha!
 Zɪn-ka-vɪɛɪʊ-kʊ-sɔbr-bie
 Ganɪ-ganʊ-wul nɪbɛ ganʊ
 Fʊ sǎǎmɪnɛ bɛ zɔrɛ dɔ ɪ
 Yɛlmɪna nyuur tɛgr'a kyɛ

Maa wa nyē ĩ na tũna yel.

- 4B. You know I don't speak in vain
Listen to my words well
God gives me my words
When I see it (the truth) I say it
Mother of he who mourns over basket-saab meal
Truly, Lucio
Lucio, mother of the war-arrows
Lucio, mother of Kandeme
Lucio, Nadoli
Slim like the sheep-skin bag
Calm like a `pot of Pito
Son-of-the-handsome-one-whose-beauty-strikes
the-witches-dead
One-whose-graceful-steps-inspire-others-
to-walk-with-dignity
Your sires fear no foe
Truly, it's only envy people harbour
When I see it (the truth) I say it.

The funeral ground is one other place where dirge singers - *laykonbe*, who may be classified as praise poets have mourners and sympathizers as patrons. Elegiac poetry in Dagara is closely related to praise songs in content as we have already noted. The praises in *layne*, dirges, are directed to the deceased, his ancestors and the bereaved as well. In Daayen's dirge to a Kusiele dead, he not only pays tribute to the deceased but also

expresses sympathy for the bereaved family and the clan.

For satisfactory performance a dirge singer ought to have good knowledge of the family background of the deceased. The family background here is in its wider sense. It involves not only the immediate family but also the whole clan of the deceased. This enables him to sing of the greatness of the bereaved family and also to display pathos which is most critical at this stage, in his utterances. The *laɲkone's*, dirgists ability to do this effectively yields him monetary reward from the mourners and sympathisers through a leading bereaved member of the deceased family present at place of performance. The usual place of dirge singing is the front of the catafalque where the corpse is seated in state. Animated by two xylophonists and a drummer the dirge singers - who normally perform in pairs, stand in the front line of the circle formed round the instrumentalists and chant their elegies.

It must however be said that money given this way is divided among the two eulogists, sometimes, among the group of mourners on whose behalf they performed. Indeed any male group of mourners that attends a funeral is supposed to chant elegies but since most people do not have that gift of poetry, the dirge singer performs on their behalf, hence the sharing of the proceeds of the performance. But in another vein when a bereaved is so much touched by the utterances of a singer he may offer the particular eulogist a sum of money. This money offered so pointedly belongs to that individual eulogist and he does not share it even with his co-eulogist. So depending on a dirgist's virtuosity, he stands a chance of making a handsome fortune at a funeral through

the patronage of the bereaved family and the rest of the mourners and sympathizers.

The class of dirge poets discussed so far is the male category who together with the xylophonists and drummers keep the funeral going. They are paid as we have seen for their services. But there is also the female dirgist whose mournful chants invariably summon all the women on the funeral ground to encircle the catafalque to mourn. This usually happens when there is an interlude marking the absence of new male arrivals at the funeral or when it is apparent that all sympathizers around have had the usual three sessions of mourning.

As the female chanter leads in her elegy in a soft and mournful voice the rest repeat the tear provoking refrain.

Take for example this invitation to mourn by Denisia Daabɛ:

5A. Sāābiiri woo, nɪ lɔb gũɔ yee

Mabiiri woo, nɪ mɪl gũɔ yee

Hii

Buɔv yelu mɔɔ a yi ti zu yee

A tãākɛɛ za a pɔɛ lore?

Hii, hii.

5B. Alas! my father's children form a circle

Alas! my mother's children form a thick circle

Hii

What misfortune has befallen us,

That makes the raw shea fruits to fall?



Hĩĩ hĩĩ.

Though such chants often move most people to shed tears, the chanter is not offered anything for her poetic performance. In other words, she enjoys no patronage in terms of money and other material gifts.

But if the female dirgists do not receive any recompense for their performances, their counterparts who perform at marriage feasts do. They accompany brides to their grooms' homes with songs that are usually praises to the brides, but sometimes condemnatory and critical of the grooms' clans. The following is a song that is purported to warn the bride of the frustration and insecurity she would face in her new home:

6A. Wa a yir bɛ ta sɛrɛ
 E lanɛ luge
 Pɛpɔɔ-saab-ɲmaa-kone ma
 Fɔ kyir'i lɛbrɔ?
 Wa a yir bɛ ta sɛrɛ
 E lanɛ luge
 Dɔpure vaar-sɛvɛlɪma
 Fɔ kyir'i lɛbrɔ?

6B. You have hardly reached home
 Yet seeking comfort from roof props
 Oh mother of one who laments over basket-saab meal
 Why don't you go back?
 You have hardly reached home

Yet seeking comfort from roof props
Oh mother-of the-resplendent-in-dawa-dawa robes
Why don't you go back?

The groom's family is expected to patronise the lead singer and her team who may announce their arrival with this song:

7A. Bɛkʊɔnɛ biiri, tɪ wana
TI wa na yee, tɪ wana
Vurbaalɛ biiri, tɪ wana
TI wa na yee, tɪ wana
Bʊrɲmaa biiri, ti wana
TI wa na yee tɪ wana, yaa
NYudɛɛ kʊɔrɔbɛ kokolikoo
TI wa na.

7B. Children of Bɛkʊɔnɛ, we have come
We have come, Yes we have come
Children of Vurbaa, we have come
We have come, Yes, we have come
Children of the Crown-bird, we have come
We have come, Yes, we have come
Renowned farmers of the prize-yam
We have come.

By this appellation it is clear that the groom comes from the Bɛkʊɔnɛ clan and that the particular family is noted for cultivating prize-yams. In other words the family belongs to a

class of great farmers and a lot is expected from it on this great day that a bride is brought to it. However, when praises of this type fail to yield the desired results of gifts such as money, food and good drink, the singer often plunges into insults and criticism. (c.f. Finnegan 1977, p.191; Okpewho 1992, p.28ff). To prevent the singer from further exposing the weaknesses of the groom's family, money or some other gift is given out by the groom's family amidst ululations from the bridesmaids, ususally made up of paternal relatives and friends. As Furniss and Gunner have said of a similar situation among the Somali, "the payment is seen as being both reward and a means of silencing the performer" (Furniss and Gunner 1995, p.12).

In conclusion, we may say that there is nothing like court patronage of praise poets among the Dagara ruling houses. There is however what Okpewho calls semi-private patronage of praise poets, but in the main, they generally perform publicly and any individual that is moved by their praises may show appreciation by offering cash or kind to them.

4.03 THE COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE OF PRAISE POEMS

Composition in oral literature has generated a lot of interest among scholars ever since Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord's oral formulaic theory came to light. First introduced by Parry in his pioneering work in 1930 titled *"The Studies in Epic Technique of Oral Verse Making. "I"; Homer and Homeric Style"*, the theory sought to show that there are significant differences between an oral poet and a literary poet in their methods of composition.

Where an oral poet composes a piece of some length there must be a way of fitting his words in a fixed pattern of his verse. This contrasts with a literary poet who sits down and takes time to write out his lines or dictates them. The oral poet, Parry points out "cannot think without hurry his next word, nor change when he has made, before going on to read over what he has just written" (Parry 1930, p.77).

Thus, what enables the oral poet to keep performing without pausing to select appropriate words and phrases is the formula which Parry defines as "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metric conditions to express a given essential idea" (Parry 1930, p.80). The groups of words are stock words, building blocks which may be repeated at appropriate intervals while considering the next words or ideas to express in continuous strain. These formulas to Lord, function to make oral composition easier during the rapid pace of performance.

Lord's own investigation with the composition of oral singers in Yugoslavia confirmed Parry's theory of the formula and further brought to light the thematic inconsistencies that exist in the Homeric and the Yugoslavian epic poems. Contrary to the view of other scholars in regard to these thematic variations, Lord held that they were the result of "the thematic and formulaic structure of the oral epic poetry" (Abdulkadir 1981, p.19) not an outcome of bringing together "shorter Lays". In his *The Singer of Tales* (1960) he further stressed the significance of themes "maintaining that they are as necessary as the formulas in building the structure and content of a song" (Ibid. p.20).

Apart from analysing the themes, Lord considered the

"ornamentation" process employed by the poet to enlarge his piece by the addition of other elements like episodes, metaphors and epithets. But probably the most contentious point he made was that "an oral poem is not composed for but in performance". In other words, an oral poet composes his poems during the event of the performance. This view has been criticised by some scholars including Ruth Finnegan on the grounds of over generalisation. Finnegan argued that "much of the composition may well take place before the moment of performance (Finnegan 1974, p.27).

In the case of Dagara oral poetry some of the theoretical concepts of Parry and Lord raised here are quite applicable. But it must be said that the notion of lineal progression according to metric pattern is not wholly true of most African oral poems and for that matter, Dagara oral poems. Really, one cannot talk of Dagara metre and what Gbadamosi and Beier said of Yoruba is also true of Dagara:

"There is neither an important difference in length of vowels nor a marked difference between stressed and unstressed syllables on which metre could be based".
(Gbadamosi and Beier 1958, p. 8).

Though the praise poetry is much more shorter than an epic the poet employs ornamentation, as well as the formula system to build it. In the praise songs of Charlie Guy, several stocks of formulas can be identified. These he uses as stalling devices to keep the performance going on while he considers what to say next. In a praise song to Lucio which runs into 182 lines for instance, Charlie repeated "Maa wa nyε ĩ na tũna yel" - (I will say it as it is) eleven times and referred to the Bible four

times in these words:

Baabul'u Iɛɛ - Its the Bible speaking

Aza ben a Baabul

gamɛ puɔ - It is in the Bible.

The singer also began fifteen lines with "Yelmɪŋa" - truly.

In another praise song to Emeritus Archbishop P.P. Dery at my request the poet opened thirteen lines with Yelmɪŋa in the 133 lined song. He also made use of the rhetorical question:

NI nyɛ ʊ (a) na?

Have you seen him (it)?

seventeen times! Both songs were composed on the spur of the moment and considering the various themes he covered, he needed such building blocks to bridge the gap in between the themes.

When a poet goes solo but with the accompaniment of a musical instrument, he may be at much leisure to pause and recall or select words and phrases to proceed with the performance. But for one such as Charlie Guy who sings with neither an instrument nor a helper, it can be quite a strain even if he has learned his piece by rote. It is thus necessary that he relies heavily on the formula he has fashioned out himself to perform with credit.

Bede Bongne in a twenty-five-versed praise song to Most Rev. G.E. Kpiebaya that runs into 113 lines, however appears to have used full verse as building blocks. The blind poet first repeated verse 15 as verse 18 and then repeated the 21st and concluded with the seventh verse as the twenty-fifth. Much as they may be considered as stocks of formula, they can also be seen as placing emphasis on the major concerns of the poet. Indeed, he was at

that point of performance speaking for the entire congregation gathered at the Wa Catholic Cathedral to bid their out-going bishop good-bye to his new appointment at Tamale. The three repeated verses are as follows:

8A. NaanmIn na ku fu ni grasie

NaanmIn na ku fu no kanyiri

A fu tō ti ta a baaru

A nyε fu san-ya za

A NaanmIn zie.

TI mī kyāā na kyilε

ε ti na nyε ni bisob

A Dagne na ton u vuuru son

U sig wa kaa iru mī ku ti.

Wa Daosi biir za kone na

Bisob Kpεbaya iru Ian

Wa Daosi biir za kone na

Bε de nī a ti bisob

Bεr Tamale.

Verse: 15 and 18:

8B. God will grant you grace

God will grant you patience

To labour to the end

And receive your reward

From God.

Verse: 21 and 22:

We are still hopeful
That we shall get our bishop
The Lord will send His Holy Spirit
To descend and appoint him for us.

Verse: 7 and 25:

The Diocese of Wa laments
Over the departure of Bishop Kpiebaya
The Diocese of Wa laments
That our bishop has been sent to Tamale.

This technique of Bongne demonstrates that the use of repetition in oral performance does not only provide a breathing space for the poet to recollect and select aspects of a text but to also stress important points he wishes to convey to the audience. This may not be seen in isolation but in relation to even the technique of Charlie Guy and most oral performers who use stocks of formulas. The repetitions stress key points of interest.

I have mentioned the contentious nature of Lord's classic statement that "an oral poem is not composed for but in performance". Much ink has been spilt on it. While some scholars such as Magoun, F.P. Jr., Arant and Larry D. Benson supported the theory (AbdulKadir 1981, p. 29), Finnegan (1977, p.73) AbdulKadir (1981 p. 22) and Okpewho (1992 p. 68) believe there is an element of over generalisation. As Okpewho pointed out "in the *Udje*

poetry of the Urhodo the *orUrile* (composer) and the *Obuole* (singer) are normally different people. And among the Somali oral poets would take care to point out that the poem they were about to recite was composed by someone else". (Okpewho Op. cit. 68). Also (Finnegan Op. cit.p. 74ff)

Lord might have overstated his case for composition in performance by making what operates in the Homeric epics and the Yugoslavian epics universal law. But the possibility of composing an oral poem during performance cannot be dismissed outright even in African oral poetry as Finnegan has had to accept, when she said

"much (though not necessarily all) of the composing may take place before the moment of performance" (Op. cit., p. 78).

An experience I had with one of my informants may be relevant here, I believe, in showing the great possibility of composition in performance.

At my request, Madam Virginia MaaniasE, a leader of a female singing group that had been invited to perform at a Kakube festival, agreed to sing for me a grinding song she was to sing to the general audience at the function. I recorded this private performance and later recorded the one she performed in public.

When after the function I played back both recordings to her we both realised the two performances were markedly different in terms of organisation, themes, words, phrases and length. Asked why she did not repeat exactly what she had sung to me at first, she laughed and said she thought she had said all that was sung in the first song but quickly added that as she stood before the

chiefs and other dignitaries she felt there was the need to salute them and to praise the Nandom Naa. The extracts from the two texts show an example of the differences in them as far as the words and phrases as well as the general structure go:

9A. First Text:

Dɔpure vaar sɛvɛɛɪɪ

Kɛ ɪ ma yiri a be ɔ̃ɔ̃ɔ

Nadole yir pɔɔ nɔ ɔ bɔŋ daar

Kɛ ɪ ma yir'u

ɔ̃ɔ̃ɔ ɔ̃ɔ̃ɔ

Pɪɛ pɔɔ saab ir vɔla ŋmaa dɔnɛ

ɪ ma yir'u

ɔ̃ɔ̃ɔ.

9B. The resplendent in dawa-dawa leaves

That's supposedly my mother's house

Nadole's house of the war arrows

That's supposedly my mother's house

ɔ̃ɔ̃ɔ ɔ̃ɔ̃ɔ

The clan that must carefully remove saab

from the basket to eat

That's my mother's house.

10A. Second Text:

A bie ŋa na nɪɛ ar ɪɛɛ

A yir buor dem arbɛ n'ɔ?

000

A Kusiele yir puo ni u Nadoli daar

ĩ ma yir'i a be yee

Zaabɛɛ yir puo ni u Bɛkyɔg

ĩ ma yir'r a be

A piɛ puo saab iru ŋmaa bɛru

ĩ ma yir'i a be

000

ĩ ma yir'u

000 000

10B. But this child that is talking

Whose niece is she?

000

The Kusiele clan of the Nadoli-war-arrows

That's my mother's house

Zaabɛɛ's house of Bɛkyɔg

That's my mother's house

The clan that-will-eat-no-saab from-a-basket

That's my mother's house

000

That's my mother's house

000 000.

While in the first text the singer appears to doubt what her mother's clan is, she is more confident of it in the second text and begins her self-identification with a question and proceeds to answer it.

As mentioned above *Lagni* of the Dagara is closely related to praise songs. In expressing sympathy to the bereaved praises are chanted for the dead as well as the ancestors of the deceased and the bereaved. It is one oral art form that may be said to be composed in performance. Indeed, some details about the deceased - for example, his clan, family background and occupation need to be known by the dirge-cantor and he will on the spur of the moment compose a dirge jointly with his co-performer.

Of course, not every verbal art composition is done that way. Charlie Guy composes praise songs at short notice, in fact in performance but others such as Bede Bongne spend time to compose and rehearse it with a chorus before the actual performance.

Bede in an interview with me said he usually took some time to compose songs of various types. When inspired to do so, he might withdraw from members of his house-hold for long hours. In withdrawing he would either confine himself in his bedroom or seek seclusion under a distant shady tree. This was done to prevent disturbances from people. But any time he returned to his people from such creative reveries, he always had a nice song to teach and rehearse with his "NOMhaa Choral Group" a small band of male and female singers, before the performance.

Bede further claimed he composed some songs while he worked or rested. There have been times he had woken up from sleep with a new song to teach his little band. Bede believed that his compositions were spiritually inspired. As a religiously-inclined individual, he has praise songs for some religious dignitaries in his diocese. Some of these praise songs can be found in the

appendix.

Most of the marriage songs sung in praise of the bride especially are usually composed and rehearsed before they are performed on the occasion of the marriage. Of course, some praise songs - both adulatory and derogatory can be composed during performance depending on the mood of the poet and the atmosphere in which she operates.

4.04 THE POSITION OF THE PRAISE POET IN HIS COMMUNITY

Like the literary poet and other poets of the oral tradition elsewhere, the position of the Dagara praise poet depends on the quality and volume of his output. Added to these are his personal charisma and economic solvency. He should be charismatic in the way he says and does things during performance. His words and gestures should be such that they carry the audience along with him.

The quality of the poet's work should reflect the cultural norms of his society and should put him in a position of one who gives hope and joy in the midst of adversity and despair. He is thus seen as a seer, a chronicler, an entertainer and a praiser.

As a seer, the poet plays a prophetic role in society by raising its members' hopes for the future through praise singing. Through this medium he encourages the object of praise to strive harder to achieve whatever noble goals he has set for himself. The praise poet succeeds as a seer if he is able to make his patrons see with him a bright future.

Aware of the expectation of the patrons he encounters, the praise poet makes copious references to the success stories of

their heroic ancestors as proof of the inevitable success that must come the patrons' way if they would just strive a little harder. In the following lines for instance, Bede Bongne in his praise song to Rt. Rev. Bemile on the occasion of his episcopal ordination, encourages the bishop to take up the challenge of leadership fearlessly:

11A. Faara Paul nɪ a tɪ bisob

A Naanmɪn wa kaa ir kʊtɪ

Kpɛɛɛ-yir pʊɔ zimpir-yɔr-waar

A nɪkpɛɛmʊ pāā bɛ tab bɪɪ.

Sabir-been-lo-maal taa' tɪɛɛ

Bɛɪɪ-kone-tɪ-mine-taten

Gandaa-tanɪ-a-lɛr-ka-kyɛb

Ta zɔrɛ dɛbɛɛ togtog e

Biyaga-guole taa' bʊnɛ ɪ

Bɪnaaba-Sabie-warmɛ

Dɔpure-vaar-sɛvɪɛɪɪ, pɪɛ-pʊɔ-saab-ɲmaa-gar

ɲmɪn na kʊb nɪ a kanyir.

11B. Father Paul is our bishop

Whom God has chosen for us

Kpɛɛɛ's child, the cumulus-of-sudden-rain

Authority now rests with you.

Transforming-rain-drop worry not

You-who-thunder-near-by, but rains-in-
distant-lands

The valiant-that strikes and render all axes
redundant.

Fear not.

Succour-of numerous children, bear no doubt

Countless-raindrops of Binaaba

Resplendent-wearer-of dawa-dawa-robos, detester
of saab-in-basket

God will give you courage.

The object of praise has powerful super-human mentors and is exhorted to look up to them for support. But apart from offering words of inspiration and encouragement the poet also warns against dangers ahead and attempts to suggest ways of avoiding or resolving them. In a praise song to Lucio, the praise poet Charlie Guy warned him against the flattery and lying tongues of his would-be enemies in these words:

12A. Īɛɛ ɲa nɪsaal sɛbla

FU na nyē zukɔbr sɛbla

Yelmɪɲa nyē a bɛ nɛɛ a

Nyɛ bɛ nɛɛ a

Yelmɪɲa mɛ sɪɛla puɔ kũũ

ɛ kyɛ a puɔ kpɛ lhere vũũ

A bɛ puɔr kpɛ sɛblɛ zuo

KyIr kyIr mē patoro kŭŭ a

FU baŋ, māā bē bŭnē Iērē I

MI kyēli ī yelbie vŭla

ī yelbie, NaanmIn kŭ mē

Māā wa nyē ī natŭŭna yel

12B. People of today

People of today as you have seen

Truly, mark their words

Mark their words

Truly, salty-sweet like clayey water

But their insides are flaming fire

Their bellies are very black

But inflammable like petrol

You know I don't speak in vain

Listen to my words carefully

My words come from God

When I see it (the truth) I say it.

In the last four lines Charlie Guy does not mince words in respect to the source of his knowledge. God is the source and He has commissioned Charlie to tell the truth and Lucio must have to take him seriously. The poet's role as a seer and an interpreter of the divine word is put in clear perspective in Charlie's claim.

Another role of the praise poet in the view of the Dagara is that of a Chronicler. The praise poet with his more than ordinary gift of memory may be the custodian of the history of

his society. This enables him to sing of heroic deeds of his patrons' ancestors as well as personal exploits of these patrons. His grasp of the biographies of the people around him are also important for impressive and effective performances. A poet's display of indepth historical knowledge of a patron's ancestry in glowing language could win him a generous present and a projection of his image as a poet.

While he gives an impressive historical account in his appellations, the poet is greeted with rapturous acclamations in the form of ear-splitting ululations especially from the female members of the audience. Such a response usually reassures the poet that he is playing his role creditably.

Reasons for people's affection for glamorous clan or family appellations are not hard to find. Firstly, the Dagara are nostalgic about the so-called glories of the past. Faced with harsh economic and social realities of life which tend to blur their focus on a better future, an ornamented painting of the past evokes pleasurable feelings for the past generations.

A second and perhaps more important reason for the love of appellations is that they give one a sense of pride to know and have it known by others that one has noble roots of ancestry. Mindful of this fact praise singers exploit the situation and paint exaggerated portraits of the forbears of their patrons. The purpose obviously is to please the patrons and claim more generous gifts while they are beside themselves with joy. Ambrose Daayen of Nandom, Goziir who is a notable xylophonist and dirge singer told me how he was a proud winner of a goat prize staked at a funeral of a hunter. By giving a picturesque declamation of

the ancestry of the deceased, Daayen did not only win the prize but had various sums of money proffered him as he sang his dirge.

So where a poet is able to meet this social and artistic demand of his community his image as a social commentator is enhanced and he is revered for his intellectual capacity to hold all that information in his mind and to bring it out at appropriate moments.

As people of great humour the Dagara like a good entertainer. Among the various oral art practitioners, the praise poet deals more directly with the individual and more often than not says the things the one would like to hear. He exploits the vanity of the individual to his own advantage by exaggerating the nobility or greatness of one. Though the object of praise usually knows that the poet has the tendency to exaggerate he is thrilled all the same by what he hears from the singer and may show his appreciation by offering the singer a gift. So apart from the fact that the public see him as a seer and a chronicler, they also hold the praise poet as a great entertainer who has the gift of colourful language. Indeed a praise singer should be able to use language very imaginatively and artistically.

Imaginative and artistic use of language involves a heightened language amply enhanced by stylistic devices such as proverbs, metaphors, similes and imagery. Structural repetitiveness in lines and refrains coupled with prosodic features like alliteration and parallelism combined with the other devices, set the poet's language apart from everyday language and situate it in the realm of poetry. This poetic use of language appeals strongly to the aesthetic sentiments of the

hearers.

Most praise chants tend to be in song; because of that it is possible to wrongly assume that the Dagara love for praise songs is mainly hinged on its musicality. My investigation has shown that most people consider the music as being only a vehicle that transports the contents of the piece woven in an imaginative language. The more intricate the artistry the stronger the appeal of the song. As Bede Bongne said:

13A. "A bɛ ɪ mɛ nũɔ̃ yõ na ʊ na
nʊ mɛ ɪ, ɛkyɛ a viɛl'a kɛ
a yeɛle tɪbrɛ, a yelbie wob
nyɔg taa ɪrɛ ti nũɔ̃ ɛ
kʊrɛ ti tiɛrʊ".

13B. It should not merely be melodious
but it should be weighty in content
The words interwoven such that they
evoke pleasure and thought.

Bede's statement epitomises the view of many Dagara in regard to the aesthetic nature of a praise song. In the following praise verse he has given an example of a thought provoking praise song deeply grounded on proverbs:

14A. Dɛrbaanɛn kanyir sob mɪ ɔb
Baŋ-aza-kʊ-bangu-bie
kpaar mɪ mĩĩ a fʊ dɪ bʊnkāā

Tō-ta-be ni di-ta-be yoo.

- 14B. It's the patient one who eats the rat (meat)
Child of the-wise-one-to-whom-nothing-is-hidden
To eat oily meal, the occiput must be sore
Production level determines consumption rate.

Apart from the second line which is a praise name created from the process of nominalisation, the rest of the lines are proverbs. While the first and third lines exhort the object of praise to espouse the virtues of patience and endurance the fourth line reminds him that one's ultimate achievement is dependent on one's determination to succeed.

So for the praise poet to satisfy the aesthetic appetite of his community he must have an ingenious mind to create scenes and events vividly with his gift of words for the people to 'see'.

It is not enough for one to be recognised as a poet with one or two compositions. That would be considered a flash in a pan. The volume of oral compositions is a demonstration of a praise poet's devotion to his vocation.

In spite of the foregoing, praise poets in the Dagara community enjoy no court or royal patronage nor do they depend on any individual's patronage for their livelihood. They are generally public performers but not professionals in the strict sense of the word. They "are professional artists only in the sense of the seriousness with which they devote themselves to their careers as artists. For their living, they each turn to any

of the occupations open to members of their community-farming [--
-]" (Anyidoho 1995; p. 249). They may frequently be celebrated
and even envied for their gift of song (Anyidoho, Op. cit. p.
248) but "in a society where leaders are men of measurable
success" as Awoonor points out, "poet-cantors even though they
may be respected are never among the aristocracy of leaders".
(Awoonor 1974, p.19).

In this respect, one could cite the late Bɛrgyɪrɛ as a
typical example. This man was respected for the ingenuity he
exhibited in xylophone playing and xylophone making as well. He
was invited to many homes to entertain his hosts with
performances that drew large crowds. But his constant roving
among villages and even across international borders of Ghana and
Burkina Faso left him little chance to organise a decent family
life. Though he was said to have had four women with whom he bore
four children, by the time of his death in Burkina Faso in 1991,
they had all deserted him to find more serious men to marry.
Bɛrgyɪrɛ, compared to most of oral poets in the area, was indeed
more professional as he tended to depend on his art for his
livelihood. But of course, it is unlikely that such a person
could have been given a position of trust or leadership in his
community.

There are some poets who play leadership roles in their
communities but not because they are artists. Such people have
attained an appreciable level of success in farming or some other
field of endeavour. Ambrose Danyen is one such person who is a
village head-man. This therefore means that much as society
appreciates the artistic role of the praise poet, his place in

the community is rather ambivalent and it is left to him to conduct both his social and economic life in such a way that he is accorded a position of trust and greater reverence even when he is not performing his art.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.00 FUNCTIONS AND RELEVANCE OF DAGARA PRAISE POEMS

In discussing the role of the praise poet in the previous chapter, it was pointed out that his relevance in the Dagara community is premised on his ability to effectively serve their various needs through his art of *danu* performance. These needs are basically sociological, psychological and aesthetic. It is appropriate at this stage to examine the functions of *danu* that make them relevant in the life of the Dagara.

5.01 CELEBRATION OF PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

The desire to achieve a particular goal that is honourable and creditable in society, often is the driving force that propels individuals to undertake various tasks. The effort spent in achieving the objective may be such that it is not missed by the community, because of its magnitude or gracefulness and thus calls for public acclamation in the form of a praise song.

One function of the *danu* in this respect then is to acknowledge the effort and ultimate achievement of the hero, and to project him as an object of admiration worthy of emulation. The Dagara believe that no notable achievement can be realised without dedication and hard work. Diligence is a virtue to them while sloth is scorned at and never rewarded. The negative attitude towards laziness encourages all to strive hard for themselves and for their community; for the community because they belong to a communalistic society and they all recognise that the actions of each of its members reflect on their entire

community. If the action is commendable the whole community stands commended but if on the other hand, the action is disgraceful, the community suffers the indictment too.

The communal philosophy of the Dagara encourages *danu* performance for achievers. Bearing in mind that success is not won for the benefit of the individual hero alone but also for his people, *danu* to them is a celebration of a collective success of the whole group. This is manifested in the nature of the *danu*. While the individual achievements of the immediate hero are lauded, those of past heroes of the community are also celebrated in the same praise song. Take for instance this piece by Charlie Guy in honour of Archbishop Dery:

1A. Yelmɪŋa ɛ ɔɔzɔm nu ɪɛɛ

ɔɔzɔm na taa wa sɔɔlɛ ɪ

ɪmakurnaa nu fɔtɔɔ na wɔ?

Bug bagr wa faa nɪɛ

Pɔɪkɪuu, nɪ nyɔŋ na?

Bisob Dɛr, ɔsɔɔ yuori lɛ

Pɔɪkɪuu taa wa sɔɔlɛ ɪ

ɔlɛ nɪ ŋa bug bagɛ sɪɪɛ

Nɪ nyɔŋ na?

Bisob Dɛr ɔ piil'a

ɔlɛ nɪ ŋa ŋmarɛ a nuur zɪɪ

ɪaŋɛ a kpɪmɛ ɪaŋ.

1B. Truly, that's ɔɔzɔm speaking

ɔɔzɔm don't shy away

It's Ŋmakurnaa, have you heard of him?

He divined to save people

Pɔrikuu, have you seen him?

That's Bishop Dery's father's name

Pɔrikũũ, don't shy away

He confounded people with his divination

Have you seen him?

He has begun

Here he is pouring the sacrificial blood of hens

For the ancestral spirits.

In this text, the poet is informing his audience of his impression about Archbishop Dery. The Archbishop to him is an embodiment of the spirits of Pɔrikũũ his father and Ŋmankurnaa his uncle, both of whom he served as an acolyte. The Archbishop had served his uncle as an assistant when he ministered to people as a diviner. He however forsook Ŋmakurnaa to follow his father, when Pɔrikũũ was converted to Catholicism. Dery was to rise to become an archbishop well known in Ghana and abroad. It is in the light of this, that the poet sees him as a great priest performing ritual sacrifices (Masses) on behalf of his congregations. And while he praises Dery, he does not leave out those who first taught him about God to whom he is now a chief-priest.

Similarly, in a praise song to another prelate, Rt. Rev. Bemile the poet Virginia Maaniasɛ made references to both the hero's patrilineal clan's forbears and his matrilineal clan's heroes.

2A. PIɛpɔɔ-saab-ɲmaa-kone bie

Bɛkɔɔnɛ nazag bie nɔ

ɔ sokyir paal'a nɪ nɔmɔ

Alɛ so Naanɲmɪn kaa ir'u.

2B. Son of he-who laments-over-saab-in-basket

Son of the Bɛkɔɔnɛ kraal

His heart is full of love

That's why God chose him.

"PIɛ-pɔɔ-saab-ɲmaa-kone" is a 'deverbative eulogie" (Kunene 1971, p. 13-) of the bishop's clan - Kpɛlɛ while Bɛkɔɔnɛ is his mother's clan. By saying he is a "son of the Bɛkɔɔnɛ kraal," the poet who is also of that clan implies that the bishop is a true member of the Bɛkɔɔnɛ clan. So from this *danɔ* all members of the two clans are expected to be proud that one of them has risen to the rank of a bishop. Another function of the *danɔ* is that it motivates people to distinguish themselves in heroic deeds that can bestow honour, fame and prosperity on them and the rest of the community. Farmers, hunters, blacksmiths and other traditional professions have often found themselves stimulated by *danɔ*.

Commendation or praise, no matter how mild, has the tendency to please even the most modest of people and make him eager to earn another through harder work. That precisely is the function of *danɔ*. *Danɔ* touches on the vanity of man and makes him feel proud of himself. This pride in him further stimulates him to perform similar feats or more spectacular ones to remain in the lime

light. But as the individual is thus motivated to perform tasks that are of communal interest the community benefits from them too.

Being such an exciting and pleasing performance, *danU* encourages slumbering members of the Dagara community to rouse themselves up to do things that not only bring them joy but also bring honour to their people. The greater the number of people roused into action, in this manner, the more the community stands to benefit from their achievements. Apparently, the real hero is the community that breeds and grooms those that bring honour to it. The *danU* themselves in this context may be likened to Olympic medals that are kept by their individual winners while the honour goes to the nation that groomed the winners.

The Dagara realising the potency of *danU* in both individual and group development, never let an event worth celebrating in song, go by unnoticed. It is the responsibility of the praise poet, however, to perform the duty of praising on behalf of the larger society. It is thus in performance of such a duty that Rose DOnIr called on the Nandom Catholic community to celebrate Rt. Rev. Bemile's election as Bishop of Wa in these words:

3A. Nandomɛ Lanyirbiir

NI ɲmɛ kuryii

Ka Iañ U, Iañ kyIrɛ.

3B. Church of Nandom,

Acclaim with ululations

To stimulate him.

Such an acclaim not only shows happiness but also expresses the people's solidarity with the hero.

5.02 ENTERTAINMENT AND RELAXATION

A praise poem may function as a medium of motivating people into profitable activities, but it also has a function of relaxing the mind and body through entertainment. As Okpewho has said,

"One major usefulness of any form of literature is that it offers delight and so relieves us of various pressures and tensions both physically and mentally."
(Okpewho 1992, p.106).

One way a *danu* relaxes the body and mind is through the melody of the music. Incidentally, all personal praise poems are sung rather than chanted as is the case is with clan appellations.

It has been argued in the previous chapter that the Dagara affection for *danu* is not merely because of the music that tends to be an inherent component of it, but more importantly, because of the message that it conveys. While still holding on to that argument, it may also be said that the power of music in *danu* has the effect of rousing soothing emotions that relieve tension in the mind, relax the body and "create a cheerful and happy attitude" (Ludin 1967, p.291).

The flowery language that is applied to the composition and performance of *danu* gives a lot of satisfaction to the audience. This colourful language of course involves a lot of exaggeration on the part of the poet. Various figures of expression and stylistic devices as seen earlier are combined in the composition

and performance of the *danu*. The effect is that a heightened language which has an aesthetic appeal to the people is created. Such a language also normally projects the praised as a super human being as there is the tendency to ignore or conveniently suppress his human weaknesses in the praise song.

The very idea of being such a personage as the poet wants to impress upon him and the audience is generally pleasing to the object of praise particularly, and the members of his family or clan. This is so because of the general wish of people to be seen in good light. It is thus pleasurable and entertaining to be showered with accolades that project one's image before the public.

It is also entertaining on the part of the audience who may not believe some of the nice things and heroic deeds ascribed to the praised. They are entertained by the seeming gullibility of the praised who manifests his acceptance of the flattery through dancing to the *danu* or offering gifts to the praiser.

In a funeral situation however, mourners and sympathizers accept flattery to the bereaved and the deceased in good faith. This is so because, such colourful attributes in a dirge are intended to soothe the sorrow of the bereaved and also to mellow their melancholic temperament. The praise in this context has a "cathartic function [---] in relieving social tension or in alleviating overwhelming sorrow" (Finnegan 1992, p.129) during such traumatic periods of loss.

The entertainment function of *danu* may be said to favour the community too. Entertainment creates hilarious moments for the people. There is happiness and harmony among them as against

animosity and strife. A happy community has peace that fosters growth in various ways. The entertainment function of *danu* may thus be considered as a harmonious and stabilising in the Dagara community.

5.03 SELF-ASSERTION

Praise poems also play an important role in enabling people to assert themselves. They further create opportunities for people of one clan to identify one another. When a person's *danu* is performed, it is not only his achievements alone that are recounted but also those of his heroic ancestors as has been observed already. In this wise, he is identified with great men of the past and allows him room to assert himself as a distinguished personage of a noble family or clan. This is particularly important for chiefs who are usually eager to prove their royal parentage in the face of succession rivalry. In such a situation, the following lines by Virginia Maaniasie constitute a typical example of a *danu* that can assist one to assert himself:

- 4a. Aã mInε nεbε danɔ di a naalɔ
 Kaa anIbε zie?
 BεkɔOnε danɔ di a naalɔ
 Kaa a nIbε zie
 Danyε nI aɲa, danɔ di a naalɔ
 Kaa a nIbε zie
 Kyiir'ɔ danɔ di a naalɔ
 Kaa a nIbε zie

Bɔrɔ yi woo, di a naalu

Kaa a nɪbɛ zie

Vurbaalɛ Moro nu di a naalu

Kaa a nɪbɛ zie

Vurbaalɛ Konkũũ woo, di a naalu

Kaa a nɪbɛ zie

Puoure woo, di a naalu

Kaa a nɪbɛ zie

4B. Who in their royal reign have

Cared for the people?

The Bɛkũɔnɛ in their reign

Have cared for the people

It was Danyɛ who first reigned

And cared for the people

Kyiir had reigned

And had cared for the people

Bɔrɔ's turn came, woo to reign

And he cared for the people

Moro the Vurbaalɛ, woo reigned

And cared for the people

Konkũũ the Vurbaalɛ, woo reigned

And cared for the people

Puoure woo, reign

And care for the people.

The verse has traced the royal ancestry of Naa Puoure back to many generations and acknowledges him as the rightful traditional

ruler of Nandom though there is a slight error in the order of succession. Traditionally, Kyiir was the first defacto ruler of Nandom and was succeeded by Danyɛ on his demise.

Through the praise songs, members of the various clans are able to recognise and identify with one another as belonging to their respective agnatic groups. The shared ancestral history and totems mentioned in the *danu* of a hero, provide clues for people to identify their hitherto unknown 'brothers' of the tertiary level as discussed in Chapter Two. It does not only give pleasure to know that one shares origin with many other notables as the case may be, but it also makes one feel safe and secure to know there are dependable relatives around in case of adversity.

5.04 RECORDING HISTORY

Events of the past have usually come to later generations in pre-literate societies mostly through oral tradition (c.f. Vansina 1985, p.27ff) which comprises legends, myths, epic and of course, praise songs. The role classical epics like Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* played in recording part of Greek history - the Trojan War, is quite phenomenal. Similarly, the Sundiata epic has told the story of the rise of the Mali empire in the Western Sudan. In regard to the Dagara, the *bagr* myth (c.f. Goody 1972, *The Myth of the Bagre*) has told the story of man's creation and his relation with God in the search for peace.

Danu on their part have recounted the exploits of people of various cultures. Among the Dagara, *danu* have celebrated notable events of the distant past and contemporary times. The notable

events that past clan patriarchs and their successors caused to happen, serve as history to the people of this generation who now hear it from the accounts of the praise poets. The 'great' deeds recounted evoke the feeling of pride among members of the clan. They are proud to have had such great men as ancestors who performed such feats. Knowledge of the 'glorious' past inspires the present generation to either strive to surpass the achievements of the past heroes or to at least equal them.

Heroic acts of contemporary men are also celebrated in songs and hence, recorded for the education and inspiration of future generations. For instance the various praise songs of the three bishops and the Nandom Naa seen earlier, will pass not only as praise songs but also as historical accounts of these personages. In the light of this the functional relevance of *danU* as a recording of history cannot be over-emphasized. It has often been said that it is necessary for a people to know their past in order to know who they are. *DanU* offer the Dagara an opportunity to know who they are and what they can do.

5.05 ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Praise poetry is one outlet of artistic expression for one gifted with the talent of composing and performing. It offers the poet a stage to express himself artistically, using words and music such that his audience is both entertained and stimulated into action. A praise poet is a "master of the art of speech" and "the art of speech has no secret for" him, to use Djeli Mamadou Kouyate's words (c.f. Niane 1960, p.9).

One with such mastery of words would be inclined to exhibit

it for several reasons. Firstly he would like to display this rich gift of communication for his own aesthetic satisfaction; art for art sake. The pleasure he derives from this practice may urge him on to indulge in it as often as possible and this could eventually bring him into public recognition as one who has the gift of song.

Secondly, corollary to the public recognition of his special talent of praise singing, he would be encouraged by them to perform for their delight. As Charlie Guy said in an interview:

5A. A ĩ danU yielu Ian, maa wa kyere
nɪbɛ mɪ buɔlɛ mɛ na kɛ ĩ wa danɪ
wul bɛ saakuɔmU; ɛ bɛlɛ wa wõ
a ĩ yielu a, ɛ bɛ Ian mɪ mhãã na.

5B. Because of my praise songs, people
invite me as I go by, and urge me
to sing praise and teach them tradition.
They claim my songs delight them.

2/6/95
At Nandom, Ko.

As the poet impresses his audience with his performances they show their appreciation by offering him gifts of all sorts. Such a concrete demonstration of appreciation, with time becomes the third reason for performing *danU* for people. While he would be enjoying himself displaying his poetic skills and entertaining people, he would be alert and eager to receive gifts from them.

For the various functional values that praise poems have for the Dagara then, it is apparent that praise poetry will continue to thrive indefinitely especially as the youth, from Charlie Guy's account, are greatly interested in it. *Danu* will continue to be performed in honour of members of the community who have distinguished themselves in various fields of endeavour. It certainly is a vibrant oral art among the Dagara that engages the attention of not just the individual praised, but all those present at its performance.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have sought to study the praise chants and songs of the Dagara called *danu*. *Danu*, the study has revealed, is a popular and vibrant art form which may be composed at an earlier time before performance or contemporaneously done. Whichever way it is done, the purpose is usually to praise some one for either his personal achievement or a contribution he has made to society.

The study has also shown that *danu* may not be wholly praise but could be laced with subtle criticisms most covertly. A criticism may be made by conveniently keeping quiet about well known weaknesses of the hero. It may also be done by cautioning him on certain attitudes or tendencies which the poet as spokesman for the public, considers negative to both the praised and society as a whole. Such a caution may be given humorously but in spite of that, it is not expected to be lost on the praised.

It is also observed that though *danu* can be performed by most individuals, there are specialists in the art who are quite distinguished and are in a class of their own. They are the people sought after to perform at public places and even at private homes. They are the poets with abundant gifts of words that are engaged for their qualitative richness.

Among this group of people may be found both sexes. Praise performance is open to both sexes. It is the setting that may

impose a limitation to one gender or the other. For instance, in the performance of bridal or grinding songs, female oral poets hold sway there, even though male singers may also avail themselves at weddings to sing praises of various personalities present. In a funeral situation where dirges, so closely related to praise chants are performed, it is mainly the male poets - *lan̄konbɛ*, who perform. Occasionally, female dirgists may perform when the male ones are in recess.

Training of these oral poets is informal. The individual strives to distinguish himself as a respectable artist through his interest in the art and the desire to develop his latent poetic talents as much as possible. Taking advantage of whatever material is useful in that direction in his locality, the individual addresses himself to the task of self-training assiduously to achieve his dream.

Praise poets among the Dagara have the general public as potential patrons. They do not have private patrons to minister to as their counterparts in aristocratic societies like the Akan, Dagomba, Yoruba and Zulu have. Their popularity however, hinges on their performances and how they conduct themselves in both private and public lives.

In examining the Dagara *danU*, what Finnegan said in regard to elements that could help determine a poem was found very useful. She had said that:

"What we must look for is not one absolute criterion but a range of stylistic and formal attributes - features like heightened language and metaphorical expressions, musical form or accompaniment, structural repetitiveness (like the recurrence of stanzas, lines and refrains) prosodic features like metre, alliteration even perhaps parallelism." (Finnegan

1970, p.25).

It has been found that the characteristics of the *danu* show evidence of the stylistic features Finnegan has listed. A feature, such as heightened language through the employment of metaphors, hyperboles and other figures of speech, runs through the various praise songs encountered. Incidentally, praises are either sung or chanted, and this makes them musical. For rhythm, the song or chant may be accompanied by hand clapping or raft zither, and in the case of a dirge xylophone and drum give the most appropriate musical accompaniments. Structural repetitiveness, such as the recurrence of stanzas, lines and refrains also feature prominently in the body of the various praise songs.

Lines and stanzas of oral performance have often posed a problem in terms of discernment. In resolving the problem of determining a poetic line scholars have found the 'pause' in utterance very relevant. For instance, a stretch of utterance in between pauses may constitute a line (c.f. Anyidoho 1977, p.21). This stretch of utterance is also referred to as a "breath group" (Ibid. p.21) implying that all that is said in linear order in between pauses is uttered under one breath.

In determining the line in the Dagaaba dirge Saanchi observed that:

"Any line demarcation would have to take into consideration the pauses the dirger observes, for it is precisely at these pauses that his companion or the chorus may come in. In that sense, the 'line' may be said to have a 'pausal' identity and may consist of only one word or a whole sentence" (Saanchi 1992, p.

The line in Dagara praise song corresponds with that of the dirge as Saanchi has rightly demonstrated it. The line is bounded on both ends by pauses, and could be a full sentence or just a phrase. The stanza on the other hand is relatively easier to determine especially in songs that are accompanied by choruses or refrains. The chorus marks the end of a stanza which incidently, usually carries a separate theme from the others. The end of the chorus or refrain may initiate another stanza in the sequence. Where there is no chorus, the main ideas or themes dealt with tend to determine the verses.

With regard to the foregoing features of the *danU*, it can be determined that the *danU* is structured with those characteristics that available literature on oral poetry view as necessary features of the genre. As an art form, *danU* has come a long way and its survival in generations yet to come is not in doubt. This is so because of its functional relevance to the Dagara community. It does not only satisfy the aesthetic needs of the people but it also serves as a source of entertainment and inspiration to rise above one's difficulties in life. As an oral historical 'documentary' it is didactic particularly to the youth.

APPENDIX

A. CLAN APPELLATIONS

I

KUSIELE DANU

Kusiele gbenɔdaa
Nadole ni bɛ bɔɔdaar
Dakyin-migr ganɛ
Kŭ lo sole,
Dɔpure-vaar sɛviɛli
Masuur-zie na saɲ pɔg-bɛ
Dibaali diyĩĩ kpɛɛrbɛ
Kpɛ dion lɛb yi tul
Bɛnyɛ kyɔgrɛ na kyɔgri kũũ
Dilampɔɔ kũ ũũ dɔmɛ
Kyɛ tiɛ a lɛr ka kyɛb
Sabir been lo maali zie
Bilsaa ni ɔ dɛbzɛ
Dɛbzɛ kũ maali buɔ
Piɛ pɔɔ saab ŋmaa kone
Tããkpẽẽ larwiɛ
Piideme nibɛ Dɔg-mũũ
Naɪŋmɪnɛ ni bɛ Katɔr zie
Kokoguule ni bɛ Kandeme
Balɛŋ been laɲ dɪrbɛ
Dɔgviɛli ŋmɛli kultaa.

TRANSLATION



Kusiele the lion
Nadole of the war arrows
He who strides majestically on walls
in contempt of beaten paths
He who is resplendently dressed
in dawa-dawa robes
The red fungus, the scare of women
Hero of the narrow ante-room
He who makes an exit, walking backwards
He whom men imitate
At their own peril
The plain that offers the foe no cover
He who strikes a tree and
No axe dare strike again
One rain drop that transforms the land
Bilsaa, heroic custodian of Dɛbzɪɛ-the valiant,
The valiant who is not pacified with a goat
He who eats Saab from a basket
to his regret
The great shea-tree that overshadows
the farm
Dɔgmɔɔ, great-sire of the Piiri settlers
Katur zɪɛ, great-sire of Naɪgmɪnɛ
Kandeme, great-sire of the Kokoguule
Partakers of a common meal
Comely endogamous progeny.

II

BEKUONE DANU

Vurbaa lo laar Tɔm
 Vurbaa bayɛlɔ
 Tɪntɪna nyɛ paal baa
 Tɪntɪra baa nyɛ kũ gbaal
 Kyakyapɔla nyɛ paal baa
 Kyakyapɔla nyɛ saŋ baa
 Zag-yɛlɔ nyɔmɛɛ
 Bayɛlɔ mɛmɛɛ
 Zakorikori za ŋmɛrlaar
 Bayɛlɔ bule zɔm kũ ɔb
 Bulbɛ zɔm kũ ɔb
 Bayɛlɔ bule zɔmbɔl kũ tɛr kɔbr
 Tambɔg tuo gaŋ kone
 Bayɛlɔ baa kũ ŋmaa sɔg
 Bɔrŋmaa baa kũ ŋmaa sɔg
 Bɔrŋmaa kɔkɔr kũ ɔaŋ baŋ
 Bɔrŋmaa Kɔ saŋ zie.

TRANSLATION

Vurbaa, the rolling river that over ran Tɔm
 Vurbaa, the wide river
 A river over flowing with the tɪntɪra fish
 A river of tɪntɪra fish that defies poaching
 A river over flowing with egret droppings
 A river defiled by egret droppings
 A large court of wet-noses

Bayelɔ, the wide river of numerous children

The snatching crowd that shatters the food bowls

The wide river whose well fish will not be eaten

The wide river, well of fat, boneless fish

The perilous pond one crosses with dire consequences

The wide river that defies bridging

The river of the crown-bird that defies bridging

The beautiful neck of the crown-bird that will wear no
chain

The crown-bird whose cry evokes fear.

III

KPIELE DANU

Yɔrwaar, na kyɔg laar

Sabirbeen lomaali zie

Nabɔɔ ulu lo gan saa

Zilige saa kyɔg danɪ

Kyɛ tɪɛ a lɛr ka kyɛb;

Tanɪ a san bɛ sogre i;

Din din din ti mine taten;

Bɛli kone ti mine taten;

Kyug pula na maali zie;

Salom pula kyɪkyɪn gansɪɛɛ;

wɛgya pula wɛgya kyɔɔrɛ sɪɛɛ;

yipaal kpɪɛrbɛ kɔ kpɛ dabuo;

PIɛ pɔɔ saab ŋmaa kone.

TRANSLATION

The sudden rain that is collected in bowls;
One rain drop that transforms the land;
Nabuo dew that surpasses rainfall;
The dawn rain whose collection evokes praise;
He who strikes a tree and renders,
the axe redundant;
He whose thunder defies any query;
Diŋ diŋ diŋ while raining elsewhere;
Deceptively rumbling while raining elsewhere
Bright moon that transforms the night;
The *KyIkym* - cloth-wearing white sky;
You dress in white and striped cloth;
You whose dwelling is eternally new;
He who eats *saab* from a basket
to his regret.

IV

GBAANE DANU

Walpiel nyotuoŋ,
Zagri yir kpɛ mũɔ̃
Walpiel ilɛ gāgāā,
Walpiel ilɛ guɔ daar,
Zagri ilɛ tuo daar;
Wɛpula baŋ gaanu;
Wɛsɔg nadɛr kũ dɔ pɔg;

Tug bɛrɛ kpɪɛrbɛ;
Gbāgbala ŋmɪɛrbɛ;
Zanzul kɔblɔ, nɔ bɛr yon.

TRANSLATION

Stripe-nosed Antelope,
One who abandons home to live
in the bush;
Antelope with the protruding horns;
Antelope whose horn bends,
branches low;
One who would rather bear wood than horns;
The grey bush that glides with majesty;
Bull of the deep wild that would not
be bartered for a wife;
One who resides in great thickets;
Antelope family, whose number makes
a clearing in the bush.
One who caterpillar-like
Sloughs off his skin.

V

Bɛrwɔlɛ Danu

Bɛrwɔ nɔŋ zɛbr kɔ bɔ yele
Sansaalɔ salɛ kɔ lob baa
Bɛra dɪrɛ kɔ ŋmaa kur
Bɛŋdaa sɔbɪgr kɔ sɛ ŋman
Tāāyaalɛ kaa zɛɛ

Ŋmaame nazugbulu

Kamasɛl dagol, kyɛ kũ pɛgli

Bɛrwɔ̃ baa kũm

TRANSLATION

Peaceful but battle-loving Bɛrwɔ̃;

The steady dog that defies
slippery grounds;

The metal on which the sharp-edged
razor has no effect;

The calabash that would not
be mended with bast fibre;

Peaceful residents of the shea bush;

The non-aggressive hornless bull,
that resides in peaceful locations;

The thorny Kamasɛl cudgel,
burdensome to handle;

Bɛrwɔ̃ who once provoked
would fight to death.

VI

METUOLE DANU

Mɛ tɔ man;

Mangar ka;

Ibzɔŋmaa muo vũũ;

Tan̄zu gbelizɪr;

Mɔbaa gyimur.

Dul dul dugre baa kũ nyɔg,

TRANSLATION

He whose house extends
to the great river (the Black Volta);
He whose length spans the Black Volta;
The tail-less crocodile that
fetches fire;
The redbells of the hill;
The dragonfly of the river bank;
Confident swimmer, fearless of
marine dangers.

VII

DIKPIELE DANU

Bɛsɔbɔn-ɛ dɪ ɡaŋ a sɔb;
Nyanyubaalɔ-sa-pɛŋfɔ;
Sɔɡzɪɛ wa wɪɛ;
Do tɪɛ lɛb sɪɡ tul;
Doŋmɪnɛ Bɛɡyɪnɛ;
Zɛnɔɔ, baʊl-mɛtɛŋ;
Gaamɔɔ nɪ ʊ ɪmɪnpɔɔ;
Naagyɪɛ nɪ ʊ kabɪr;
Dɛbozɪɛ nɪ ʊ Taalɛ.

TRANSLATION

One who takes more
than the owner;
One who prefers to usurp
than to borrow;



Red-locust that invade the farm;
The climber who descends face down;
Great Bɛgyɪnɛ of Doŋmɪn
Zɛnɔɔ, hunter-founder of a town (Nandom)
Gaamɔɔ and his illustrious ŋmɪnpɔɔ
Naagyɪɛ and his Tɛŋgan
Dɛboziɛ and his son Taalɛ.

VIII

NABɛGLE DANU

Zɛndaa lale viɛl kũ baŋ miɛrɛ
Bayoŋ ni ɔ wurpɔla
Wurpɔla kũ iaŋ baŋ
Saal sɔrɔ ŋma zuru
ɛwɛr pɔɔ ir bie
Kyug pɔla tam tiɛrɛ
Tɪɛ puorɪ lɛb tul
Kpɛŋkpɛrɛ ŋmaa yɔɔr
Zu maar ŋmaa tɔ daa
ɛ kũ bɛ ninɛ iaŋ sidun
Doŋmɪn ni ɔ Bɛgyɪnɛ
Tɛŋkpɛɛ tɛnyɛlɔ.

TRANSLATION

Zɛndaa owner of the attractive bowl
by a mysterious maker;
Bayoŋ with his white horse

The white horse that wears no collar
He who sharpened matchets
to behead foes
And cut open a belly to remove a child;
Ace archer of the moon-lit night;
One who transforms himself
Behind a tree
He who slashed off a foe's penis
He who planted severed heads
on sticks
While killing people to feed the vultures
Great B&gyIn& of DonmIn
A big, large settlement.

B.

PERSONAL PRAISE SONGS

I

Praise song in honour of Rt. Rev. Paul Bemile. First sung on the Bishop's visit to Ko Parish and performed again on 2/6/95 at my request at the poet's home in Kukya.

Poet: Bede Bongne

Refrain: ZIna bibir Ko paalu ka

PUpIeLU nI nuU tEgr'U

TI daar ti kone nI ti bisob Iag

Pampanaga ti nuu kpE na.

Bisobmine, faara mInE ee

BUradari sIstamInE

NI a saamE za nI a tEpdeme

PUpIeLU yelkpEe Iag na ti wa.

Iag ti yUOr'I a faaramInE

TI na bE tEr a bisob 'a

A Wa DaaEsi Kiristabiiri

Yaga lEbr nuUrE a puoru Iag.

Ka ti puore zElE NaamIn

E NaamIn son ti nyE bisob

NaamIn maali a ti tiErU ku ti

NI vE k'a ti puoru barka.

NaamIn tome yelsɔgla nu wɛ

Tenzu ti nIsaalbɛ zie

Ti ti tagri taa a ti bisob lan

MaamIn yɔ ban u nIr ira

Nɔmhaa yelbanguura nu wɛ

A vuuvu son tɔ ku ti

Saazu pii ni a NaamIn tonkpɛn

Ti nIsaalbɛ ku tɔɔ ban ɛ wɛ.

Faara Paul ni a ti bisob

a NaamIn wa kaa ir ku ti

Kpɛlɛ-yir-bie-Zimpir-yɔrwaari

A nIkpɛɛnu pãã bɛ tab bii.

Sabirbeen-lo-maal taa' tiɛɛ

Bɛli-kone-ti-mine-taten

Gandaa-tani-k'a-lɛr-ka-kyɛbu

Ta zɔrɛ dabiɛ togtog.

Bayɛlu mamInɛ ni kyaarɛ

Korikori za-ɲmɛr-laar-mInɛ

Zukpor mamInɛ za ni puore

KUrɛ a bie u nyɛ arɔzie.

Biyaga-guole taa'bUnɛ i

Binaaba-sabie-warmɛ

Dɔpurewaar-sɛviɛl-pɛ-puɔ-saab-ɲmaa-gar

ŊmIn na kɔb nɪ a kanyiri.

Fɔ mamInɛ za pap ar'a kɔb
Bɛkɔɔnɛ Vurbaalɛ-kpɛ-laar-Tɔm
Kyākȳāpɔla-nyɛ-saŋ-kɔɔ nyɪɛna woo-e
Bon za bɛ pigr fɔ sɔrɛ.

Dɛrbaa nɛn kanyir sob mɪ ɔb
Baŋ-a-za-kũ banɔu bie
Kpaar mɪ mii na a fɔ dɪ bɔnkāā
Totabe nɪ dɪtabe yoo.

Nakpaanɛ bie bɛ zɔrɛ wɛdɔŋ za ɛ
Fɔ sãã nyɔɔ nɪ wɛdɔn gaari laŋ
ŊmIn sɔr pɔɔ, bɛ za puore
Bisob Bɛmɪlɛ woo, fɔ nyɔɔnɪ gbeg gbɛr.

Ansolomin nyɔvɔr tori na
U karakyisi tome za pɔɔ
U dɔɔ fɔ nɪ a bidan, a de kɔ ŊmIn
Katerina bɛ dɪɛnɪ puoru e.

Tone lɛ a Laŋnɪ son na wul a
Yezu kpin yelmɪna kũũ
Sulu pɔɔ nɔɔ nɪ a tenzu nɔru
Dapar bome na viɛl sɛg nɪ bɔb

Bisob Dêr ton NaanmIn tome ti bal
Ule nu zo kyen banme puo
Tuura u gbêe kyogre a u ib
Fu san-ya ben dapari puo.

NaanmIn na faa nu kaa ir fu a
A vuuru Son na tie fu
U na kub'I kanyir girasie
A Kirista dagara tuofu Iag.

Ti mi de fu na ni ti puo za
Ti saa Bisob Paul woo
Ti na tie fu na a tome na puo
Wa Daaesi za maalv Iag.

Ni vê ti mi i kirista bimini
Siri zagra sitaana bele
Bag-bugre yir puo na puoru wa ga?
Ku-kyen-be be gan be

NaanmIn ter'I amisie
Ni me kyel danI NaanmIn
Kpiele yirbie Bisob Paul Iag na
Ti wa lantaa NaanmIn danv Iag.

TRANSLATION

Refrain: For us today in Ko,

It is only joy and happiness,
For we were yearning for our bishop,
Now is our desire fulfilled.

Bishops, (Rev.) Fathers ee,
(Rev.) Brothers (Rev.) Sisters,
Our guests and fellow citizens,
We have gathered here to celebrate
this great joy.

Morale had fallen among the priests,
And backsliding had set in,
Among the Wa Diocesan faithful
There being no bishop.

We prayed, pleading with God.
That we be given a bishop.
God has fulfilled our desire,
Let's give Him thanks.

God's ways are mysterious
In the eyes of men
While we disputed over personalities,
God knew his anointed one.

What an amazingly wonderful thing
The Holy Spirit has done!
God's wonders come like a descending arrow

We humans cannot comprehend them.

Father Paul is our bishop
God has chosen him for us
Kpɛɛɛ's child, the-cumulus-of-sudden rain,
Authority now rests with you.

Transforming-rain-drops, worry not
Cunning thunder that rains in distant lands
The valiant whose command renders
all axes redundant
Fear not.

Shout for joy, children of Bayɛɛ
All you-that-shatter-the-food bowl-in-a-rush,
All you children of Zukpor, pray
For the greatness of this off-spring.

Succour-of-numerous-children
Countless-rain-drops-of Zɪnaabu
Resplendent-wearer-of-dawa-dawa robes,
Detester-of-`saab'-in-basket
God will grant you courage.

You enjoy the support of all your mothers
Bɛkʊɔnɛ, Vurbaa that has occupied Tɔm
Blood-of-the-egret-that-defiles-the-river-
with-its-droppings

God has chosen you so,
The Holy Spirit will be your support
He will endow you with the gift of courage
To bear the cross of Christ.

We accept you with our whole heart
Oh! Our father, Bishop Bemile
We shall support you in this task of yours
For the development of Wa Diocese

May we all be good Christians
By truly denouncing satan's evil
The sooth-sayer's home has become the
house of prayer
The reluctant one has performed beyond
expectation.

All glory be to God
Shout in praise of His name
For the sake of Kpɛlɛ's son, Bishop Paul
We have gathered to praise God.

No obstacle lies in your way.

It is the patient one that eats the rat
Child of the-wise-one-to-whom-nothing-
is-hidden

To eat oily meal, the nape must be sore
Production level determines consumption rate.

The hunter's child fears no beast
Your father tamed many wild beasts
To worship God
Bishop Bemile, you have caught a lion by the leg.

Anselmn has lived virtuously
All his life as a catechist
And offered you the first born child to God
Catherina is a devout worshipper.

Go according to the church's teachings
Jesus died for the truth,
The pleasures of this world
are only a drop in a ladle
It's only the heavenly treasure that is desirable.

Bishop Dery worked tirelessly for God
And is now rated among the greats
Follow his footsteps, emulate him
Your reward is in heaven.



God has chosen you so,
The Holy Spirit will be your support
He will endow you with the gift of courage
To bear the cross of Christ.

We accept you with our whole heart
Oh! Our father, Bishop Bemile
We shall support you in this task of yours
For the development of Wa Diocese

May we all be good Christians
By truly denouncing satan's evil
The sooth-sayer's home has become the
house of prayer
The reluctant one has performed beyond
expectation.

All glory be to God
Shout in praise of His name
For the sake of Kpɛlɛ's son, Bishop Paul
We have gathered to praise God.

II

A Praise Song in honour of Archbishop (Emeritus) of Tamale,
Archbishop Peter P. Dery, composed and performed by Charlie Guy
at the request of the present writer on 2 June, 1995 at Ko.

LanzImE I na mana yoo

Bisob mIna, a DEr'U waar

ĩ na dan na puori

Bisob DEr, E fũũ nũ dE tarE

FU de fU tome zEg nI

Tome lige mE saa mI a

Bisob DEr, NaanmIn nũ IErE

A DEr'U zI

NyE, a DEr'U zI

NyI buɔlE kE aak-bisob

IErE ŋa, a fU yuor 'a

NyE a fU yuor'a

NI ban na kE NaanmIn nũ kU U?

NaanmIn nũ kU U

Nasanaa banI U na

Utorza Tengan bie a

YlmIna, E wEbErE bie nũ

kE lE I a nazagr bie a

YelmIna, a DEr'U zI.

Aak-bisob, a ŋmIn nU mag
A ɡɔsʊpʊl'u yel
Yelmɪŋa, ɛ NaanmIn nU kU fU
Yelmɪŋa, de a yuor kU fU
De a yuor kʊb
ɛde a faŋ kU fU
Yelmɪŋa, Dɛr, taa wa sɔɡlɛ I
Taa wa sɔɡlɛ I
Mɔsɪnyaa, a ŋmIn nU ɪɛrɛ
Yelmɪŋa nyɛ Aak-bisob
FU wone nɪ a yelbie a
FU na zɪ a tenkpɛɛ pʊɔ a
FU tob na sɪrɛ na.

ŋmakurnaa, bɛ bɛ buɔlɛ I?
Fʊʊ nɪ ŋanɪ buɡ baɡɛ sɪrɛ
A na I a NaanmIn tome a
FU na In ŋmIn bɛrɪ?
Bisob Dɛr, NaanmIn nU kU U
U mɪŋa nyɛ, buɡ baɡɛ sɪrɛ
De a lili ŋma kpɪmɛ pʊɔ
ɛ lɛ lɪɛbɛ a ŋmIn sɪrɛ
NaanmIn wa ɪr fU a
FU na In ŋmIn tɪ tʊɔ bɛr?
Kɛkɛkɛ, fU na kyɛɛ na de.

Nyɛ a NaanmIn nU kU U

Alɛ bɛ ɪ a Naanɪn faŋ a

Bisob Dɛr kŭ tŭŋ lɛbɪ ɛ

A Naanɪn nu ɪɛɛ

U kŭ tŭŋ lɛbɪ a faara ɛ

Wa yi do wa kpɛ a bisob

Yi be wa be a aak-bisob, kɛkɛkɛ.

NI nyon na

Uɛ ni ŋa de a nuɔ ŋmarɛ

ŋmarɛ ɪaŋn a kpɪmɛ ɪaŋ

NI na nyɛ a ŋmɪn buŋ-ira

NI nyɛ U na?

Maa bɛ buɛ ɪɛɛ

ĩ na ɪɛɛ ŋmɪn magr'a

ĩ na ɪɛɛ ŋmɪn sɛbr'a

Gɔzam-ma, ni nyon na?

ĩ na yela, ni nyog na?

Gɔzam-ma, ni nyog na?

Nayir-ma mɛ ni nyon na?

Aa! kɔntɔmbɛɛ bie

Kɔntɔmbɛɛ bie

Bug a bagɛ wul nɪbɛ sɪɛ

Bug a bagɛ wul nɪbɛ wulu

U bug bagr ku nɪbɛ sɪɛ

Bug a bagr ti faa ni nɪbɛ

U in a bag-bug-kyur bie

Aa! bag-kyur wuɔ

Nyɛ bag-kyur bie.

Zina bio ni nyɔŋ na?

U In a NaanmIn bie

ɛlɛ I a Tengan bie

YelmIn a Tengan kpɛɛ bie nu

U In a Tengan tɔrza

Kɛ lɛ I a Tengan tɔr

NI nyon na?

YelmIna Gɔzam nu lɛrɛ

Gɔzam na taa wa sɔglɛ

ŋmakurma fu tɔɔ na wo?

Bug bagr wa faa nɪbɛ

Pɔrɪkũũ, ni nyon na

Bisob dɛr, U sãã yuori lɛ

Pɔri kũũ taa wa sɔglɛ I

Pɔrɪkũũ taa wa gure

Ulɛ ni ŋa bugr bagɛ sirɛ

NI nyon na?

Bisob Dɛr, U piil'a

Ulɛ ni ŋa ŋma a nuur zĩĩ

Iaŋnɛ a kpɪmɛ Iaŋ

NI nyɛ a na?



Zina bio u na tũõ na i

Maa bε nu ban ε

Ule ni na, a ŋmIn bie nu

KirIsta, ni nyon na.

TRANSLATION

Neighbours, I will say it

Here Bishop Dery himself comes

Greetings, Bishop Dery

As you approach

Devotion to duty has elevated you

In a vocation as mysterious as rain

Bishop Dery, God is speaking

It's Dery seated

See, it's Dery seated

You call him Archbishop

Do you know it's God's gift?

It's God's gift

Even the white ruler is aware of him.

He is himself, child of Tengan

As child of Tengan

Truly, he is a child of great lands

And also a child of great Kraals

Indeed, that's Dery.

Archbishop, God has ordained it

The gospel has said it

Truly, God has blessed you
Truly, He has blessed your name
And given you power
Truly, Dery, don't shy away
Don't shy away
Monsignor, it's God speaking
Truly, Archbishop
Are you listening to the words?
Resident in a metropolis
Your hearing could be impaired.

¶makurnaa, you are hailed
You have conducted critical divinations
That being the will of God
How can you abandon it?
That being the will of God,
God has entrusted it to Bishop Dery
He is a great diviner
Who sacrifices the chickens to the ancestors
He is becoming godly himself
If you are God appointed
How can you ignore his will?
No, you can't
God has blessed him
If it were not by God's power
Dery could not have been a priest
Rising high to be bishop
And climbing higher to be Archbishop.

There he is,

Sacrificing the fowls

Sacrificing them to the ancestors

As for God's annointed ---

Have you seen him?

I don't speak in vain

God notes down whatever I say

God notes down whatever I say

Gozam-ma, have you seen him?

Naayirma, have you seen him?

Aa! son of great beings of the wild

Son of great beings of the wild

Confounded people with your divination

Your divination showed people the way

He divined for the people indeed

He divined and saved the afflicted

He's the son of the chief-diviner

Aa! the skin-bag of the chief-diviner

Behold the son of the chief-diviner.

Behold him this day

He is God's son

As he is also son of Tengan

Truly he is the son of great Tengan

He is Tengan herself

He is indeed Tengan

Have you seen him?

Truly, that's G0zam speaking

G0zam, don't mince words

Ŋmakurnaa, have you heard of him?

He divined to save people

P0rIk00, have you seen him?

That's Bishop Dery's father's name

P0rIk00 don't relax

He confounds people with his divination

Have you seen him?

Bishop Dery has begun

Offering the sacrificial blood of the fowls

To the ancestors

Have you seen that?

Today he is very able

This knowledge does not come from me

But here he is, the son of God

Christ-like, behold him.

III

A praise song in honour of Rt. Rev. Paul Bemile of Wa, sung by Rose DOnIr on 11th June, 1995 during the bishop's first pastoral visit to the Nandom Parish.

YaanI yee, yaanI yee

Bisob Paul woo e

Waa yaanI

Refrain: YaanI yee

Bisob Paul woo e

Waa yaanI

TI puori a Aak-bisob D&r

Na tō a tome

TI w&lI gUOnI a

Refrain: YaanI yee ---

Bisob Kpiebaya mI wa

Tō a tome

TI arI saazu

Refrain: YaanI yee ---

Bisob B&MIl& wa de kyog

U mI bObra k&

U arI saaien

Refrain: Yaani yee ---

MUOle a NaanMI yele

LOb a NaanMIIn yelbir

Laara tendaa za

Refrain: U MUOle

LOb a NaanMI yelbir

Laar a tendaa za

Kokoguule Kandeme bie

LOb a NaanMIIn yelbir

Laar a tendaa yee

Refrain: U MUOle ---

Salom, ganKyUOre bie

LOb a NaanMIIn yelbir

Laar a tendaa yee

PIEpUO-saab-nmaa-kone bie

LOb a NaanMIIn yelbir

Laar a tendaa yee

Refrain: U MUOle ---

Tani-tiE-a-lEr-bE-ka-kyEb bie

LOb a NaanMIIn yelbir

Laar a tendaa yee

Refrain: U mUOle

TanI-tIe a-san-bE-ka-sogru

LIb a NaanmIn yelbir

Laar a tenɗaa yee

Refrain: U mUOle ---

Vurbaale duolaare nyIEna nu

LOb a NaanmIn yelbir

Laar a tenɗaa yee

Refrain: U mUOle ---

TI buOle nI a fU yuori

Zinabio fUŪ nyē

FU yuor bE yi gā

Refrain: U mUOle ---

FU vuole nI a gan puO

FU vuule na

Wa yi NaanmIn tome zu

Refrain: U mUOle ---

NandOmE lanyirbiir

NI ŋmE kuryii ka Iañ U

Iañ kyIrE

Refrain: UmVole ---

MVole a NaanmIn yeLe

LOb a NaanmIn yeLe

Laar a tenDaa

Refrain: U mVole ---

TRANSLATION

Welcome, welcome

Bishop Paul,

Welcome

Refrain: Welcome,

Bishop Paul

Welcome

We salute Archbishop Dery

Who worked zealously

Till his retirement

Refrain: Welcome ---

Bishop Kpiebaya

Too has worked hard

And earned promotion

Refrain: Welcome ---

Bishop Bemile has come to continue
He aims at
Reaching the top

Refrain: Welcome ---

Proclaim
Broadcast the word of God
Throughout the world

Refrain: Proclaim ---

Son of Kandeme of Kokoligu
Broadcast the word of God
Throughout the world

Refrain: Proclaim ---

Son of the striped-sky
Broadcast the word of God
Throughout the world

Refrain: Proclaim ---

Son of he-who-eats-saab-from a basket only
to lament

Broadcast the word of God
Throughout the world

Refrain: Proclaim ---

He-who-thunders-at-a tree-and-renders
all-axes-redundant
Broadcast the word of God
Throughout the world.

Refrain: Proclaim ---

He whose-thunder-defies-any-query
Broadcast the word of God
Throughout the world

Refrain: Proclaim ---

Scion of Vurbaa whose offspring gather
in joyous harmony
Broadcast the word of God
Throughout the world

Refrain: Proclaim ---

We are celebrating your name
From now onwards
You have become renowned



Refrain: Proclaim ---

You looked through the books
You looked through
Until you discovered God's vineyard

Refrain: Proclaim ---

Faithful of the church of Nandom
Applaud him with ululation
To stimulate him

Refrain: Proclaim ---

Proclaim God
Broadcast the word of God
Throughout the world

Refrain: Proclaim ---

C.

GRINDING SONGS

I

A Grinding Song in praise of Naa Imoru Puoure of Nandom, sung during the Kakube Festival of Nandom on 27th November, 1994 by Madam Naarjminzumε KUnwokole, of Tuopεr.

HI hII, hI hI hI, hII.

ĩ naa nU zIna

K'a ĩ wa k'a ĩ wa bεl nyε

HU hŭŭ, hI hII

A dŏmɛ Puoure

Naa tō buɔlmɛ a kyɛ bII?

Dŏmɛ-babɛlI-kU m naa

Tō buɔl mɛ a ka bII?

— HI hI hI, hII

A kakube tigri na

Ka ĩ wa ka ĩ wa bɛl nyɛ?

HI hII

Aŋ yuor la ŋa

Gaŋ yuor mInɛ

HI hI hI, hII

Bayɛlɛ yir puɔ naa

Ka ŋa mI kpɛ dio kyɛ kuli

HI hII

Zukpuole biir gaŋ-a-naa

Gaŋ-a yuor lɛ

HI hI hI, hII

Ĩ waa bile bile

Kyɛ ĩ won lɔ ba yuor yɛlɛ

HI hII

Bayɛlɛ yIrpuɔ

Bambaala kŭ di tuo tog togi

HI hI hI, hII

Yɛn' deme la nyɔg Inziɛ

Kyɛ sI ir bile?

HII

Bayɛlɛ maŋ nyɔg la

GbenziE si ir soor

HI hII, hII

Zina na ta yee

K'a naalun na sintaa

HI hII

Andune na ta kaara

Nasapula libie yeE

HI HI HI, hII

A bidoo na yee

U di la a kukur na naa

HI hII

A wabaana na ba ban

KyE zI tIE k'U yelu

HI HI HI, hII

Ba moo watier

Ka nasapula naalun tuma lE?

A kukur na mi lE

U saakumine dan kpE U

HI HI HI, hII

An la kyE ba ban i saâ

KyE tier k'U suur ban?

HI hII

Zonanyira zonga nyE

i saâ yuor l'a lE

HI hII

i saâmine man woe

Bikpieb lan ni nakyine

HI HI HI

Naayiile maŋ wɔɔɛ

Pɔgkɔɔri laŋni buŋguuro

HII HI HI, HII

Bibilsanani ĩ ma yuor la lɛ

Pɛmpɛn-nugɔɔri ĩ ma yuor la lɛ

HI HII

Yɛ buɔli bɛli kone ti mi teŋe nyɛni

Yɛ buɔii sabirbeen lo maali zɛe nyɛni

HI HI HI, HII

TRANSLATION

HI HII, HI HI HI HII

It's my chief

I have come to see today

HU HU, HI HII

Was it not Dɔmɛ Puoure

Who sent for me?

HI HI HI, HII

Was it not Dɔmɛ-ba-bɛliku

Who sent for me?

HI HI HI, HII

Is it not the Kakube Festival

I have come to attend?

HI HII

Whose name is it

That is above other names?

HI HI HI, HII

It is in the Bayɛɛ's house

The stranger finds solace

HI hII

The children of Zukpor are peerless royals

Are a name unequalled.

HI HI HI, hII

Even as a child

I heard the greatness of their name

HI hII

In the house of the Bayɛɛ

The poor suffer not at all

HI HI HI, hII

Who cut through red flesh

To deliver a child?

hII

It's the Bayɛɛ

Who tear out the liver from the live lion

HI HI HI, hII

Is it today

Royalty is comparable?

HI hII

That the world may ignore

The money affairs of the whiteman

HI HI HI, hII

This royal son

Has been the king of the hoe

HI hII

Yet the ignorant

Are bent on criticism

HI HI HI, hII

Do they think his power

Came from the whiteman?

HI hII

In this business of governance

His grandsires come first

HI HI HI, hII

Who is here

That wants to know my father?

HI hII

Zɔŋanyɪra Zɔŋanyɛ

is my father.

HI HI HI, hII

My fathers provide

For the orphan and the destitute

HI hII

Naayiile provide

For the widow and the farm-hand

HI HI HI, hII

Bibilsananɪ is my mother's name

Pɛmpɛn-nugɔɔrɪ is my mother's name

HI hII,

Scion of he-who thunders here but rains elsewhere

Scion of that one rain-drop that transforms the

land

HI HI HI, hII.

II

A Grinding Song by Virginia Maaniasie performed by her during the Kakube Festival at Nandom on 26th November, 1994.

Vurbaa e e

ĩ puore nĩ a NaanmIn yaanĩ wɛ

Bɛkʊɔnɛ yir puɔ nĩ ʊ duo-laar ma

ĩ puore nĩ a NaanmIn yaanĩ

Tɪntɪra baa nyɛ-dul-kpaa-ma

ĩ puore nĩ a Tengan yaanĩ

A zakorikori-za-ɲmɛr-laar-ma

ĩ puore nĩ a gyama yaanĩ

A namInɛ za na kpaa duo dɪŋ dɪŋ dɪŋ

ĩ puore nĩ a nĩ gbɛɛ yaanĩ

A gyama zaa yi yee

A Kakube ɲa ti na wa

Sāākʊmʊ na ti wule ye e

ũ ũ ũ

A Kakube ɲa ti na dɪrɛ

Sāākʊmʊ na ti wule ye e

ũ ũ ũ hũũũ

A bie ɲa na nɪɛ ar aɲa ɪɛrɛ

Yirbuor dem bie nʊ?

A Vurbaalɛ yir puɔ, na kpɛ laari Tɔm

Bɛ yir bie nʊ ye e



TIntira yir pu ni u nyε paal baa

ĩ sãã yir'i a be

Vurbaa dem tI zI a Tɔm

Kε ĩ yir'i a be

A zakori kori-za-ɲmɛr-laar

Kε ĩ yir'u

ũũũ hũũũ

A bie ɲa na nIε a Irε

A yir buor dem arbε nu?

ũũũ

A Kusiele yir puɔ ni u Nadoli boɲ daar

ĩ ma yir'i a be, ye e

Zaabɛlε yir puɔ ni u Bεkyɔɔ

ĩ ma yir'i a be

A pIε-puɔ saab iru ɲmaa-bɛrɔ

ĩ ma yir'i a be.

ũũũ

I ma yir'u.

ũũũ

A banfɔ ɲa ĩ na IɛrI

ĩ sãã yir puɔ k'a yi yee

ĩ sããmInε yee

Danɲ danI danbie durnyε puɔ

ĩ mamInε danɲ danI danbie dɔnε puɔ

Maa mI na yi yee

I danɛ nI a danbie dɔrnyɛ puɔ

ŬŬŬ hŬŬŬ

A pɔg ɲa na nIɛ ar Iɛɛɛ

A yirdem buor pɔg nu?

ŬŬŬ

Miminyɛɛ dem kyaali

Bɛ kyaala wa ir mɛ mur, yee

Walpele yirdem il gyali korkor

Kyaali bɛ kyaala wa ir mɛ mɔra

ŬŬŬ

Bɛɲdaa biiri, yee

Kyaali bɛ kyaala wa ir mɛ mur a

ŬŬŬ

Walpele biiri yee

Ti kyaali bɛ tampeɛɛɛ

Wa ir mǎá

ŬŬŬ hŬŬŬ

Aã mInɛ nɛbɛ daŋ dI a naalu

Kaa nIbɛ zie?

ŬŬŬ

Bɛkɔɔnɛ nɛbɛ daŋ dI a naalu

Kaa nIbɛ zie

Danyɛ nI a ɲa daŋ dI a naalu

Kaa a nIbɛ zie

Kyiir'ɔ daŋ dI a naalu

Kaa nIbɛ zie

Bɔrɔ yi woo, dɪ a naalɔ

Kaa nIbɛ zie

ŬŬŬ hŬŬŬ

A Vurbaalɛ Moro nɔ dɪ a naalɔ

Kaa nIbɛ zie

Vurbaalɛ kɔ̃kũũ woo, nɪ a naalɔ

Kaa nɔbɛ zie

ŬŬŬ

Puore woo, dɪ a naalɔ

Kaa nIbɛ zie

ŬŬŬ

Dɪ a naalɔ

Kaa nIbɛ zie

ŬŬŬ hŬŬŬ

Dan̄ dan̄ ɛ koro daar

ɛ pɔg mɪ guol a bie eee

ɛ dɛb wa bɔbr a bie

ɛ pɔg mɪ gbɛnɪ zɪɛr

Tɪ guol a bie

Pɔg nɪ a ɲa

Ir gbɛnɪ zɪɛr

Tɪ guol a bie

Pɔg nɪ ɲa, ir gbɛnɪ zɪɛr

Tɪ guol a bie

A ɪɛɛ ɪɛɛ ɲa a libie na wa yi a

ɛ pɔg-bɛ bɛ kyāā gbɛnɛ ɪ



ŪŪŪ hŪŪŪ

A dīa bio na wa yi a

A pɔg-bɛ bɛ kyāā gbɛnɛ i

ŪŪŪ

A dīa puoru na wa yi a

A pɔg-bɛ bɛ kyāā gbɛnɛ yee

ŪŪŪ hŪŪŪ

TRANSLATION

Vurbaa e e

I salute God,

Mother of the merry crowd of the BɛkŪɔnɛ clan,

I salute God.

Mother of the tintiira fish

I salute Tengan.

Mother of many that shatter the meal bowl

I salute great crowd here.

All the royals gathered here

I welcome you

All the people gathered here

Congratulations for coming

We have come to Kakube

To celebrate our culture yee

ŪŪŪ

We are celebrating this Kakube

To display our culture yee

ŪŪŪ hŪŪŪ

But this child who is talking,

Which clan's child is she?

My father's clan is the tIntIra clan

The fish that confounds with its number,

The Vurbaa clan that occupies Tɔm

That is my clan

ŬŬŬ

The snatching crowd that shatters the food bowl

That is my father's clan

ŬŬŬ ŬŬŬ.

This child who is talking

Who is her uncle?

The Kusiele clan of the Nandoli war arrows

That is my mother's clan yee

Zaabɛɛ clan and its Bɛkyɔg

That is my mother's clan

The clan that will not eat `saab' from a basket

That is my mother's clan

ŬŬŬ

That is my mother's clan

ŬŬŬ ŬŬŬ

The talent I display now

It is from my father's house

This talent I display now

It is from my mother's house

My fathers, yee

Sang songs of praise at gatherings

My mothers have sung songs of praise at gatherings

I on my part

I am singing songs of praise at gatherings

ũũũ ũũũ

This woman talking

To which house is she married?

ũũũ

Some double sighted people focused

In their mirrors and picked her like a reed

The antelope clan of the branch-like antlers

Focused in their mirror and picked like a reed

The antelope children

The B&ɲdaa children

Focused in their mirror and picked like a reed

The antelope children yee

Focused on their ashes and picked like a reed

ũũũ ũũũ.

Who in their royal reign

Cared for the people?

The B&kuɔn& in their reign have

Cared for the people

It was Dany& who first reigned

And cared for the people

Kyiiir had reigned

And cared for the people

B&ɔrɔ came to rule

And cared for the people

000 000

Moro the Vurbaale woo
Reigned and cared for the people
Kõkuu the Vurbaale, he reigned
And cared for the people
Puoure woo, reign
And care for the people
Reign and care for the people

000 000

At first in the distant past
It was the woman that nurtured the child
If the man wanted a child
The woman picked vegetables
To feed the child
This was a woman who
Rose, plucked vegetables
And fed the child
This is a woman who
Rose, plucked vegetables
And fed the child.

In the world of money nowadays
Women do not pluck vegetables
Nowadays
Women do not pluck vegetables
Since the advent of the new religion

Women do not pluck vegetables

000 000

D

LIBATION TEXT

ĩ sãã Naan̄mInI
Bumbuuɾɛ za ŋmInI
Tendaa za ŋmInI
Saazu ŋmInI
Naabile ŋmInI
Iaŋ-mhaarʊ ŋmInI
Iaŋ-tʊlʊ ŋmInI
Kũũ mhaarʊ nI aŋa
A fʊ bie bɛɾɛ kʊɾɛ fʊ
Sag ũũ wa de
Nandɔm Tɛŋgani
A Nandɔm Barʊ
A Tanbɛɾɛ nI a Tanli
nI wa na?
Kũũ nI a Tanli
nI de mhãã kɔkɔɾ
ĩ saakʊm zɛnʊɔ
nI a yɛbr za
Nim nI a daparɛ za
nI na sag a nI bie buɔlʊ
ɛ sag wa de kũũ mhaarʊ
Alɛ na ti bɛɾɛ kʊɾɛ nI
Bon za bɛ nʊ ɛ
ɛ kyɛ yelbanguura kaŋ nʊ
A zie kabɾ na nyuur
A kʊɔ dirɛ naŋ
A bagbɛɛ kon' welwel mɛ piir'a

A kuLi siR siRititi
A kũõ nyuur kpIer a biir
A kũõ nyuur kũre a pɔg-bɛ
A dũn ni a bImpIgɛ za nyiri nyImɛ
Bũwɔmɛ ni bũnyIeri za ko na ar
ni bɛr sabir u lo ten
A bon ŋa nu ti zɛlɛ
Alɛ na ku a niBɛ
Tigr ni Iag-mhaarU
Alɛ na vɛŋ ti yɛli
A bibiir zɛn tampɛlu wa don ni
ni vɔl suur ɛ piIr bɛ bɛr
ni vɛ Iag-mhaarU be a niBɛ zie
ɛ saŋna za wa bebe
ni tiɛ wul ti maali
ĩ sãã NaanmInI
A Tengan
A saa
A BarU ni a Tan
A daparɛ za
ĩ bɛ tɛr nuɔrɛ
A ni bibiir kon-nuɔr'I aga

TRANSLATION

God my Father
God of Creation
God of the Universe

God of the Sky
God of men
God of Peace
God of adversity
This is coldwater
Your child is offering you
Please, accept it
Tengan (Earth Goddess)
The BarU (River Gods)
The Tan (Hill Gods)
Have you come?
This is cold water
May it quench your thirst
My grandsire ZEnUO
And his brothers
You and all the host of heaven
Please, kindly respond to your child's plea
And accept this cold water
Which we offer you.
It is not anything
But a mysterious crisis has affected us
There is extreme drought
And water is scarce
The water courses have become hard rocks
The wells are completely dry
And the children are thirsty
And the women are equally so
Animals and birds are in pain

Fruits and root crops have shrivelled
Grant us one drop of rain
This is what we humbly request from you
That would give the people food and peace
That would enable us multiply in number
That would make the people honour you
Your children have smeared ashes before you
Forgive and cleanse them
And grant them peace
But if there is any evil done
Kindly point that out for pacification
God my Father
Tengan
Sãã, the Rain God
The Rivers and the Hills
The Heavenly host
I have nothing to say
But this is what your child has to say.

E.

DIRGES

DIRGE I

A dirge chanted by Bernard Wobrmɛ at the funeral of Kɔbom
in Accra.

Woo, woo sɔgrbɛ

NI sɔg mɛ a zaanvɔr yaani

Woo, woo konbe
NI sɔg mɛ a zaanɔɔr yaani
Woo, woo, ti muur guba bie u kul
Woo, woo, konbe ti muur ɲmiɛrɛ u kul
Woo, a bie ɲa na bɛr vuo
Ãã na tũũ a u nuu tome tũ?
Ankaalɛ Nandɔmɛ woo
Ãã na lɛ kyũ gyili
Iaɲ ni ni Iaɲ?
Bɛ-so-bon-ɛ-di gaɲ-a-sob bie, woo
Bɛwaa dem buɔlɛ na
ɛ fu yi dam gyil a bɛ sɛb
Woo kɔbom woo
Legon biir tiri gan
ɛ fu wa wul bɛ gyil kɛ bɛ ɲmɛ
Fu wo a na? ɛ fu wa
Wul bɛ bɛwaa bɛ sɛb
Nasamɪne woo,
NI wule nuru ɲma na u gã
Kɔbom, nasatenɲ baɲnɛ woo
Ir wul mɛ a sɔr i kyen
Kũũ woo, kũũ, fu saɲ mɛ ni tiɛrɔ
Kũũ woo, kũũ fu saɲ mɛ ni yele
Baɲ-ɲmiɛrɛ bie kul'i ni u baɲfu
Konbe woo ni na kũ aɲa a baar
Kũũ woo kũũ buũ fu mhaa mɛ nuɔr lɛ?

TRANSLATION

Alas, alas, mourners

Respond to my evening greetings

Alas, alas, eulogists

Respond to my evening greetings

Alas, alas, let's praise the expert's,
son as he goes home

Alas, the vacuum that has been created

Who can fill?

Nandom citizens in Accra

Who will enthrall you with his xylophone
music to dance?

Son of he-who-takes-more-than-the-owner

B&waa dancers are calling on you

To play for them to dance

Alas KObom, Legonites have invited

You to teach them the xylophone

Have you heard me? That you should come

And teach them how to dance b&waa

Alas, whitemen, your instructor

Has lost the power of his hands

Alas, kObom, you who know the whiteman's
country well.

Arise and show me the way

Alas death, death, you have squashed my hopes.

Alas death, death, you have destroyed my plans.

The experts son has gone with his expertise

Alas, dirgists, chant his final praises.

Alas, death, death why have you shocked me so?

II

A dirge chanted by Ambrose Daayen at the funeral of Emiliana Beyuo, in Gɔzɪr.

Woo, woo Bulmhaarv woo

Woo bul-ki-nyu yee

ĩ kɔkɔr ko na yee

dɔɔkuvɔra pɔg woo

A puomanĩ vaara valo yee

Pɔg kũ bɛr v tɔ bie yee

Pɔg na lɛn' v tɔ bie yee

Pɔg kũ da kal woo

Pɔg kũ la ihĩ yee

Pɔg na ban dɔɔ been kul'a

TRANSLATION

Alas, alas eternal fount alas

Alas, one whose spring water sustains me

My throat is dry alas

Worthy spouse of a distinguished farmer

It's time to clear the farm of debris

A mother of the other's child

A mother who would lick the other's young clean

A woman who would buy no dawa-dawa

A woman who would deride none

A wife who would know one man only has gone home.

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