UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

MUSICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF DAGARA PEOPLE
IN BURKINA FASO

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Nedbebe Pierre Hien declare that this thesis is entirely the result of my own research work, and it has never been submitted either in part or in whole for another degree elsewhere.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the genuine prosperity of Dagara music and musicians.

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DEFINITION OF TERMINOLOGIES: KEYWORDS

Dagara music theory refers to a systematic set of abstracted principles, thoughts and generalised explanations, as a result of observations and analyses, concerning the music-making and musical behaviour in Dagara society.

Ethnography is coined from two Greek words *ethnos* meaning folk, people and nation and *grapho* which means writing, discourse. Ethnography is a method and a discipline as well. As a **scientific discipline**, it is the systematic study of people and their culture. As a **research method**, it is a field-based method of data collection with a particular focus on participant observation strategies.

Ethnosemantics is a semantic-based approach or method employed to study the local knowledge or the cultural perceptions and worldview of a particular ethnic group. It is both a theory and a method that consists of analysing and getting the meaning of the vocabulary or words used by the indigenous people.

Ethnodoxology is coined by Dave Hall from two Greek words *ethne* meaning people or ethnic group and *doxos* which means praise, glory or belief. Hall (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ethnodoxology) himself defined ethnodoxology as the "study of worship of God among diverse cultures or more precisely the theological and practical of how and why people of diverse cultures praise and glorify the true and living God as revealed in the Bible". Ethnodoxology is the "application of ethnomusicology, ethnic art studies, worship studies, missiology and related disciplines" for the purpose of creating adapted musical forms of worship. Thus, Ethnodoxologists study local musical traditions and work with local musician and churches to adapt and develop locally created musical forms Christian worship.

Ethnomusicology is the scholarly or systematic study of music, especially the non-western music, in relation to its own culture.

Applied Ethnomusicology is the process whereby the results of this systematic study are used in the purpose of solving community problems or concerns. In that sense, Ethnodoxology can be described, to some extent, as applied ethnomusicology.

Creative Ethnomusicology is the process that consists of employing or incorporating the results of an ethnomusicological study into musical compositions.

Kinship system sociologically refers to patterns of behaviour, rules and principles governing people's relationship in a kingroup. It is the key to the understanding of the socio-cultural life as it is the basis for the social organisation and relationships including social institutions.

Musical Ethnography is an aspect of ethnography and a common field between anthropology and ethnomusicology. In that regard, the ethnographic study focuses on music and its various dimensions such as performance, socio-interactions in music, musical elements, extra-musical parameters etc.

Native category refers to the (native) viewpoint of the indigenous people about their music.

Thick description as an ethnographic method is an analytical and interpretive method employed for a deeper understanding of a particular subject under study.

Social institutions are standardised patterns of regulative principles, procedure and practices that determine the nature and pattern of behaviour, conduct and mode of interactions in a particular society. In short they are standardised ways of doing things in society. They promote order, social control and social identity within the society.

Social structure is the inter-connected set of social institutions such as marriage, religion, economy, politics, health etc**.**

"Sixtave" refers to an interval between a tonic note and its immediate repetition in a pentatonic scale. Its counterpart in the heptatonic scale is called Octave.

Equipentatonic refers to five equal steps (tones) in the sixtave.

GLOSSARY OF DAGARA TERMS

This Glossary consists mainly of the vocabulary of the Dagara in Burkina Faso. It also consists of key terms that have been employed throughout the study. Indeed, the alphabet system and the orthography pertain to the writing system commonly used for the Bible translation and also for the mother tongue literacy. Originally since the arrival of the missionaries in the diocese of Diébougou in the 1930s, the French alphabet was used by the white missionaries and later on indigenous priests for the translation of religious and liturgical texts into dagara language for worship purposes. Nowadays, the Dagara alphabet and writing systems in use accommodate many special characters such as the (ɛ) and the (ɔ) also found in many other languages, as the French alphabet has been gradually dropped out. Words may, therefore, be spelled in two different ways, but I have attempted to use the current official orthography and vocabulary of the *Lobr*. However, differences in orthography may be observed when quoting other sources.

In addition to the spelling system of the *Lobr*, I have also opted for the use of the British spelling system throughout this study.

ʻiamaaro:	Health, wellbeing
Baa:	A river
Baa:	Dog
Bawr:	Initiation
Bawr-binɛ:	Dance of initiation
Bɛlanw-mɛ:	A style of music played on the *dɛgaar*
Bɛlu:	Matronymic name
Bɛwaa:	Is the name given to the *gyil* recreational repertoire and dance for the youth
Binɛ:	Dance
Dagara:	Designates the people as an ethnic group
Dagara:	Refers to the language of the Dagara people
Dɛblu:	Specific melodies played on the xylophone for male deceased
Dɛgaar:	A style of music played on the *dɛgaar*
Dɛgaar:	Seventeen or eighteen key xylophone
Dowlu:	Clan, lineage
Gandaa:	A strong man, champion

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Gangaar:	Lock-drum
Gyil:	Xylophone
Gyil-mwiɛrɛ:	A xylophonist
Gyil-piiru:	Warm up
Kpab:	Introduction
Karo:	*Bɛwaa* dance
Kɔkɔr:	voice
Kɔ-mwiɛrɛ:	A gourd-drum drummer
Kon:	Sound, cry
Konton-bile:	A dwarf, fairy, spirit being
Kon-ton:	Fetish
Ko-tuo dem:	Bereaved members
Kpaw-kpawɛrɛ:	A timeline keeper
Kuor-yaaro:	Closing of the funeral
Kuor:	A Funeral
Kuɔr:	A gourd-drum
Kuor-wuofu:	Opening of the funeral
Kuu:	Death
Lanw-kone:	Dirge singer
Lanwni:	The funeral dirges that are performed alongside with the *dɛgaar* instrument
Lobri or *lo-gyil*:	Fourteen key xylophone
Maa:	A mother
Maa-kum:	Grandmother
Maa-yir dem:	Maternal family
Muuro:	Praise, congratulation
Naamwin:	God
Nyɔ-vuuro:	Life
Paala:	A funeral stand or pyre
Pɔw saa-yir dem:	In-law family or family of one's wife
Pɔw:	Wife, woman
Pɔwblu:	Specific melodies played on the xylophone for female deceased
Pure:	Father's sister

Saa:	A father
Saa:	Rain, thunder or lightening
Saa-kum:	Grandfather
Sɛbru:	Particular name of the dance of initiation
Siman dem:	Neighbourhood, community
Sir-yir dem:	Husband's family or groom's family
Sir:	Husband
Tanw:	Hill or mountain
Tchɔmb:	Warm up in *gyil* playing
Tegan-sob:	The chief priest of the earth shrine and the custodian of the land. He is the traditional political authority
Tegan:	The spirit of the earth
Tew:	Village
Yɛb:	Brother, sibling
Yɛbr:	Brothers, siblings
Yeepuule:	Sister, sibling
Yiel-faa:	Bad song
Yiel-vla:	Good song
Yielu:	Song
Yir-dem or *saa-yir-dem*:	Paternal family
Yir:	Household
Zom:	Insult
Zukpar:	A melodic theme or song
Zanu:	The re-enactment of the life history of a deceased

ABSTRACT

Dagara constitute an ethnic group who occupy and span two neighbouring countries in West Africa: Ghana and Burkina Faso. They are located in the South-Western region of Burkina Faso and in the Upper-West region of Ghana. Although the Dagara live in different countries, they still share the same socio-cultural practices that define them culturally among other ethnic groups.

Dagara cultural identity is their collective and dynamic cultural values held and cherished over the years. Music is one of these cultural values as it constitutes an integral part of the Dagara socio-cultural systems to the extent that many aspects of their everyday life and special occasions are often marked by a variety of musical and dance practices.

In the perspective of music as culture, this thesis has ethnographically investigated the music of the Dagara in Burkina Faso by focusing on the significance of the music in its socio-cultural contexts. It also argues that the music of the Dagara depicts their kinship system and their worldview as it approximates or correlates musical and social structures. This approximation essentially consists of an analytical approach of the juncture or the correlation between the musical and the socio-cultural as an important factor of ethnic or cultural identity.

The research methodology employed is a qualitative ethnographic method which comprises primary and secondary sources. It has also employed the non-probability sampling technique for the selection of the key informants from five areas of Dagara land in Burkina Faso and the phenomenological and triangulation methods for data analysis. The study is mainly framed within the ethnosemantics theory by Agawu, the Feld's six-fold framework and the "thick description" of Geertz (1973) as backdrop of the analysis of musical performances that can be considered as 'webs of significance or meanings' (Max Weber).

A MAP OF BURKINA FASO SHOWING DAGARA LAND
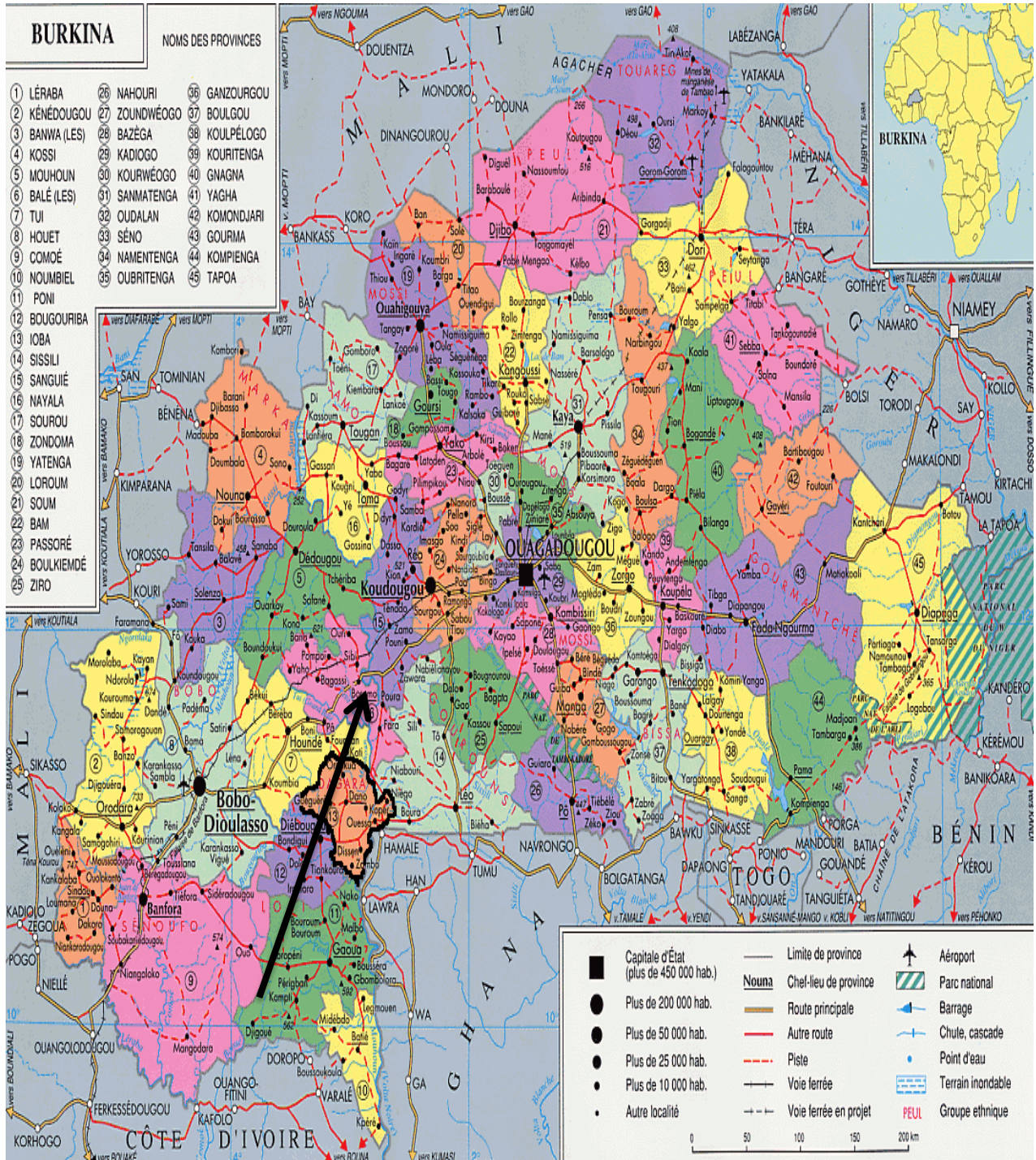
Dagara land   Source: Google Map

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Dagara constitute an ethnic group who occupy and span two neighbouring countries in West Africa: Ghana and Burkina Faso. They are located in the South-western region of Burkina Faso and in the Upper-West region of Ghana**.** They live in the same geographic area but separated by artificial borders instituted by the former British and French colonial powers through the partition of Africa during the Berlin-Africa conference of 1884-1885[1]. Although the Dagara live in different countries, they still share the same socio-cultural practices and the so-called "dagara", e. g. Dagara speak dagara, as pillars of their cultural or ethnic identity.

Cultural identity according to Hall (1989) is the collective-one-true-self, the oneness or the essence of particular people. It is not a static but a dynamic reality as the collective oneness is constructed by the history and the culture of the people. In the same vein, Dagara cultural identity is informed and shaped by their collective and dynamic cultural values held and cherished over the years. Music is one of these cultural values as it constitutes an integral part of the Dagara socio-cultural systems to the extent that many aspects of their everyday life and special occasions are often marked by a variety of musical and dance practices. Merriam (1964) even argued about music as culture rather than simply being a part of it. In their book entitled "Music as Culture", Herndon and McLeod (1979) define and justify music as culture instead of music in culture. The main argument here is that, if music has to be considered as being simply in culture, this means that it can simply be taken out of culture to the laboratory for scientific analysis (*idem*, p. 122). Therefore, the basic

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[1] Arthur Silva White F.R.S.E. (1890) The partition of Africa, Scottish Geographical Magazine, 6:11, 561-574. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1470254900855455

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assumption of their textbook is that, music exists as culture rather than in culture. With regards to their perspective, if the music of the Dagara can be seen as Dagara culture, then a deeper understanding of that music will hopefully be helpful in a better understanding of their culture.

To better understand the music and the culture of the Dagara for pastoral purposes, the former bishop of Diébougou, Most Rev. Jean Baptiste Some, had, some years back, committed himself in establishing a theory of the music of the Dagara based on in-depth research work. Thus, between 1967 and 1975, he assigned a research committee made up of indigenous priests who worked with resource persons for that purpose (Mukassa, 1976, pp. 4-5). This pastoral will is well shared by his successor Most Rev. Der Raphael Dabire who also appointed some of his priests to be musically trained in such a way that they can engage in in-depth investigations for more developed and systematic elaboration of the music of the Dagara for pastoral and liturgical needs. In an earlier work in 2016, I did an investigation on the *gyil* or Dagara xylophone around which revolve primarily the Dagara musical traditions. But, the input of this scholarly contribution and those of similar studies towards the systematisation or the systematic knowledge[2] of the music of the Dagara appeared as too restrictive and limited, probably due to the different study perspectives. In 1983, the late Rev. Fr Kusiele Dabire Nicolas did an investigation on the music of the Dagara in the context of an academic requirement for the end of the theological cycle in the Major Seminary of Koumi in Burkina Faso. Through this work entitled "Du Kuur yii à l'Alleluia" (*Integration de la tradition musicale Dagara au culte Chrétien*), he broadly studied the music of Dagara in the context of inculturation, in the sense of introducing efficiently the music into the Roman Catholic Liturgy. His work seems to be more

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[2] By 'systematic knowledge' I mean elaborate research findings related to musical elements and other major musical components or aspects of Dagara music.

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systematic and elaborate in regards to the various musical genres and some of their social roles and significance. Moreover, Nicolas on one hand featured some of the findings by the above priest committee and on the other hand contributed through relevant abstractions to the understanding of the inter-relationship between the music of Dagara and Dagara cultural identity. According to him, the Dagara sing their life through their musical performances in relation to their cultural practices (Dabire, 1983, p. 45). Likewise, Ferdinand Hien, in his organological study of *gyil* in 2016 in Dakar (Senegal), also limited himself only to the tonal scale of *gyil*. These limited perspectives, indeed, create a number of gaps in Dagara musical scholarship and systematisation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In the Dagara community, as stated earlier on, music permeates a wide range of life cycle, social, and religious customs. It is located both in public and private performances. In the context of cultural identity, some aspects of Dagara culture such as their social organisation successfully and effectively define the Dagara culturally. Thus, as an integral part of that culture, music can efficiently define the cultural identity of the Dagara people. Unfortunately, despite the contributions by some existing research works on the music of the Dagara people in Burkina Faso, the music still needs more investigations as those works are limitedly partial in terms of research perspectives and interests. For instance, in 1976, the research committee of indigenous priests, mentioned above, compiled some raw data on the music of the Dagara in general and those of the *gyil* in particular without any deeper analysis and systematisation. Michael Vercelli Biagio (2006), in his PhD dissertation focused on the performance Practice of the Dagara-Birifor Gyil Tradition through the Analysis of the *Bɛwaa* and Daarkpen repertoire. Wiggins Trevor (1998), Hien (2016) and Ferdinand Hien (2016) mainly studied the Dagara *gyil* (Xylophone) within the Dagara

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musical culture. The outcome of these researches calls for a deeper investigation to efficiently help in the understanding of how music culturally defines the Dagara people.

Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to conduct a musical ethnography of the Dagara. In other words, it investigates the music of the Dagara as their culture with a particular focus on three of its genres, that is, *bawr-binɛ, bɛwaa* and *ko-gyil*. Thus, it provides an input into the above mentioned research works on the music of the Dagara. Finally, it aligns itself with the shared pastoral assignment begun with the pioneering work done by the indigenous priest's committee. To address these scholarly concerns, the following research questions guided this study:

a) How does the significance of the music within the Dagara society in Burkina Faso resonate with the relationships that exist in their music and the society, and what does that mean to their socio-cultural life?

This general research question is elucidated by the following specific questions:

a) How does their kinship system permeate and fuel their socio-cultural practices?

b) How do the Dagara rationalise their philosophy concerning their music?

c) How do the uses and functions of the music impact the Dagara socio-cultural life?

d) How does the musical structure depict their kinship system and worldview in the context of cultural identity?

Obviously, the above questions suggest my specific research objectives to be achieved.

1.3 Research Objectives

This thesis is essentially about a musical ethnography within the Dagara socio-cultural system in the broad perspective of "music as culture" according to which music and culture are strongly interrelated and inseparable. Thus, the backdrop of this study considers the

music of the Dagara as Dagara's culture. The main aim of this study therefore is to conduct a musical ethnography that culturally defines the Dagara as an ethnic group. But, this major objective can efficiently be accomplished through the achievement of four (4) specific objectives:

a) The present study, first, examines the Dagara social organisation.

b) Secondly, it establishes the Dagara's philosophy of music in terms of perception and understanding of their own music, investigates the aesthetic conventions that prevail in Dagara musical culture.

c) It examines the socio-cultural uses and functions[3] of the representative musical genres (*Bawr-binɛ*, *bɛwaa* and *ko-gyil*).

d) Finally, it analyses the musical structure in relation to the Dagara identity[4] and social structure.

The achievement of these objectives runs through the structure of the following chapters: chapter one introduces the study with a general description of the research framework, question and methodology. Chapter two describes the socio-cultural practices of the Dagara society in Burkina Faso. It discusses the historical origin, the worldview, the kinship system and the socio-economic activities of the Dagara from Burkina Faso. The chapter also emphasises the centrality of the kinship system as that system permeates the social organisation. The third chapter, through an ethnosemantic analysis, focuses on the philosophy of the Dagara concerning their music, philosophy also incorporated into the aesthetic principles and the narrative of the musical specialists, on musical instruments construction and some musical genres. Chapter four is about the ethnography of Dagara

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[3] "Musical uses and functions" refers to different ways (uses) music is performed and the socio-cultural role(s) it plays in Dagara community.

[4] Dagara identity refers to their cultural identity informed and shaped by their history and culture. But, since the culture itself is dynamic and comprises multiple aspects, this cultural identity is also dynamic and multiple in nature. In other words, Dagara cultural identity fuses innovations (modernity) and stability (tradition) as far as the cultural aspects are concerned. In short, it features the "unity in diversity" principle.

musical performances in Burkina Faso through which it also examines the uses and functions of the three major genres (*Bɛwaa, Bawr-binɛ* and *ko-gyil*). Chapter five mainly deals with the musical analysis of five selected pieces. The analysis aims at examining the musical elements of the music of the Dagara. Chapter six summarises the findings of the study concludes and suggests some recommendations.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The music of the Dagara has been the subject of previous studies in Burkina Faso and Ghana. Many of these studies mainly focused on the organology of *gyil*, the musical performances and the socio-cultural functions of the music of the Dagara. However, none of them specifically dealt with these particular areas: (1) the exact relationship between the musical and the socio-cultural apart from the work of Woma (2012) which exclusively related the musical to the socio-political; (2) the exploration of the music of the Dagara as functional, contemplative and communicative since its functional aspect is extremely emphasised at the expense of its contemplativeness; (3) its correlation with text in terms of the music of the Dagara as text in particular and as culture in general. In short, all these areas, to my knowledge, have not been direct subjects of the numerous previous studies. Therefore, this ethnographic investigation on the music of the Dagara aims at exploring the music according to these areas. By doing so, it will contribute to the ethnomusicological studies of African music in general and of the music of the Dagara in particular. In fact, the study illustrates, in specific ways, a number of related scholarly works and theories. For instance, it illustrates and even goes beyond Nketia's argument about the juncture of the social and the musical as this juncture is generally overlooked by some scholars. In the same vein, it confirms, to some extent, the strong relationship between musical structure and social structure despite all the limitations and criticisms against this argument. Furthermore, it also supports Agawu's argument on African music as text on the one hand,

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and on the other hand as music for life's sake and for art's sake as well. Finally, through the research findings or discoveries, the study contributes to the scholarship and documentation of the music of the Dagara.

Moreover, in addition to this primary and scholarly purpose, another purpose of the study is ethnodoxologically-oriented as the research will probably and hopefully bear multiple interests within and outside the Dagara society. For instance, its input may be used for different ends, especially the better understanding and practices of some cultural and religious practices. Thus, the necessity of establishing a theory[5] of the music of the Dagara and the general input of the research can hopefully make room for a creative and applied ethnomusicology; in a sense that this research work can provide some useful materials for musical compositions (creative ethnomusicology perspective) as well as the research findings may also help in community problems solving (applied ethnomusicology perspective). For instance, transcribed musical excerpts can make the music more accessible and more resistant to arbitrary changes and misinterpretations. The present research contributions can also be a source of inspiration to so many other ethnic groups such as *Birifor, Lobi, Jâ, Sissala, Senoufo* etc. whose musical traditions are similar to the Dagara.

1.5 Scope of the Study

As stated earlier on, the Dagara are scattered in between Burkina and Ghana. Therefore, it would have been more comprehensive to study their music within their geographical location. But, for the purpose of practicability, efficiency, I found it very useful to limit the

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[5] "A theory of the music of the Dagara" in this context, embraces Gerhard Kubik's argument about his "theory of African music". Indeed, "Kubik makes it clear that he is not writing a "theory for" African Music in a prescriptive manner, but that he is assembling important facts and observation in a systematic fashion that would enhance the explanation of music and musical behavior in Africa" (Avorgbedor, 1997, pp. 232-233). Thus, Dagara music theory is a "theory of", but not a "theory for" the music of the Dagara.

geographical scope of my study to the Dagara living in Burkina Faso. However, occasional references have been made to those in Ghana.

The Dagara possess a very large and rich musical heritage which encompasses so many musical genres and instruments. However, these musical genres and instruments do not bear the same musical significance in the socio-cultural system. In that regard, the minor musical genres which are specifically occasion and gender based encompass the following musics: *Suolu* (tales music), *Nuru lo-ba* (female music), *Nakiibɛ yielu* (shepherds music), *mouo-puo-kpɛ-wiɛ-pɛblo* (hunters music) etc. The major musical genres which can be labelled as more serious genres usually fuse both sexes (male and female) in performance context and are mainly concerned with the use of *gyil*. These three genres of interest are *bɛwaa (bawaa)* recreational music, *Binɛ* which is about various forms of music and *bawr-binɛ* which embraces music of initiation and Christian worship. These same *dagara* words, *bɛwaa*, *binɛ* and *bawr-binɛ,* are used to designate, at the same time, the music and its inherent or related dance as well. It is to these three major genres that my content scope is limited as they can musically reflect the *Dagara* musical traditions.

1.6 Methodology: Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The research methodology employed is basically a qualitative ethnographic method which relies on primary and secondary sources. First and foremost, being a member of the society is central to the undertaking of this work. It provides me with an insider's viewpoint of the music. However, my particular concern throughout the stages of this study is about producing a musical ethnography in an objective and critical manner. For the sake of that intended objectivity, my data collection and analysis also embrace Nketia's contextual strategies of inquiry and systematisation which can be conceptualised by the concept of contextualisation. As a methodological and analytical tool, contextualisation, according to

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Nketia (1990), is mainly about describing the ethnographic context, that is, social and cultural context or any other frames of reference, in the perspective of getting meanings and significance of music. It is an analytical and evaluative process for the study of music as culture. But, before going to the field for the collection of data, I have gone through related literature which has been greatly helpful in finding out areas that most require close attention and investigations.

I have read, indeed, relevant documents that include books, brochures, articles, and journals. Throughout these reading exercises, I have been interested in any gap(s), any relevant findings and in any misinterpretation(s) about Dagara music and/or its aspects. Some of the relevant findings by other scholars have, indeed, confirmed some of my hypotheses; and others are used to deepen my understanding of the music of the Dagara. For instance, my assumption about the equipentatonic nature of the *dɛgaar gyil* is supported by Trevor Wiggins hypothesis regarding the intervallic structure of the instrument (Wiggins & Kobom 1992, p. 5). Any misinterpretations are intended to be carefully corrected and supported by objective evidence.

Secondary sources include audio-visuals, films, videos, audio, etc., but these are often of mixed disciplinary concerns and a small selection from these categories actually focuses on the music of the Dagara. Moreover, the focus of those categories also often lacks ethnographic contexts and musical analysis. Therefore, this musical ethnography, of course limited to Dagara land in Burkina Faso, aims at filling that gap as well as at reconstructing a theory of the music of the Dagara informed by the perspectives of born-in-the-tradition practitioners.

Dagara land, indeed, comprises the following administrative centres: Nyigbo, Dissin, Zambo, Koper and Dano. In each of these districts, I sought the most traditional villages, at least two of them, where the Dagara tradition is still rigorously observed. Based on the non-probability sampling technique, I selected my key informants who are knowledgeable enough as the custodians of the Dagara musical tradition. Though I am not dealing with quantitative research as such and due to the large population of Dagara across Burkina Faso, I selected systematically at least two informants from at least two "traditional" villages of each district for more representative and objectivity purposes. Most of my informants are either *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* (xylophone players) or *lawn-kon-bɛ* (male dirge eulogists) or both as they are knowledgeable in musical sound and tradition. Moreover, some other informants also are featured as custodians of the Dagara tradition in general and *bawr* initiation in particular. In total, I interviewed twenty-two (22) informants: Nyigbo (8), Dissin (4), Zambo (2), Koper (4), and Dano (4). On the fieldwork, I employed a number of techniques involved in ethnographic methods. I also made use of multiple forms or techniques of qualitative data collection procedures which include observations, conversations, personal communications, purposive listening to vocal and instrumental musics, and face-to-face interviews with the above key informants. For the structured interviewing techniques, I designed a structured interviewing and stored the information through audio recordings (MP3 recorder). The unstructured and semi-structured interviews were purposely adopted and mostly used for their advantages in giving more time to the informants to open up in answering questions more exhaustively. Being an emic investigator largely replaces the technique of participant observation strategy. The language, for instance, has never been a problem neither a barrier to me in getting the confidence of the people. All the language subtleties and nuances are well captured when investigating the perception and understanding of the people about our music. However, I have been well aware that, being an emic or insider researcher, does not present advantages only, but also some consequences

such as the risk of insider's biasness. The only efficient way of addressing this eventual biasness has consisted of analysing and interpreting all my collected data like an etic or outsider (Herndon (1993, p. 66-70)), given that some of the information on the field appeared to be completely unknown to me as this could be the case of an outsider. I can think like an outsider on the basis of my exposure to music education, that is my bi-musicality (Titon, 1995) which can enable me to momentarily step out of my "insider's straitjacket". The study of the music of the Dagara, indeed, needs the complementary views of both the insider and outsider investigators. According to Avorgbedor (1986-1987) and Herndon (1993, pp. 63-80) the diverse viewpoints of the insider and the outsider concerning research works are complementary as well as necessary and should, therefore, be equally valued. Mercia Herndon particularly illustrated that relevance by demonstrating how efficient and relevant the combination of different viewpoints from insiders and outsiders is, as far as human science and societal study are concerned. From the dualistic viewpoint by Fred Gearing, the triadic approach of Raymond Fogelson and his own quadrilateral analysis of the same subject, that is, Cherokee healing and notion of power, he concluded:

> "If possible, multiple voices, from many points of view, over a considerable period of time would weave a clearer picture of the music of people. Such voices would include all ranges of practitioners, participants, non-participants, total strangers, and deep initiates. Lacking this, we do the best we can, and should remember that no voice, by itself is sovereign, absolute and definitive.

In that regard, this study can be considered as the necessary voice of a deep initiate whose life has been imbedded in the culture since his childhood. Since then, I have been attending musical events such as *bɛwaa, bawr* and funerals ceremonies where I did some live recordings. Through audio-visual recordings, I have been able to gather information in terms of answers, sounds and moving pictures in relation to music and musical performances.

I also employed the non-probability method for the selection of representative songs according to time and space. To be able to deal with the musical elements of Dagara music, I assigned myself to musical transcriptions[6]. I cross-checked some existing musical scores before adoption. I also transcribed some of the songs to complete the sample.

All data collected, in the different ways above, are carefully compiled and analysed critically through the methods of triangulation and phenomenology in order to cross-check the validity of my data. Based on the multiple sources of collection of data associated with the purpose of objectivity, all the recordings have been systematically transcribed. These transcriptions displayed some differences and similarities as well. It is, indeed, from these transcriptions and through the methods of triangulation and phenomenology that I abstracted the musical structure of the *ko-gyil* style regarding specifically the opening rite of the funeral.

Moreover, it appears clearly that the more objective way of analysing oral music such as the music of the Dagara, is to have the scores of some representative selected songs (5). This transcription tool objectively suggested relevant ideas about the features of the musical elements and principles as they also inform and reveal the Dagara cultural identity.

Moreover, in analysing some specific aspects of the music, I used inductive and/or deductive approaches to establish some general principles and to verify some hypotheses, statements and ideas related to the music within its cultural system. Geertz's (1973) "thick

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[6] I did the transcription of the selected songs on "Finale" which has the great advantage of enabling the hearing of the sound produced. In fact, I have been inspired by some existing musical transcriptions drawn from Hien Ferdinand's thesis (2016) which have been thoroughly re-arranged in so many ways such as change of keys to averagely suit to the Dagara xylophone tonalities, phrasing of melodies and a few corrections of pitch for better reproduction of these melodies as performed in traditional settings.
Unfortunately, "Finale" couldn't produce the regular and equal intervals of the *dɛgaar* scale as all the songs are played on the *dɛgaar*; hence, theses transcribed melodies are approximated.

descriptions" approach has also been helpful in examining and understanding the various cultural logics that inform the musical structures and the strategies of sound or music in use, that is, the ways that sonic forms when performed identify, invert, reinforce, or negate the positions of performers. "Thick description", indeed, is an analytical and interpretive means employed to discover and reveal the depth of meanings that human actors inscribe in their language and actions. Usually employed in Anthropology and communication studies, "thick description" method is also used in ethnographic studies where the subject is mainly privileged in the analytical and interpretive process. Thus, "in their field notes, ethnographers attempt to understand their own and their subjects" suppositions. In seeking to explain as much as possible about the subject, the ethnographer's notes become thick not just with description but also with underlying inferences and implications…" (Thompson, 2001, p. 66). Denzin summarised the main characteristics of thick descriptions into four (4) points: (1) It gives the context of an act; (2) it states the intentions and meaning that organise the actions; (3) it traces the evolution and development of the act and finally it presents the action as a text that can be interpreted (*ibid*). As defined, "thick description" undoubtedly fits into our ethnographic description of musical performances. Thus, in combination with other methods such as phenomenological and contextual approach methods, thick description definitely presents musical performances as subject, texts and web of meanings to be interpreted. Thick description process may also include the ethnosemantic process in a complementary way as both processes share the same goal of a better understanding of a particular subject.

In establishing his semantic theories in the context of music as a web of meanings, Nketia (1990) also emphasised that semantic theories are critical for the understanding of the communicative potential of music as a social experience. His analytical and evaluative

process of contextualisation is the ethnographic tool or method of getting the meanings and significance of music within its cultural context.

1.6.1 Theoretical Framework

This ethnomusicological research is framed by Nketia's[7] (1990, p. 81) analytical and evaluative process of contextualisation for qualitative ethnographic data collection and analysis. To Nketia, contextualisation is the process of viewing entities in a context in terms of their internal and external relations and relevance. He underscores the relevance of contextual approach as follows:

> The ultimate goal of the contextual approach is to facilitate the exploration of meaning in music beyond descriptive analysis which, in such studies, would be a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Thus, it is based on the assumption of that ethnographic description, analysis and interpretation of music events approached from the perspective of context should lead to a richer and more dynamic view of a music culture than other approaches that do not integrate contextual considerations into the analysis (Nketia, 1990, p. 70).

This contextual approach, indeed, is enhanced by nexus and factorial analyses. The nexus analysis establishes relationships between music and other cultural aspects, while factorial analysis examines the pressures exerted on music and music-making by social, political, religious or economic forces. Likewise, Scherzinger (2001) is of the same point of view that ethnomusicologists should emphasise the context and ethnographic of musical details and structural or formal analyses. He said:

> Still, my argument is not only concerned with the structural inequality that affords western music multiple institutional perspectives and African music only an ethnomusicological one. More specifically, I want to show that even on its own terms, some of the concerns that structure ethnomusicological discourse (particularly its purported "sensitivity to the

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[7] I will also draw ideas from other important essays by Nketia in the course of the discussions. For example, his essay on "The Juncture of the Social and the Musical: The Methodology of Cultural Analysis" (1981) mainly frames the last chapters (Chapter five and Six).

African point of view" or more generally its "context sensitivity" may be dabbling, quite unconsciously in the knowledge venture of neo-colonial imperialism (pp. 12-13).

The study is also embedded in the six-fold framework designed by Steven Feld (1984, pp. 383-409). He proposes that researchers studying various societies organise their inquiries and reports along similar lines. Therefore, as an illustration, his theoretical framework in essence calls for thick descriptions constructed along parallel lines. In establishing a relationship between Dagara social and musical structures, I have organised my data collection and analysis based on Feld's six areas of inquiry: environment, competence, form, performance, value, quality and theory. To him, "details questions" about these areas help determine the musical features in relation to the social structure. This six-fold framework, therefore, is relevant to the study as it may help in capturing the philosophy of the Dagara, that is, their perception and understanding concerning their music. For instance, musical instruments are constructed from natural elements such as trees (environment); the perception and understanding of music are best captured from the indigenous musical specialists (competence and theory); and the aesthetics conventions are usually established from musical performances (values and quality) etc. In their book entitled "The Ethnography of musical performance", Herndon and McLeod (1980) synthesised seven (7) different ways of conducting ethnomusicological research. Although the present study may combine different ways throughout the process, its main focus is placed on this fundamental question that features Anthony Seeger's methodological approach: What are they doing and why are they doing it in that particular way? Applying this interrogatory idea to the Dagara in Burkina Faso, the question becomes: What are the Dagara doing and why are they doing it in that particular way to the extent that what they are doing can be called the music of the Dagara? This question, indeed, does not only serve as a background of the research questions, but is also the main concern that runs throughout the study. The questionnaire as

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a guide for interviews (see appendix D) is, therefore, inspired and built around this six-fold framework and this fundamental question and is meant for thick description from the informants.

Thus, it appears clearly that Geertz's (1973) 'thick descriptions' is more suitable as background to this framework. As Roseman (1973) rightly pointed out, our ethnomusicological analyses delve into the "webs of significance" where cultural system can be considered as those webs and the analysis of it, therefore, not to be an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning. This metaphorical statement had been inspired by Max Weber's argument that 'man is an animal suspended in webs of significance'. In the same line of thought and by analogy, the study of Dagara music should be performed within its cultural system seen as "webs of significance". Thick description of a particular musical or cultural related issue is, indeed, another important source of gathering relevant information about the Dagara's worldview in general and the philosophy of their music in particular. For instance, a thick description about how musical instruments are constructed and about musical performances is worth of relevant knowledge as these construction processes and musical performances can be considered as potential "webs of significance or meaning". The theory of thick description and associated with that of ethnosemantic analysis by Kofi Agawu are effective tools for scrutinising that web of meanings as far as the music of the Dagara is concerned.

1.6.2 Literature Review

The main purpose of this thesis is to examine more deeply and more extensively some specific and indispensable components of the music of the Dagara based on the input of some previous investigations and other complementary researches in relation to my research subject.

So many research studies have been conducted by individual scholars, national and international organisations on African music all over the African content. For example, Hugo Zemp financed by the French National Centre for Scientific research (CNRS), and supported by the International Institute for comparative Music Studies and documentation in Berlin did a lot of recordings on the music of the *Senoufo* from Ivory Coast, especially the *poro* music. Strand (2009), for her dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, researched on the *Sambla* xylophone called *baan* in Burkina Faso.

Although the music of Dagara in Ghana and Burkina Faso share almost the same characteristics regarding their socio-cultural usage and functions, the music of the Dagara in Ghana particularly has received much more scholarly attention compared to that of Burkina Faso. Indeed, the works of some scholars such as Goody (1961, 1962), Malidoma Somé (1993, 1994), Naaeke (2005), Mensah (1982), Godsey (1980, 1984), Saighoe (1984) Vercelli (2006), Sidra (2011) and Woma (2012), just to mention these, reflect that attention as far as *gyil* music is concerned. In that regard, Wiggins Trevor and Joseph Kobom in their collaborative work provided some few theoretical elements in their organology of *gyil* (Wiggins, 1998). These organological studies, indeed, gave an insight and an input about the scales in which the music of the Dagara is embedded. Likewise, Vercelli in his doctoral dissertation largely explored and analysed the recreational music or *Bɛwaa (Bawaa)* music of the Dagara on one hand and on the other hand, the funeral music or *the Daarkpen* of the Dagara-Birifor in Ghana. Though his work depicts certain scattered elements and aspects of Dagara music as far as the musical performance is concerned, it is more about the *gyil* music in two specific genres (*Bɛwaa and Daarkpen*) and in two subculture groups (*Dagara and Birifor*) while my concern focuses on these three major genres of the music of the Dagara: *Bɛwaa, Bawr-binɛ and Ko-gyil*. However, his work is worthy of interest as it extensively dealt with the *bɛwaa* performance which is an important aspect of this study.

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Trevor Wiggins personally did tentative recordings and investigations on the music of Ghana, especially the *bɛwaa* music of the Dagara from Nandom in the Upper-West region of Ghana. Although *Bɛwaa* is part of the Dagara musical genres in Burkina Faso, such intensive research works have not been done as far as the music of the Dagara in Burkina Faso is concerned. However, what is done about the music of the Dagara in Ghana can also inspire the study of the music of the Dagara in Burkina Faso as well.

Among the different and various perspectives given to the study of the music of the Dagara by scholars, only the research work done by Woma (2012) purported a correlation between music and socio-political issues regarding Dagara music and dirge. He emphasised that "taken as political discourse, funeral music and dirge have the ability to shape public opinion because these musical themes can significantly impact the listeners' opinions on the speakers' intention". To him, the textual meanings of funeral music and dirges constitute the most important public discourse among the Dagara people. He also pointed out that, funeral ceremonies do not only offer the opportunity for musical performers to express their musical talents, but also provide them with a platform to communicate their thoughts and feelings. In the same vein of approximating music, culture and society, the present study extends that correlation to other cultural dimensions within the context of music as culture.

But doing so, I am well aware of the relevance of the past and current debates about the correlation between musical structure and social structure. There may be, indeed, an unwise risk of correlating carelessly musical structure and social structure for so many reasons. Directly or indirectly the argument of John Blacking about musical change fundamentally questions that assumption. In fact, it may eventually happen that social change essentially affects a particular social structure, but not the musical structure which can remain intact and vice versa. To Blacking, indeed, "changes in music do not necessarily accompany the

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changes of mind that affect institutions related to music-making" and "not all types of social change precipitate corresponding musical change" (Behague, 1986, p.17). Furthermore, while a particular music may not change, the meaning attached to it over a period of time by people in the society may significantly change according to some socio-cultural factors. However, according to John Blacking a clear distinction should be made between a change within a musical style which can be termed as innovation and a complete change of style and this distinction should be meaningful to the music-makers and consumers. This argument by John Blacking echoes to some extent Bruno Nettl's classification of musical changes. The first type of musical change, according to him, is about change without continuity, in a sense that an entire system of the music is replaced by another. The second type is the radical change where the new system of music still reflects the old one. The third one refers to the continuity of change where innovation and stabilities fuse together. The last type of musical change stands for change that features more stability than innovation (Behague, 1986, p.18).

More directly, Kolinski and Nketia have questioned the relevance of this consensus among ethnomusicologists concerning the intimate correlation between musical structures and the social and cultural conditions under which these structures have been created, maintained or changed. They observed that the basic structure of sounds applicable to dissimilar societies logically invalidates the assumption of a strict correlation between musical structure and social structure, since this assumption is not even proved for individual cultures Kolinski, (1978) and Henry, (1988, p. 217), Nketia, (1981, p. 24). In the same line of thought, Henry (1988) assumed that two processes such as musical and social structures may operate epiphenomenologically without any interconnection. Based on that argument and to depart from the traditional debate regarding musical and social structures, he rather associated types of music with types of people in the complex society of the Bhojpuri speaking society

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in India. In that society, indeed, musicians from certain social castes perform certain types of music. With regard to religions, Muslims perform different types than do Hindus. In the context of gender differentiation, Hindu women exclusively sing songs that men don't perform. However, it is worth noting the existence of genre drift where the performance of a particular song by other social category alludes to the category that the genre is originally associated with. In that case study, music is not correlated to the whole social structure but to some specific categories such as gender and religious categories of the society.

Based on these arguments, my correlation between musical and social structures is more about establishing a relationship between musical performance structures, the Dagara's worldview and a number of socio-cultural values such as their kinship system. From this perspective, I argue that if a cultural value is crucial to the whole social structure and that cultural value is depicted by music and its performance, then it should be a logical relationship of some kind between that music and that social structure. Applied to my study context, kinship system and the worldview of the Dagara in Burkina Faso appears as the most important socio-cultural values in Dagara community. These socio-cultural values are reflected through music-making to the extent that their music exists as their culture.

Music as culture is another important topic among scholars. The founding father of this theory is Alan P. Merriam who first considered music as being in culture. Indeed, shaped by his anthropological background, Alan Merriam was very biased in defining in 1960 ethnomusicology as the study of music in culture with music seen as content and culture as the container. Obviously, this definition suggests that music can be removed from culture and be studied in the laboratory in a scientific manner. Being aware of this limited and exclusive definition of ethnomusicology, he later on defined, in his book "The Anthropology of music" (1964), 'ethnomusicology' as the study of music as culture, in a

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sense that, music is a thoroughly integrated aspect or part of culture. However, though music is interrelated to the other aspects of culture based on its social functions and uses, all the cultural aspects and elements are not necessarily relevant to ethnomusicological research. His argument might probably inspire Herndon and McLeod (1979) who also held that, music exists as culture in a sense that, it is a thoroughly integrated aspect of culture. As music occurs in human groups, so does it exist as culture, because music is perceived through cultural canalisation and is defined by specific groups who produce it. In other words, musical culture is created within communities in such a way that "music transmission also acts as a conduit for a formidable corpus of political, artistic, and religious beliefs" (Hallmhurain, 2001, p. 146). This strong relationship between music, culture and society is shown by Marie McCarthy's conceptual nexus or thematic links in which music, seen as a pivotal medium of the construction of the Irish identity, is assimilated to culture, canon, and community and to communication. According to her, music as culture can be described as the foundation and motivation for the transmission of culture. Likewise, music as canon refers to the content and set of cultural values that is transmitted. Music as community implies the context of that musical and cultural transmission. Finally, Music as communication designates the system of methods, media and technologies used in the musical and cultural transmission (*ibid*).

This argument is similarly shared by Steven Feld and Marina Roseman according to whom there is an intrinsic relationship between musical or sound structure and social structure or organisation. However, the suggested methodological approach to the study of music as culture does not require an exhaustive implication of all the aspects of the culture, but rather intensive, detailed, systematic observation. Therefore, a purposive selection about customs, group relations, or behaviour is necessary for the acquisition of knowledge resulting from the mutual influence and the interrelationship between music and culture. Taking into

account this methodological approach, a purposively selection will be done among the musical genres as well as some specific aspects of the culture in regard to the musical and social association. In his investigations on the *Kaluli* society of Papua in New Guinea, Feld (1984) compared the sound structure and the social structure of this classless society. In fact, he blends issues related to both ethnomusicological and socio-musical perspectives in order to demonstrate how the shared meaning and the understanding of musical sounds successfully depict the social structure and organisation of the *Kaluli*. This approach appears to me as a wonderful source of inspiration in my attempt to understand how features of Dagara society and identity as a distinct ethnic group, are revealed through their musical sound and the ideologies of sound-making and sound-makers. Similarly, Roseman (1984) compared the sound structure and the social structure of the *Temiar*, an egalitarian society which, in one way or the other, features Dagara society.

Music, as human product, can also be described as human or a social behaviour. As such, it has a structure or a regular patterned sound which is variable according to the cultural context; and that structure or regular patterned sound is determined by human or social behaviour in terms of physical and verbal behaviour. In that sense, Blacking (1973), a British anthropologist and ethnomusicologist, further developed this behavioural aspect of music by defining and arguing about music as 'humanly organised sound' or 'soundly organised humanity', that is, music being considered as human capability and its potential as an intellectual and affective force in human communication, society and culture (Behague, 1998, p. 236). Music is also a social activity and, in that regard, he clearly stated that "musical change may epitomise the changing conditions and concerns of social groups, perhaps even before they are crystallised and articulated in words and corporate action; but it may also reflect affection for novelty and changing intellectual fashion. Conversely, an absence of musical change may reflect a retreat from challenging social issues, or a

determination to face them and adapt to them, while maintaining essential social and cultural values" (Blacking, 1977, p.3). To demonstrate the practicability of his assumption through a case study of the *Venda* children's songs, Blacking was able to assess quite accurately by means of transcriptions the various patterns of songs' structures and more importantly to relate the musical forms to the cultural counterparts of the *Venda* people (Behague, 1998, p. 234). His analysis while confined to the form of the children's songs', also reveals something of the emotional content of the music and ultimately aimed at explaining the interrelationship between music and culture.

Lomax (1976) is of the same viewpoint as it is shown in his work entitled "Folk Song Style and Culture". By analysing singing styles, Lomax associated, in his report, patterns of singing styles with social structures. To him, musical patterns feature human behaviour considered to be also highly patterned, regular and redundant to the extent of yielding stable structures in each society. He also concluded that music is a universal public communication of social identity: "The profile of a society can be roughly projected from the profile of its music, dance and speaking styles" (Kolata, 1978, p.287). However, Lomax's work was particularly controversial and was criticised by his fellow scholars. Much of the criticism against him focuses on his method and data interpretation. Feld (1984) describes Lomax's cantometrics (a study of singing styles) as an important discovery, but an ineffective tool for comparative sociomusicology as the study reflects singing rather than song (*idem*, p. 384). His source of data collection which is mainly the controversial "Ethnographic Atlas" by Georg P. Murdock's is considered unreliable as that source itself is out-dated and therefore irrelevant (Kolata, 1978, p. 288). Likewise, his anthropological methodology consisting of cross-cultural comparison between unrelated societies is said to be inefficient, informal and consequently irrelevant for the following reasons: the updated anthropological methodology rather focuses on natives' viewpoint or

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native category rather researchers' mere description, peoples involved in the process and system of classification are untrained and the omission of eventual musical changes over the large period of data collection. Moreover, as Merriam and ethnomusicologists observed the sample size of ten (10) songs is not representative enough (*ibid*). However, Lomax's supporters' arguments also bear an amount of relevance in regard to the pedagogical and professional nature of the work. Titon believes that Lomax's work constitutes a great contribution to the development of ethnomusicology as cantometrics or analyses of song styles attract people and students to become more impressed by the beauty in correlating music and culture for awareness of one's own cultural identity (*ibid*).

To conclude, I acknowledge the relevance of the limitations and criticisms towards the correlation between musical structure and social structure, especially when that correlation is not ethnographically contextualised enough. In other words, I have taken note that the fundamental relationship between social structure and musical structure may not be always relevant to all societies for so many reasons. I also agree, to some extent, with those who make this essential association. Based on these important considerations and perspectives, I strongly believe that, there is always a vital connection of some kind between the music and at least one of the cultural values as those values are shared and cherished by the people who produce that music. In the case of the Dagara society in Burkina Faso, it is their kinship system that makes that connection between musical structure and social organisation as that kinship permeates and fuels their entire socio-cultural life. Since the various criticisms and objections towards Lomax's work are mainly based on the data collection and the methodology processes, addressing these issues in a more scientific manner in the context of the present study, will hopefully be helpful in the last three chapters as far as the correlation of Dagara singing styles with their social identity is concerned.

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In the context of ethnomusicological contributions to ethnodoxology and local knowledge, it is worth noting that the study of music as communication and as social glue is of great importance to the life of any Church across the world. In that particular regard, King (2009) holds that "the implications of Christian music communication as it relates to Christian mission need to be developed and studied in a systematic way (p. 48). In her point of view, "ethnomusicology with its two major paths of studying "music as sound" and "music as behaviour" has a major contribution to make to missiology" (*ibid*). By Missiology, I mean the extending of the gospel or the kingdom of God which constitutes the ultimate task of doing missionary work. Thus, the missiological field, in the view of Roberta King, encompasses the interrelated and complementary following subfields: Theology, church growth, cultural anthropology and ethnohistory. Music as communication also permeates these subfields to the extent that "the dynamics and impact of Christian music communication, when studied in terms of musical sound, process, context, event and social dimension present missiology with approaches that have yet to be explored" (*ibid*). In the same vein of music as communication, Neeley (1999), in his book entitled "People of the Drum of God- come!" examined the speech surrogate of the *nkul*, a two-tone hollow talking drum of the Ewondo people of Mekomba in Cameroon. That talking drum is a communicative tool (church bell) used by Antoine Owono, a church leader, to summon his congregation. These drummed summonses are analysed as ethnic-cultural identity factors of Ewondo as the *nkul* and its use is also meant for other non-religious purposes in the community.

Moreover, music can also be seen as social glue. Thus, exploring effectively the impact of music as social glue in Christian worship context, Gerardo Marti, from his case study on *Worship across the Racial Divide,* "comes away convinced that music has a crucial role to play in the integration of religious communities" (Hartmann, 2013, p. 1152). According to

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Marti, "successful, genuinely integrated religious communities…. are marked and defined by those based in "genuine relationship" and meaningful interracial interactions" (*ibid*) as the actual practices of communal music-making such as rehearsals, performances, and worship services break social and racial barriers and rather bring people together and cements their social relationships.

All these attributes of music in both contexts of ethnodoxology and ethnomusicology can be described as an echo and answers to the call by the Catholic Church leadership in the context of ethnodoxology for better rooted evangelism. In 1963 to 1965, the Second Council Vatican, indeed, "brought to full maturity the perception that many problems of indigenisation can be solved only by the local churches themselves" (Musices, 1980, p. 15). However, its (Vatican II) Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (CSL) underscores that "adaptations of the Liturgy, according to the genius and traditions of peoples 'as long as they harmonise with its true and authentic spirit' (CSL, 37) and 'the substantial unity of the Roman rites is maintained (CSL, 38) (Musices, 1982, p. 15). "It is therefore right that African Catholics be given the opportunity to develop an indigenous liturgy, not only by the use of the vernacular, but also by way of singing as well as action, that is, dance and gesture" (*ibid*). In the context and for the purpose of integrating Catholic belief into cultures, "ethnomusicological research is called upon to make its contribution, not least because music bears a special significance in worship and proclamation (Musices, 1980, p. 15). This universal pastoral concern is passed down, through all the layers involved in the Catholic hierarchy, to me, as a priest and researcher, who want to take the opportunity of this study to make my contribution to what has been done as far as Diébougou diocese in Burkina Faso is concerned.

The study of Dagara music as culture has been a major concern of individual as well as of some institutions such as the Diébougou diocese. In that sense, an early attempt to document the Dagara music in Burkina Faso was done from 1967 to 1975 by an indigenous priests committee commissioned by the Emeritus Bishop of Diebougou, Most Rev. Jean Baptist Kpiele Some. This work entitled "*Jalons pour une ethnomusicologie Dagara: Enquêtes livrées par une équipe de chercheurs*" and published in 1976, is a raw compilation of data on Dagara music, that is the *gyil* and the Dagara musical genres. Though the data collected are consistent, there is, indeed, a crucial need to systematically elaborate and organise them for better insight of the music. That was even the profound wish of that committee as stated in their conclusion section (Mukassa 1976, p. 123).

In my "organology of *gyil*" in June 2016, I examined some musical elements of the *gyil* and the socio-cultural significance of Dagara music. But this work needs to be deepened enough to be able to contribute to the understanding of the music of the Dagara. For instance, in the present work, some details have been brought regarding the Dagara musical scales in relation to the *dɛgaar s*cale previously discussed in that long essay.

Moreover, I have discovered, through musical analysis (Chapter Four), that music of the Dagara also shares so many musical features with other African musical traditions: antiphonal, improvisations, polyrhythm, syncopations, off beating, repetition timeline, descending melodic lines etc. (lecture notes from Prof. Collins). Music of the Dagara like, so many African music, is culturally oriented or based, therefore, to understand it fully one needs to locate it in its socio-cultural context. In that sense Nketia (1981, 1990), underscores the indispensable nature of the ethnographic or traditional context, that is social and cultural contexts and to some extent that of the nexus analysis in ethnomusicological studies. His ethnomusicological approaches such as cultural theme, causal relations,

contextual and cultural factor approaches undoubtedly enhance the effectiveness of any contextualised ethnomusicology. "Why Suya sing: A Musical Anthropology of an Amazon People" by Anthony Seeger effectively illustrates these inspiring strategies or approaches suggested by Nketia. In this tremendous work, the key concern of Seeger is the way music is part of the very construction and interpretation of the social and conceptual relationships and processes rather than the way music is an end-product of concepts and behaviours (Feld, 1989). His work is a musical anthropology which, in essence, contrasts with "the Anthropology of music" by Merriam (1964). Indeed, if Merriam's Anthropology of music considers music as an integrated part of cultural system and social life to the extent that both realities, music and culture, becomes inter-relatedly one and same thing, Seeger's musical anthropology is based on a phenomenological method[8], and rather focuses on musical performance as a creative activity within the socio-cultural system. In that regard, musical production or performance process, a creative and productive activity in Seeger's view, appears to be more prominent than the musical product itself, though they remain complementary. According to him, musical performance plays a crucial and generative role in social construction. Finally, if Seeger successfully applied these strategies or approaches in the study of the music of the *Suya*, this suggests that the same strategies can also be applied effectively to the study of the music of the Dagara, although Dagara and *Suya* are different people.

Furthermore, I also share in the argument of some ethnomusicologists that aesthetics studies should be related to the music in connection with its cultural system. In other words, aesthetics as a shared and lived human experience is prevalent in almost every musical tradition. Therefore, "aesthetics" concept or notion must be culturally contextualised in a

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[8] "Phenomenological method" refers to an analytical method that aims at deeper understanding of realities seen as subjects or phenomena. The methodological process involved implies two basic principles: suspension of judgment and capturing of the essence of the phenomenon. In our context, this method is used to analyse musical performances which can be considered as phenomena.

systematic way by getting a better insight of aesthetics conventions or principles as established by music makers and music users within a given community (Nketia pp.118-148 and Merriam (1964, pp.259-276)). Agawu (2001) espoused this same argument made by Alan P. Merriam and Nketia about musical aesthetics. They all agreed that every musical culture has its own musical conventions. Agawu specifically underscored that even performance errors can be extremely valuable sources of insight into musical aesthetics. To him, for instance, errors such as those made and corrected during rehearsal and performance times can be hinted for determining aesthetic conventions for a particular musical culture. To arrive at the conclusion that errors are valuable sources of insight into musical aesthetics, Agawu went through an ethnosemantic analysis of the *Akpafu Todzi*'s musical performance and their native category to be able to understand how attitudes of fetching, cutting, throwing or running away and catching are or can musically be understood in terms of call-and-response for instance. Thus, in the process of establishing aesthetics, he suggested that ethnosemantics, as theory and method, can be an important and efficient tool for understanding aesthetic conventions. In the same line of thoughts, Avorgbedor (1994) establishes in terms of regular notions, a number of aesthetics conventions related to *halo* music and dance, a proscribed *Anlo-Ewe* genre, as follows: The idea of surprise performance, the ability to expand and diversify one's own repertoire; the enjoyment and evaluation by audience, self and group discipline during performance, the context of the performance, the participation of specific personalities at a particular time during performance either to confirm the quality of the performance or for ameliorative purpose, a good voice of the singer namely that of the female, the enthusiasm, energy and interest in the performance, the notion of attraction through visual decoration and some gifts in nature and cash received by performers etc. Based on these opinions and illustrations, I can assume that Dagara musical culture also possesses its own aesthetics conventions that need

to be brought on board as an important and integrated part of the music of the Dagara which also bears several attributes.

Indeed, the music of the Dagara can also be described as "text" according to Agawu's (2001) argument concerning African music. To him, though African music is mainly functional or activities-oriented, it involves contemplative aspect as well, in the sense that, it brings out many opportunities or aspects for contemplation to the listeners. Unfortunately, this contemplative nature of African music is eurocentricly denied by some scholars such as John Chernoff who believed that African Music is solely music for life's sake. To him, therefore, there is nothing like music for art's sake based on contemplation.

In his paper "African music as text", Agawu addressed this misrepresentation of African music by demonstrating that African music is essentially functional and contemplative indeed. His arguments are rooted and illustrated through the specific genre of the "songs for reflection" among the *Gbaya*, the wordless chant called *Gogodze* sung by the *Ewe* of *VE* in Volta region of Ghana, the lullabies, the extensive repetition of exclamations in *Ewe* dirges, children game songs, etc. According to him, these musical genres in particular and African music in general, require undeniably close listening as it is in the context of music for art's sake where contemplation is the main purpose and object. For, it is this contemplative nature of the music for art's sake that gives autonomy to the art music also known as music for art's sake, hence the music can stand on its own; it does not make reference to anything else nor is it meant for nothing apart from contemplation. In other words, it is music from the absolutist viewpoint.

Thus, to also be properly understood, Agawu suggests that African music must be approached at the level of musical language. Language, indeed, is a "purely semiotic

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system" functioning simultaneously as primary means of communication as a master discourse as language and metalanguage. In that regard, African music as text suggests that African music bears the same characteristics as any language and any text as well. As language in the sense of communication, African music also conveys a web of meanings to the performers and the audience. Indeed, if language is a semiotic system and music is a language, therefore African music is *ipso facto* a semiotic system where its various symbols are the embodiments involved in the performance, the words of the songs, the errors and the violence etc. As text, African music also bears some textual features such as syntax, sentences, words, phrases; in short, any text has a structure. As a text, but not is a text in Agawu's point of view, African music has almost the same structural elements that can be found in any text. For instance, musical motives (words), periods (sentences), embodiments, dance gestures, errors, violence etc. constitute the structural elements that make African music comparable to a text. All these elements need to be taken into consideration and be understood for better insight of any musical performance. Thus, speech mode of drumming, signal mode of drumming and dance mode of drumming are all illustrative of African music as text. In sum, Agawu believes that African music is not always or exclusively music for life's sake, but also music for art's sake, because it can be functional and/or contemplative as well. It is not a text, but as text, because African music, either vocal or instrumental, possesses some textual and linguistic affinities. As it shall be discussed subsequently, the music of the Dagara also shares, in the context of the Dagara socio-cultural practices, these attributes or aspects of African music.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DAGARA SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICES OF THE DAGARA SOCIETY IN

BURKINA FASO

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter focus is placed on the socio-cultural practices of the Dagara people of Burkina Faso. It traces their origins, examines their worldview in terms of their beliefs and practices that shape their culture and correlates their kingship system with their socio-economic activities. In the main it answers the following specific research question: How does the Dagara kinship system permeate and fuel their socio-cultural life and practices?

2.2 Origins of Dagara people

The historical origin of the Dagara people in Burkina Faso bas been passed down over the years from generation to generation by words of mouth. Based on the historical researches conducted by some scholars, the argument that Dagara people as well as the *Mossi* and the *Gourmatché* etc. stemmed from the *Dagomba* ethnic group is undeniable. This argument was first stated by Delafosse backed by Rev. Fr. Hébert and confirmed by Mètuor Somda Nurukyor Claude, "inspired by a popular legend accounting Dagara origin, Mètuor Somda Nurukyor C., a historian came to this conclusion 'The results of our own inquiries confirm the hypothesis established by Fr Hébert. Indeed, all the Dagara from Haute-Volta (Burkina Faso) agree that they migrated from Northern Ghana"[9]. This assumption is scholarly probed by the above scholars who claimed that the Dagara migratory movement from Tamale, capital town of *Dagomba* upwards to Northern Ghana and Southern Burkina occurred

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[9] « ...Et s'appuyant sur une légende populaire qui explique l'origine des Dagara, l'historien Mètuor Somda Nurukyor C. conclut : 'Les résultats de nos propres enquêtes confirment l'hypothèse du Père Hébert. En effet, tous les Dagara de Haute-Volta se donnent comme origine la région nord du Ghana actuel.'» (Mukassa, 1986, p. 1)

" …And relying on a popular legend that explains the origin of the Dagara, historian Mètuor Somda Nurukyor C. concluded: 'The results of our own investigations support the hypothesis of Father Hebert. Indeed, all the Dagara of Upper Volta give themselves as origin the northern region of present Ghana."

during the time of *Dagombas*' empire and their territory expansion through tribal wars, invasions and conquests. In fact, without these artificial borders, the actual geographical location of Dagara in Burkina and Ghana would have been seen as a result of migration. The actual geographical location of the Dagara in Burkina Faso can therefore be seen as a result of the colonial boundaries. Indeed, these boundaries anachronically first moved the ancestors of the Dagara from Tamale to Upper-West region of Ghana. There, some of them remained in Ghana while others migrated to the South-western region of Burkina Faso towards the end of the 18th Century (Mukassa, 1986, p. 17). While other scholars are interested in tracing the historical origin and the migratory movement of the Dagara, Constantin Gbaane Dabire rather accounts of a number of reasons and factors of that historical migration of the Dagara community. According to him, the Dagara geographical mobility is motivated by the search of fertile lands for their subsistence, the fear of the great empires and invaders such as the *Ashanti,* the *Dagomba*, the *Djermas* and the colonial powers etc. As a matter of fact, they are strongly attached to their freedom and always want to enjoy their independence wherever they are (C. Dabire, 1983, p. 23).

Etymologically, the word 'Dagara' from 'Daa-gaara' or 'Dɛ-gaara' meaning an insurrectionist person refers to the Dagara's perpetual willingness to be free. This ethnosemantic interpretation suggests the ontological factor that may account for the perpetual migration of the Dagara not only from Ghana to Burkina, but within Burkina Faso as well. In fact, based on border demarcations, it is commonly believed that the Dagara from Burkina Faso all migrated from Ghana which is now considered as their cradle. However, it should be noted that some families, for almost the same reasons and factors mentioned above, migrated back to Ghana but still in good relationships with their kinsmen in Burkina. I have been told by my uncle the late Laurent Hien that my grandfather had migrated with his family to Koro (Ghana) due to the administrative oppression in the time

of De-nyuu a redoubtable administrative chief. They only came back to Haute Volta (Burkina) at the more peaceful times. These relationships across the border are strengthened by some practices. The kinship relationships and mutual belongings that prevail between Dagara of both countries over the years, indeed, ascertain this fact. There is for instance, a reciprocal solidarity through mutual visits and supports in good times and bad times between the two groups. Another evidence is socio-cultural in nature. In spite of the colonial borders and languages (French and English), the two groups of Dagara share the same socio-cultural practices, musical culture and language also called 'Dagara'. Thus, the Dagara also known as Dagaaba or Dagartis speak dagara or dagare. The word "Dagara" referring to Dagara people had been misspelled by western and foreign scholars. The English scholars have spelled Dagara or Dagaaba 'Dagartis' while the French scholars spelled the same words 'Dagari'. These spellings are wrong because they do not make sense as the word 'Dagara' to the people they referred to. That wrong spelling can be found in the following statement: "A number of research works done by western colonial masters, missionaries as well as ethnologists, sociologists and anthropologists acknowledge Dagari, or Dagartis, or Dagaaba as farmers, hunter and rearing breeders living in South–Western part of Burkina Faso and Northern part of Ghana in West Africa"[10] (Mukassa, 1986, p. 11). According to Constantin Gbaane Dabire (1983) the word 'Dagara referring to the people and their language at the same time is what J. Goody calls *Lo-Dagaa*. The terms 'Lobr' (*Loba* in singular) and *Wiile* respectively stand for *Lo-Dagaaba* and *Lo-wiili* in Goody's nomenclature. However, Dagara as an ethnic group in Burkina Faso encompass three main

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[10] «Tous les écrits des responsables politiques coloniaux, des missionnaires aussi bien que des ethnologues, sociologues et anthropologues occidentaux parlent des Dagari (Français), Dagarti (Anglais) et Dagaaba pour désigner un peuple d'agriculteurs-éleveurs et chasseurs vivant en plein cœur de l'Afrique de l'Ouest au Sud-Ouest du Burkina Faso et au Nord-Ghana.» (Mukassa, 1986, p. 11)
English translation: "All the writings of colonial politicians, missionaries as well as Western ethnologists, sociologists and anthropologists speak of the Dagari (French), Dagarti (English) and Dagaaba to designate a people of farmers-pastoralists and hunters living in the middle of West Africa in South-Western region of Burkina Faso and Northern-Ghana".

subgroups or subdivisions based on slight differences such as the tonal accent, the *Birifor,* the *Dagara-lobr* and the *Wiile*.

2.3 Distinctions among the subgroups of the Dagara people

This section distinguishes the three subgroups that constitute the Dagara ethnic group. That distinction is mainly about their similarities and differences as far as the language and the geographic location are concerned.

2.3.1 The *Wiile*

Etymologically "Wiile" is the substantive word from the Dagara verb 'wil' meaning to destroy or to deconstruct (Mukassa, 1986, p. 13). The word 'Wiile' from the verb 'wil' therefore refers to that category of Dagara ethnic group who deconstructed their settlements and migrated or moved away from their former dwelling place. Continuous migration for any reason is one of their major trends because they are not ready to cope with their brothers *Lobr* who seem to be very permissive culturally. In terms of temperament, the *Wiile* are quick tempered and are ready to take off their own lives whenever their dignity is compromised or threatened (*ibid)*. That quick temperament as it will be discussed later might also account for the proscription of the *lo-gyil* among the *Wiile*. In terms of cultural and linguistic practices, it is commonly believed that the *Wiile* are more faithful to their traditions than their brothers *Lobr* and *Birifor.* And it is based on their cultural faithfulness that they decided to move away from the *Lobr* who are more permeable to change "extremely jealous and protective vis-à-vis their cultural identity, the *Wiile*, claiming the ancestorship of the Dagara are very distrustful towards any cultural contamination even at the expense of separating from the permissive and open-minded *Lobr*"[11]. They also speak

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[11] « Très jaloux de son identité culturelle, et qu'il est l'ancêtre fondateur du Dagara, le *Wiile* s'est toujours replié sur lui-même pour ne pas être contaminé par les apports étrangers. Il n'hésitera pas à décamper loin de

dagara but they differ from *Lobr* because of the slight linguistic differences in tonal accent and in vocabulary discrepancies. For instance, they call the cat *ba-sɔɔla* while the *Lobr* call it *nyan-nyuo*. In Burkina Faso, Dano area is the geographical location of the majority of the *Wiile* who are also found in Legmoin, Gueguere and Djikologo areas etc. They constitute a minor portion of the population of Nyigbo in Piina village among the *Lobr*.

2.3.2 The Lobr

The word 'Lobr' (plural) or 'Loba' (singular) is coined from the dagara adjective 'lô' meaning 'loose' or 'not rigid'. The substantive word *Lobr* or *Loba* refers to the subgroup of Dagara who are considered to be as already mentioned too permissive by the brothers *Wiile* (Mukassa, 1986, p. 15). This permissiveness and naivety of the *Lobr* can be seen as a quality rather than a default in another context by another person or by the *Lobr* themselves. In that sense, the *Lobr* are much more open–minded, sociable and permeable to any change that enriches and enhances their cultural practices and identity. In that sense they borrowed a type of music and dance from the *Sissala* called *Lanwmɛ-guola*. The *Lobr* are mainly located in Nyigbo, Dissin, Koper, Zambo etc. They are also scattered in other places in South-Western region of Burkina Faso for so many reasons and factors such as the need of fertile land.

2.3.3 The Birifor

The *Birifor* to some extent are considered as a people with cultural hybridity due to two reasons mainly, the language and the cultural practices. There is no doubt that *Wiile, Lobr* and *Birifor* all speak *dagara* though with [a] slightly different intonations. But apart from

son frère qui veut pactiser avec les étrangers, toujours prêt à adopter les mœurs de ceux-ci et la nouveauté venue d'ailleurs »

« Very jealous of his cultural identity and sure of being the founding ancestor of the Dagara, a *Wiile* has always turned back on himself so as not to be contaminated by the foreign inflows. He does not hesitate to decamp away from his brother who wants to make a deal with foreigners and is always ready to adopt their manners and the novelty from elsewhere.

the language and certain socio-cultural practices, the *Birifor*'s cultural practices are so close to those of the *Lobi* who speak a completely different language called 'lobiri'. For instance, the *Birifor* dance and music are very similar to those of the *Lobi* especially the 'Buur' music and dance. The word 'Birifor' itself meaningfully expresses that cultural hybridity of the *Birifor*. Cultural hybridity in this context means cultural syncretism in which the *Birifor*'s culture can essentially be described as a fusion of the Dagara and the *Lobi*'s cultures. The *Birifor* speak the dagara although with different tonal accent but are culturally close to the *Lobi* in most aspects. C. Dabire (1983, p. 14) also acknowledges this hybrid nature of the *Birifor* in these terms, "The *Birifor* speak the same language as the Dagara (with an accent similar to the *Wiile*) but their customs are practically the same as those of the *Lobi*." The tonality and the shape of their xylophone for instance are similar to those of the *Lobi's* xylophone. "Birifor" is a combination of two words in *lobiri*. *Biir* means funeral and *'Fuor'* means greetings. Combined in one word, 'Birifor' literally means 'funeral greetings'. This semantic clue suggests the possible historical encounter and interactions between *Lobi* and *Birifor* or their respective ancestors. Some years ago, I have learned that the ancestor of the *Birifor* was married to a *Lobi* lady. Unfortunately, his father in-law died and he was absent during the funeral ceremony. After the funeral, he decided to go and 'greet the funeral'. And it was from there that he had been culturally contaminated and adopted. Finally, that encounter brought about that cultural hybridity of the *Birifor*.

But regardless of this semantic clue, *Birifor* consider themselves as true Dagara with the same authenticity as the *Wiile* and the *Lobr*, "though they inherited everything from the 'Lobi', especially so many social practices, the *Birifor* consider themselves as authentic Dagara in regard to their socio-cultural and linguistic practices."[12] However, there would

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[12] « Bien qu'ayant tout hérité des Lobi dans certains aspects de leurs pratiques sociales, les Birifor, au plan socio-cultural et linguistique, se disent Dagara.» (Mukassa 1986, p. 17)

not be any surprise if now or in future the *Birifor* based on this cultural hybridity or syncretism featuring their uniqueness tend to stand out as an independent group different from the Dagara and from the *Lobi* as well. Batie district can be considered as the home land of the *Birifor* even though they are also scattered all over the region especially in Diebougou, Nako and in the cosmopolitan city of Gaoua and vicinities. The awareness of all these three groups about their oneness does not only emanate from their linguistic and socio-cultural practices but also from their shared worldview and religious beliefs.

2.4 Dagara's Worldview

The Dagara's worldview as far as their religious beliefs and practices are concerned makes them respond to their daily situations the way they do. This worldview, indeed, is conceptualised through their myths, proverbs, tales, initiation ceremonies and nomenclature[13] etc. So many myths and tales in the traditional context account for the creation of human being called "Nisaal" meaning a 'human being with smooth skin'. Most of these tales and narratives[14] unanimously acknowledge that God created and established *Nisaal* after creating all the invisible and visible beings in the world. But one common myth of the Dagara specified the way *Nisaal* appeared on earth. His ontological appearance happened in two main forms, male and female. The male called 'Bɛ-yowle' came from the sky after a rain fall and the female "Nyaa-ziele" spurted out of a river. It is this original couple that gave birth to the multitude of the humanity. According to the agreement established between the couple, the male partner was responsible for naming the male born children while the female would take care of the female ones. Unfortunately for the woman, all babies were male. Then she complained prayerfully to the creator about her being disadvantaged. And God granted her girls to be named by her. "Dowlu" is the name given to

English translation: "Although they inherited from the *Lobi* some aspects of their social practices, *Birifor*, at the socio-cultural and linguistic levels, considered themselves as Dagara."

[13] Dagara names reflect their wisdom, philosophy and religious beliefs etc.

[14] Refer to annexes for the full tales and narratives.

the male children by man and "Bɛlu" is that given by the woman. These patronymic and matronymic names are still in use up to today and are some of the pillars of dagara identity as well. Finally, according to the Dagara, *Nisaal* is created by God in such a way that the Dagara mind is holistically shaped by the idea of God called "Naamwin" or "Mwin". Despite the multiplicity of Dagara's "divinities" or supernatural beings, they remain monotheist in essence as they believe in one God. That monotheist nature of Dagara traditional religion is pointed out by C. Dabire (1983) in these terms: "The monotheism of the Dagara is quite difficult to challenge despite the multitude and hierarchical set of their gods" (p. 228-229)[15]. He also acknowledges that Dagara religiosity is undeniable in a sense that, in their social life, there is no way for unbelief attitudes (*idem* p. 226).

2.4.1 Description of Dagara's pantheon

This description does not intend to be exhaustive regarding the number of gods within the Dagara religious system. It rather focuses on a sample of the main divinities with whom the Dagara usually interact through their religious beliefs and practices. Thus, the discussion is made up of three folds: The Supreme God, the nature gods and the lesser gods.

2.4.1.1 The Supreme God (Naamwin or Mwin)

Naamwin literally means 'King-God' and *Mwin* simply means God. *Naamwin* or *Mwin* is the Supreme God of the Dagara. They believe and confess their faith in *Naamwin* through proverbs and nomenclature such as *Mwin-be* (God exists). To them *Naamwin* exists but is too far away for them to interact with him directly without intermediaries. His power is expressed by these *dagara* names *AA–tuon-Mwin* (Who can defeat God?), *Mwin-ni-fâg*

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[15] « Le monothéisme des Dagara est difficilement contestable malgré la multitude des puissances spirituelles qui peuplent son univers ainsi que la hiérarchie qui les régit.» (Dabire, 1983, p. 228-229)
English translation: « The monotheism of the Dagara is difficult to challenge despite the multitude of gods or divinities and their hierarchical order"

(God is the power, the strength). He has right of death and life about everything even the death itself. He can be merciful, nice, and good as well as wicked when offended. Based on this 'theology', human beings rely on God in total and absolute obedience and fearful respect attitudes towards Him who providentially takes care of all creatures. Surprisingly in Dagara community, either at the individual level or at the community level there is no single official ritual or liturgy dedicated to the supreme *Naamwin* as it is about his representatives on earth. Is it because he is too powerful, invisible and too far away to be approached? The Dagara seem to have more fear towards these representatives than to the supreme God himself. In short, *Naamwin* is acknowledged as the Creator and the source of everything on earth and heaven. He is the most powerful of all existing things. He is omnipresent, omniscient and too powerful and far away to be approached. He is at the top of the hierarchy of the Dagara pantheon meaning Dagara's set of spiritual powers such as their nature gods and lesser spirits who actualise and visualise the presence of the invisible *Naamwin*.

2.4.1.2 Nature gods (*Tibɛ*)

The religiosity of the Dagara is expressed through the religious rituals and liturgical actions performed in honour not of the supreme God *Naamwin* but rather in honour of His 'disciples' and "employees" which are namely the nature gods. Those nature gods are the children of *Naamwin* or *Mwin*. It is *Naamwin* who created them and endowed them power. They reside in the nature or the environment of the Dagara. They have well trained people, such as the *Tegan-sob* (Owner of the territory) who takes care of them. Unlike *Naamwin*, they can be approached directly especially in the context of ritual performances. The nature gods have some human characteristics such as needs of food, drinks, crops and more specifically the fresh blood of animals. They are ambivalent in their reactions: they are kind to those who behave well and may provide them with good health, fecundity, prosperity,

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peace, protection. The search for peace (*'iamaaro*) is the most problematic issue in human interactions with *Tibɛ*. However, they can also be harsh and nasty to anyone who misbehaves. Sickness or death can be offenders' punishment. Their relationship with human beings is *do ut des* relationship that is a kind of 'give-and-take' relationship where they provide protection to human beings and expect from them sacrifices. The *Tibɛ* also known as *Mwimɛ* (small gods) are invisible creatures (*Bu-bɛ-nyɛri*) who may become visible creatures. More powerful than man, they are less powerful than *Naamwin* who monitors their power towards human being. The following section describes the most common natural gods of the Dagara's pantheon.

Tegan is the spirit of the village territory. The word "Tegan" means 'earthly crust' and is considered as the 'incarnation' of the spirit of a given village territory. *Tegan* is the powerful judge of all the livings on earth. That spirit of the village territory is materialised by a smooth stone fixed under a special tree called *Tegan-tiɛ* or into a shrub or *tuw-puo*. Every Dagara village or town has its own localisation of its *Tegan* spirit whose power is limited to the village boundaries. The unity and the protection of the whole village rely on its *Tegan.* The priest in-charge of *Tegan* cult is called *Tegan-sob*. That cult is the most public among the Dagara religious traditions because of its communal belonging. *Saa* and *Tegan* are the most formidable and fearful spiritual powers to the Dagara.

Saa refers to the spirit of rain or lightening. It is the natural god symbolised by the '*saa-da-wɛra*' which is crossly shaped. A trunk of wood pierced above its middle by two pieces of wood is planted into the ground around dumping ground of the house. These two perpendicular pieces of wood are carved out of a tree struck down by the lightening. This penetration by these pieces in a form of a cross symbolises the intercourse relationship between the male *Saa* and his female partner *Tegan*. To the Dagara, *Saa* and *Tegan*

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constitute a couple which in an appropriate time perform their conjugal duties for the good of the livings by providing them with their survival means such as crops, plants, herbs and trees etc., as a result of the contact between rain and earth.

According to the Dagara mythology, *Baa* (Spirit of the river) is where female ancestor came out from. Either it contains water or not, *Baa,* a powerful divinity is always active and effective. Drowning to death is the punishment *Baa* deals with recalcitrant people who offend him or misbehave. River (*Baa*), hills, mountains, special big trees such as *kankala* and bush etc. are the best dwelling places of the *Konton-bili* (dwarfs) or small *kontomɛ*. And this is the religious explanation related to the practice attached to the transport of a new xylophone: When transporting a new *gyil* (xylophone) across a river, one should symbolically perform a ritual on that new *gyil* before or after crossing the river. This ritual is meant to acknowledge the presence of any *konton-bili* in the area. *Tanw* which refers to hill or mountain is a sacred place that always inspires fear. Like the *baa, tanw* is one of the lovely dwelling places of the dwarfs.

2.4.1.3 Lesser gods (*Mwimɛ*)

Bawr-mwin is the spirit of initiation. It is the *Tiib* of trial and misfortune. *Bawr* essentially means 'trial' or 'misfortune' in a sense that *fo tɛri bawr* in dagara means 'you are unfortunate'. *Bawr-mwin*'s intervention area is the initiations context. *Dow-mwin* or god of fertility or household is invoked in the context of birth; because *Dowfu* means 'birth'. And *Dowfu* or reproduction is one of the most fundamental values of the Dagara. Family with many children is considered as a blessed family as these children, indeed, constitute the manpower for the family economic activities.

Kakuɔr-mwin is the spirit of farming or agriculture. A number of rituals are performed in honour of *Kakuɔr-mwin* before, during and after the farming season. The hoe symbolises the Dagara economy in general and the agriculture in particular.

Konton (singular) or *kontomɛ* (plural) are the gods of divination or prophecy. The priest in charge of them is called *bawr-buurɛ*. He or she interprets the messages of the *kontomɛ* to the person in need. The *kontomɛ* are sheltered in the house of the *bawr-buurɛ* while the *konton-bili* or small *kontomɛ* (dwarfs) (singular *konton-bile*) dwell in the bush. These gods play an indispensable role in human life as human counsellors and educators. All the secret knowledge about life, nature, invisible world etc. is revealed to human beings by them. Their ambivalent nature makes them harsh or kind depending on the context. For instance, according to a couple of myths, the Dagara ancestor received the knowledge on music and initiation from the *Konton-bili*.

The *sigra (singular)* or *sigri* (plural) is the spirit of protection. It is the individual god that introduces the human being into life, right from the pre-natal stage to his or her death. It identifies itself to the yet-to-be-born such a way that they become one flesh. Thus, anything happening to one automatically affects the other. Good relationship with your personal *sigra* is necessary for good health.

Kpiin or *kpimɛ* (plural) are the spirits of the ancestors or ancestral gods symbolised by "sticks" (*kpiin-daar*). They take care of the whole family and protect all the membership. For instance, the belief in the ancestral protection is expressed by this automatic gesture. Before drinking either water or any drink offered especially by an unknown or untrusted person, a Dagara will shortly perform a rite of libation which consists of pouring a drop of it on the ground to show an offering of the drink to his or her ancestors. Thus, the ancestor

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neutralises any eventual poison in the drink. These nature and lesser gods are not seen by the Dagara as direct intermediaries or mediators between them and the supreme *Naamwin*. All the rituals, either collective or individual devoted to them are meant for them solely. The number of *Mwimɛ* can never be exhaustive as any cosmic and cultural element can be taken as *Mwin* based on its spiritual performance and effectiveness. In that regard, so many lesser spirits can be acquired personally. They have their own specialisations like the nature gods and bear so many forms such as amulets, talismans etc. Like the nature gods these lesser gods continuously receive sacrifices from those they protect. They also give instructions about what to eat and what not to eat. They receive their power directly from the nature gods or *Tibɛ* and the *kontomɛ*. The act of pouring libation or spreading ashes in a squatting posture is the frequent religious attitude and posture of the Dagara. Furthermore, the oral 'text' of *Bawr* (initiation) is a comprehensive summary of the Dagara worldview or philosophy about human life course, life, death and cosmos etc. as rightly observed by Jack Goody. The myth of the *Bawr* is "the only extensive text of this kind to emerge from Africa, a long explicit systematised cosmological (Goody, 1972)**.** The *Bawr* text, indeed, sums up the story of the creation, the adventure of the founding ancestors of the Dagara tradition and culture (Dabire, 1983, p. 29).

2.4.2 The three stages of Life Course[16]

According to the Dagara, human life course encompasses three main worlds: the pre-birth, the earthly life and the departed worlds. The word *bi-gbamɛ* (singular *bigbaan*) refer to all virtual babies who are not born yet including sometimes some already born babies who still have some ties to where they are from. They all constitute the invisible world of the *Bi-gbamɛ* or the prenatal world. *Bi-gbamɛ tew* is where all the decisions are made by the

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[16] Human life course is to be understood in the perspective of the naturalists. In that regard, life course refers to the course of developmental changes or stages through which an organism passes. These developmental stages include pre-birth, birth, infancy, childhood, adolescent, adulthood and death etc.

babies. These incomplete human beings are given the faculty of reason by the Dagara. For instance, the sex is chosen and the in-born abilities are given by *Naamwin* at that stage. This therefore, determines the other subsequent stages. To the Dagara mentality, the birth stage is not the very beginning of life. Human adventure starts far before birth. Thus, to be born means to pass from the prenatal world to the world of the living or the actual world (Dabire 1983). Therefore, the birth stage is an important stage that requires much care and attentions: "The new-born who risks in coming to this earth, needs to be warmly welcome by the predecessors…" (Dabire, 1983, p. 43)[17]. The Dagara believe in the re-incarnation and that belief is expressed through some individual names: *Yuora* (Female), *Dɛr*, *Dɛvira*, *Dɛrbiɛ* (male) are names given to those who are believed to be born at least for the second time. *Dɛvira* for instance is someone who was born but died at a very early age and was reborn again to finally stay in the world of the living. This category of babies based on their instability are said not to want to stay. They are therefore classified as belonging to the prenatal world. The Dagara also believe that an ancestor may re-incarnate into a new baby from the same family.

The earthly life stage *(tew-zu nyo-vuuro)* starts from the birth instance where the Dagara consider the new born as a visitor or stranger (C. Dabire, 1983). *Saan kpɛ na dio* is a figure of speech for announcing the coming into the world of a new-born. The *bipiila* or new baby is a spirit in nature who is willing to settle on earth. A new-born to Dagara is always a mysterious being who needs particular care from his or her surrounding and relatives. Once introduced into the world after being born, human being becomes a 'traveller'; in a sense that the whole human existence is seen as travel from this earthly life to the world of the departed. Thus, life on earth is basically a preparation of life after death. Earthly life to the

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[17] « Le nourrisson (*Bi-gbamɛ*) qui risque sur la terre en abandonnant son milieu, a besoin de l'entourage de ses devanciers pour être bien accueilli et initié au monde terrestre de la vie.» (C. Dabire, 1983, p. 43)
English translation: « The infant (*Bi-gbamɛ*) who risks his life on earth by abandoning his environment, needs the care of his entourage and predecessors to be well received and initiated into the terrestrial world of life."

Dagara is migratory. Is this philosophy of life, a result of their perpetual migrations or any consolation about the tragic and inevitable death?

The Dagara as well as so many non-Dagara believe in life after death. Everyone after death will join his or her ancestors in *kpimε tew* or the world of ancestors. Thus, the deceased old man, on his way to join his or her ancestors, needs the help of the living through funeral rites as a *sine qua non* condition to reach the ancestors (C. Dabire, 1983). Because when you die, you don't go back to where you are from (*Bi-gbamε tew*), but you are heading straight forwards to where your ancestors preceded you (ancestors 'world). The funeral rite[18] which is so significant to the Dagara is a contextual display of the strong belief in life after death. To the Dagara indeed, life does not end with death; it rather constitutes a change of status of being and of mode of life. Therefore, to die means to move out from one world (earthly world) to another (departed world) (C. Dabire, 1983, p. 38).

2.5 Dagara Kinship System

Though the kinship system of the Dagara may share common features with other tribes across the world in general and across Africa in particular, several scholars and administrators have been challenged by its complexity. The then French colonial administration and the Burkina Faso administration nowadays as pinpointed by C. Dabire (1983) and Mukassa (1986) mistakenly distorted the Dagara cultural identity in such a way that it is now difficult but not impossible to correct this cultural and ontological error. A lot of factors account for that cultural confusion: The colonial egocentric tendency, the fear of the indigenous people about revealing their true identity and the bearing of the father's *Bεlu* as a result of the administrative imperialism and cultural influence from other cultures etc. These factors bring a plethora of confusion in the context of social interactions. For, wrong

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[18] I will go into details when dealing with musical functions in Dagara funeral context.

identity gives rise to wrong mediations and unsuccessful pleasantries among people. Based on Dagara nomenclature in relation to Dagara cultural identity, the full name of a Dagara involves essentially the *Dowfu* and the *Bεlu*. The other names such as Christian and Muslim names are complementary. Below is an example of the standard of a Dagara full name: *Naciεlε* Some Nedbebe Pierre, *kpanyanwnε ar-bile* is for instance my full name. *Naciεl̲ε* (*Dowlu*) refers to my biological father's clan name. Normally this should have been my surname. Some *(Bεlu)* is my matronymic name different from my biological mother's clan name or *dowlu*. Nedbebe (dagara name) is my Dagara name given at birth. Pierre is my Christian name given during my baptism ceremony. *Kpanyanwnε /Ar-bile* is an expected acknowledgement of my biological mother's *dowlu* etc.[19]. According to the Dagara mythology, *Dowlu* and *Bεlu* have origin, history and explanatory background.

2.5.1 The Dowlu or Yiilu (Clan)

The discussion on the two interchangeable dagara concepts "dowlu" and "yiilu" focuses on the large and restricted meanings as they refer to either clan or lineage based on the context in which they are employed.

'*Dowlu*' is a general term coined from the verb '*dow*' meaning to give birth. It does not connote only the idea of birth but also that of an ascribed status given to the one who belongs to a particular *dowlu*. In fact, *dowlu* in a larger sense means clan referring to a group of people claiming descent from a common and unknown ancestor. And that common ancestor may be putative, meaning animal. That is why in the world of animals every *dowlu* has an animal as its totem. A particular *dowlu* or clan may have several subdivisions such as the *kyε-ku-taa-dem* or allies. These clan ramifications occurred for so many reasons, namely in the context of marriage where members of the same clan historically were forced to allow

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[19] Some people may add their father's matriclan name (*maa-kum-yir*) and other names as well.

endogamy marriage due to a crucial challenge in getting ladies to marry. And that partially explains why the exogamic rule is not rigorously observed at the big clan level. The main *dowlu* and its subdivisions are almost 'the same thing' (*Bɛ za i-n bu been*) apart from the possible marriage in-between them. The following constitutes a sample of *dowlu*: *Naciɛlɛ, Dikpiɛlɛ, kpiɛlɛ, kusiele, Mɛtoman, Mɛtokazilɛ, Gbaanɛ, Puryiile, Bɛkuonɛ, Zagɛ, Kpanyanwnɛ, Tiere, Nayiile, Dafiɛlɛ, Waalɛ Bɛrnyiine, Bɛrwuolɛ, Nabɛwlɛ, Birfuorɛ, Ganɛ, Binbiile, Batanɛ, Kuwɛrɛ, Kusɛblɛ, kuole* etc. A number of these *dowlu* are identified with some elements of nature such as animals, birds etc. These animals and birds however, are in some cases different from those that are considered as totems. Thus, those representative animals' names are synonymous to the respective *dowlu* names. For instance, the *Kpanyanwnɛ* are designated by *kyɛ-wɛl kɔbr* in reference to the vulture which specialises in breaking bones. The *Naciɛlɛ* are represented by a white horse. The *saa* is the symbol of the *Kpiɛlɛ* and the *Kusiele* since the two clans with other allied clans constitute a bigger clan called *yor-waar* or *sabir-been lo paal* man (one single drop of rains can fill a river). However, *Kusiele* is particularly designated by the male donkey (Nadole *bonw-daa*). Moreover, all the *dowlu* have praises associated with them. Those praises are historically or mythically related to the prowess or bravery of the founding ancestor of the clan. In their short forms they are also used as synonyms of the *dowlu* to which they are attached. For instance, *Zawr-zon-motiin* is the short form of praise that refers to the *kpanyanwnɛ* clan as their ancestor exceptionally fed himself with black medicine rather than cooking food using flour. *Beyuon-zaw-vuo* refers to the *Naciɛlɛ* and their allied clans such *as Nayiile, Nabɛwlɛ Dikpiɛlɛ* clans etc. This short praise summarises the bravery story about their founding ancestor who escaped miraculously from his enemy who wanted to capture him from his house. However, a single *dowlu* may have more than one short form of praises as synonyms. These praises are judiciously brought on board by the *lawn-kon-bɛ* or praise

singers on the funeral grounds as the evocation or the development of them may effectively appease or console the grieved families.

In its narrow sense, *dowlu* and its associated praises also refer to the lineage as a descent group or segment of a clan whose ancestral line is well known and can be traced clearly. The members of *dowlu* as lineage are related by consanguinity despite the historical, geographical and cultural distance that may separate them. That consanguinity, indeed, is the underlying rule for exogamy at the lineage level. Therefore, at the father's side a member is either a father (*saa*) or a son (*bie*) or a brother (*yɛb*) or a sister (*yee-puule*). There is nothing else. The "female fathers" (*saa-powbɛ*) or "paternal aunts" are called *pure.* The grandfather and the grandson are considered as brothers. In fact, the number of *dowlu* and its subdivisions cannot be accurately determined compared to the *bɛlu* which are exactly seven (7) in numbers.

2.5.2 The *Bɛlu*

The Dagara mythology holds that originally there was an arrangement between the original couple considered as the Dagara ancestry. The arrangement was made in such a way that the *bɛlu* or matronymic names were given by the ancestral female partner to the female members while the ancestral male partner gave the *dowlu* or patronymic names to the male members. C. Dabire (1983, p. 125) summarises the explanatory myth as follows: "The mythical account of origins claims that it is the names *Bɛlu* given by the first woman to her daughters, while the *dowlu* are those given by the first man to the male descendants. The etymological explanations link them to different jobs reserved for women in *dagara* society" (C. Dabire, 1983 p. 125)[20]. "Bɛlu" etymologically derives from the dagara verb

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[20] Le récit mythique des origines prétend que ce sont les noms (*bɛlu*) donnés par la première femme à ses filles, tandis que les *dowlu* sont ceux donnés par les premiers hommes aux descendants mâles. Les

'*bɛl*' 'meaning' to look at or to observe. This etymological clue seems to be more relevant in relation to the etymological meaning of *Some* which is the first historical matronymic names of *bɛlu*. *Some* is a shortcut of this exclamation of the ancestral mother: *maa mi suomi dow…! m*eaning 'this baby girl is mine…!' with the connotation that she resembles her and belongs to her. The other six *bɛlu* are also meaningful about the female works in Dagara society: *Dabire* meaning *Daan-bir–yaarɛ* is the daughter who was assigned for the first day preparation of the millet beer called *pito* (*daa*). *Somda* refers to two words: *sim* connoting second day preparation of the *pito* and *da* meaning to buy or to sell. Thus, Somda is the daughter who succeeded Dabire for the second day of the pito processing and its selling on the third day. *Kpowda* derives from *kpowri* which is an onomatopoeia that imitates the noise from pounding nuts for oil processing. *Kambire* is coined from *Kambur* which is the residue after extracting oil from the nuts. She is the specialist of oil processing. *Meda* like Somda is a combined word from *mɛ* meaning to mould using clay and *da* meaning to buy or to sell. Meda is the potter. *Hien* is Dabire's daughter. Her name is a result of the complaint made by her mother Dabire who was always complaining about her siblings' gripe of her: *Bɛ-hiɛn-mɛ-na* meaning they hate me.

There are subdivisions within the *bɛlu*: Among the *Some* there is *baa-Some (*Some from the river*)* and *monyure-puo-Some (*Some from a specific grass called *monyure)*. The Dari encompass *Dabire, Somda-sɛbla* (Black *Somda*), *Somda-ziɛ* (red *Somda*), *Kpowda* and *Meda*. The *Kambir*e distinguish *Kambir-sɛbla* (Black *Kambire*), *Kambir-ziɛ* (Red *Kabire*) and *Kambuole*. *Hiɛmɛ* is two: *Hien* and *Dabi-Hien*. Like the *dowlu*, the *bɛlu* are associated with animals as Totems. Thus, the hare (*sonw*) represents the *Some*, the turtledove (*mwaam*

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explications étymologiques les rattachent à différents métiers réservés aux femmes dans la société *dagara* (C. Dabire, 1983, p.125).

English translation: « The mythical account of the origins claims that it is the names (*bɛlu*) given by the first ancestress to her daughters, while the *dowlu* are those given by the first ancestor to the male descendants. Etymological explanations also link them to different jobs reserved for women in dagara society.»

ziɛ) stands for *Somda*, and the vulture (*si-dum*) is *Hiɛmɛ* (*Hien* in singular) etc. *Bɛlu* are more spread across geographical, cultural and ethnic boundaries than the *dowlu* to the extent that all *Da* from *Dagara, Birifor or Lobi* are the same (*Bɛ za-i-n-been*). It is well noted that the lines from the palm of the left hand feature the mother side and those of the right hand depict the father's mother side as well.

In conclusion, *dowlu* and *bɛlu* are the two main pillars of the bilateral belonging of any Dagara and as such, they are worth of being features of the Dagara identity based on their ascribing nature. Therefore, they prevent the individual to become an isolated person. The third name however brings about specificity and singularity that distinguishes the person from the other members of the same family. Moreover, *dowlu* and *bɛlu* do not bear the same significance in terms of social functions. The *dowlu* always has supremacy over the *bɛlu* when these belonging pillars conflict; and by stating: *saa-yir-i-kpɛ* (Father's house is first), the Dagara underscores that primacy of the *dowlu* over the *bɛlu*. In that regard, Constantin (1983:132) argues that the primacy featuring the hierarchy between man (first born) and woman (cadet) is manifest through virilocal residence, patrilineal descent for the children, social responsibility more heavily for the family head who is always a man etc.

2.5.3 The Concept of *Yir* (House or Family)

"Tew" as a village is the biggest geographical and administrative entity in Dagara land. The borders of the villages are usually natural elements such as river, hill, mountain and farms etc. Every village encompasses several lineages or families. The only religious, administrative and political authority in charge of the village entity is the *Tegan-* sob. But, the most politically structured entities are the families as subdivisions of the villages. Every family possesses totems considered as putative ancestors and the interdiction of killing and eating them stands as taboo which is scrupulously observed by the family members. They

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share the same shrine which accommodates the spirits of the ancestors. The clan mottos (*yir suonfu or danu*) are praises to the family and the *lanw-kone* at the funeral ceremonies make good use of those praises. *Dowlu* and totems are interchangeably related in praising context. Indeed, the visible form of the *dowlu* or *yiilu* as lineage is the dagara family or house (*yir*). Every *yir* has at least two statuses: Either patrilineal or matrilineal status. In Dagara society, the patrilineal family (*saa-yir*) and the matrilineal family (*maa-yir*) are two important families to a Dagara. For either being alive or dead, the Dagara belongs to these indispensable families. Thus, during funeral celebration both families proportionally play an important role for the benefit of the deceased. Therefore, a strong attachment of both families especially the father's family (*saa-yir*) is a sacred value. Thus, a son will never arbitrary separate himself from his father by constructing his own house away from his father who is still alive. He can at least build a room on his own but within his father's compound. Even a married daughter is still attached to her father's family. That paternal attachment explains, to some extent why Dagara houses are so big indeed.

Within a family every member has rights and duties: The parents (father and mother) consider their children and their properties as their own. For instance, the first salary of a child belongs automatically to his father as well as the bride wealth of his daughter. And children should take care of their parents when they become old. Obedience and respect should be their concern always. For, "if the blood of the father flows through the veins of the children, it is the skin of the mother which shelters their bodies" (C. Dabire, 1983, p. 140). On the other hand, children have to be protected by their parents especially when they are still young. Their upbringing and education should be the concern of the parents. In the mother's family side, the maternal uncle and the nephew maintain good relationships through exchange of services and goods. The uncle usually gives an animal either hen or goat to his nephew for rearing. The benefit can be shared among themselves. The nephew as

a sign of gratitude may invite people into his uncle's farm (*ar-bile kɔb*) to help in either the preparation of the farmland or the weeding the farm.

2.5.4 The Descent Group System

According to the Dagara, marriage is a union between man and woman such that the children born to the woman are recognised as legitimate offspring of both partners. The main aim of marriage is the procreation of children and the creation of descent lineage as well. It is the rule of heterogamete that strictly prevails in the marriage process. Culturally, it is the bride price that constitutes the essence of traditional union. In other words, the non-payment of the bride wealth nullifies any union and the descent is traced otherwise. For instance, a child born out of an illegitimate union does not belong to his biological father's family but rather to his mother's family. Thus, his mother's father adopts him as 'brother' and transmits his surname (*dowlu*) and his matronymic name to him as well **(**Goody, 1967, p. 78-89**).** But if the union is legitimate the children belong to their biological father's lineage. Dagara kinship system, indeed, is very complex and requires acknowledgement of both families: those of the father and the mother. It appears through this acknowledgement an effort of balanced system and the desire to respect, to the maximum, the complementary role of man and woman in the procreation (C. Dabire, 1983, p. 128). This complementarity or co-operation is also manifest and effective as far as the upbringing, formal education and economic responsibilities are concerned.

The well shared bilateral descent system by all Dagara reveals some particularities. The kinship system peculiar to the *Wiile* is an absolute patrilineal system with the practice of *Bi-diru* which is very specific to them. The *Bi-diru* is an affiliation system in relation to the

inheritance process and procedures. It is that *Bi-diru* practice that remarkably differs them

from the *Lobr* and the *Birifor*. C. Dabire (1983) explains how the *Bi-diru* practice works [21]:

> This co-ownership of the child is explicitly emphasised in the Wiile
> custom of the exchange of first-borns (*Bi-diru*): the first born of a couple,
> after weaning, is given to his father's brother (paternal uncle) who
> becomes 'pater' (father) and assumes the entire responsibility of that
> child, while his biological father becomes 'paternal uncle'. The
> biological link is no more taken into account regarding that child; the
> biological father should never, in one way or the other, try to take back
> what he has already given. The term that refers to these exchanged
> children is quite revealing: *bi-diru* means children for usufruct. For, the
> uncle now became father, has full rights over all the properties acquired
> by that child" (p. 131).

Contrary to the *Wiile*, the *Lobr* practice a bilinear kinship system in a sense that they blend

patrilineal and matrilineal systems with a particular focus on the patrilineal system which is

the dominant system among the two. Apart from these slight differences, *Lobr* and *Wiile*

consider themselves as one and same Dagara. They are more close to each other than they

are to their brothers *Birifor*. C. Dabire (1983, p. 116) points out that the *Lobr* are classified

among the full double descent groups such as the *Yako*, *Daka* and *Ibo* in Nigeria; the *Lobi,*

Jâ, Gan in Burkina Faso; the *Chakale* of Ghana; the *Nuba* in Eretria; the *Nyika* and *Digo* in

Eastern Africa, the *Herero* in South Africa. As for their brothers *Wiile*, they practice

patrilineal system with complementary uterine group system as the *Tallensi*, *Nankanse*,

Kusase, *Builsa* in Ghana; the *Wolof* in Senegal etc. Today, the Dagara still practice the

double unilineal descent system but with a particular focus on the father's line in the context

of inheritance.

2.5.5 Inheritance system

From the above discussion, it can be noted that the linguistic distinction regarding the tonal accent and the descent system associated with the inheritance system constitute the major factors and parameters that differentiate the subgroups of the Dagara. Like the *Yako* from Nigeria (Lecture notes in sociology class), the *Lobr* like the *Fanti* traced their descent group patrilineally for the purpose of inheriting fixed properties such as farms, houses, shrines on one hand and on the other hand matrilineally for the purpose of transmitting movable properties such as cattle, wealth, poultry etc. The matrilineal inheritance of properties is mythically embedded. It once happened that a uterine nephew (*ar-bile*) surprised his maternal uncle as he was toiling under a blazing sun while his own sons having finished cultivating their plot, were peacefully resting under a tree. Indignant by this the nephew takes charge of the work of his uncle. The latter in gratitude bequeathed to him his moveable properties (domestic goods, money, crops, widowed etc.) before his death. It was this matrilineal inheritance of properties that mainly distinguished the *Lobr* and the *Birifor* from their kinsmen *Wiile*. However, C. Dabire (1983, p. 117) argued that that distinction gradually disappeared over the years and brought *ipso facto* the *Lobr* closer to the *Wiile* as far as the inheritance system is concerned. Thus nowadays, the inheritance of the movable properties from the mother's line has disappeared and the *Lobr* now inherit only from the father's side like the *Wiile*. The elder son inherits the properties of the father and manages them for the benefit of his younger brothers. But in case of dispute sharing may occur. Girls have a theoretical right because they do not have to take these properties to their husband's house. In Dagara society, there are non-kinship types of relationships such as friendship (*baalu, sɛnu, cenu),* pleasantry kinship (*dien-dien-bɛ*) etc. which also bear an undeniable social significance as the kinship ties. They also share the same implications of relationship pertaining to the kinship reality or phenomenon.

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2.5.6 Kinship Implications

"*Nisaal-i-n-yowr va gbɛr*" literally means 'human being is or resembles the foot of summer squash'. Summer squash, indeed, is a rampant plant that spreads its branches or feet (*va gbɛr*) to all directions. This plant and its ramifications are allegorically used to figure out or describe the Dagara relationships. In other words, a Dagara is essentially a web of relationships in the same way as the ramifications of the 'foot of summer squash'. And this remains true in such a way that at any interaction context, a Dagara will by all means find a relationship tie between him and other fellow Dagara. And that relationship implies and requires rights and duties from both kinsmen in terms of hospitality and solidarity.

In Dagara land, any stranger especially a Dagara stranger is always most welcome to any Dagara family in and outside the village. No matter where he is from, a Dagara is lucky to be found as a kinsman by his hosts. And that sense of hospitality requires absolute fraternity among members of the same *dowlu*. For instance, at the destination after a trip, a Dagara will automatically look for shelter in a family of the same *dowlu* as his own family left behind. And based on the mechanical solidarity of the village, the family host ought to warmly welcome the traveller who is no more a stranger, but a full member at home.

Dagara kinship system requires solidarity which has been institutionalised in so many ways by the society. Solidarity, indeed, is the first principle of fraternity among the villagers in general and the members of a family in particular. In that particular context there is a common saying that 'blood ties must speak louder than any other link', brothers are the best defenders of their sisters and vice versa. Thus, in case of dispute or quarrel between a family member and another person, family members have to support their brother regardless of whether he is right or wrong. This unconditional solidarity was more crucial and vital at the time of 'explanations by arrows' (*tɛ-taa-daar*) or vengeance when people were promptly

and easily killing one another for any reason. Furthermore, in that context of warfare, some precautions were taken for security purpose and one of these security measures was the scrupulous avoidance of grouping the family settlements in one place. In other words, the dispersed settlements of families were encouraged and even recommended in such a way that they could protect and defend one another in times of danger or attacks. It was therefore not advisable for a whole family to expose itself by living together in one place. For an enemy could kill a whole grouped family at once. That same attitude of non-regrouping is still observed up to date where it is no longer the arrows that are feared, but the bad spells (*lobie*). Thus, two brothers especially from the same blood will avoid sitting side by side in a gathering. In the same vein of solidarity, the father shares his 'fatherness' or paternity with his siblings, half-brothers, sisters, and his cousins. For all of them constitute the group of fathers of the children in the house. They all share the same rights and duties attached to their status as 'fathers'. The mother on the other hand does the same with the other women and her own family. Among the children there is a hierarchy of responsibilities based on age and on sex: In the absence of the parents, the elders are responsible in taking care of the little ones (*kpɛɛn mi i-n saa*). Their right of "elderness" also implies rights and duties towards their junior brothers and sisters. Thus, during meals always taken together, the elders must leave some of the food for the youngest to finish. Even boys are socially thought to be more responsible than girls (*dɛb bɛ tɛr puri-ɛ*). Though it is the rule of exogamy that is observed, the ethnic endogamy and the geographical homogamy are preferred. A daughter will therefore avoid a marriage that will take her far away from her family, especially her mother who may need her help in time of sickness. Moreover, solidarity in Dagara society is more obvious during funeral ceremonies. In fact, the attendance of funeral celebration in one's family (*saa-yir-kuor*) is extremely compulsory. In that sense if for example a *kpanyanwnɛ* dies far away from his hometown, the first

kpanyanwnɛ family encountered as they are carrying the dead body will retain the corpse and organise the funeral service after informing the original family of the deceased.

In conclusion, I perfectly agree with C. Dabire (1983, p. 197) who rightly observes that politics and economics in Dagara society are subject to their kinship system to the extent that the question of authority (political), that of economic collaboration as well as that of justice and self-defence are effectively solved only through kinship the very right place of consciousness of solidarity.

2.6 Economic Institution in Dagara Society

The Dagara people mainly rely on farming and breeding for their vital subsistence. According to Mukassa (1986, p. 11) "most of the written materials by the western leaders and scholars, colonial leaders, missionaries, ethnologists, sociologists and anthropologists dealt with Dagari (French) and Dagartis (English) as farmers, breeders and hunters leaving in the middle of West Africa, precisely in South-Western region of Burkina Faso and Northern region of Ghana". The Dagara are localised in the savannah area with a tropical climate and two main seasons in a year, rainy season from May to October and dry season from November to April approximately. The rainy season, indeed, is mainly characterised by rain fall, fresh grasses, and water in the rivers and farming activities etc. Sometimes, the rarity of rain becomes a big challenge to farmers. The rain fall in that area is an important factor for fruitful farming activities. In the dry season on the other hand, the rivers are totally dry. That period is featured by trade, rest, leisure and festivals celebrations etc. This is the time where funeral grounds, markets places and 'pito' spots are well attended by men and women, by the youth and the children. It is the most favourite moment for so many young men to travel into neighbouring countries such as Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in search of incomes.

The leadership or authority of the head of the family is well structured and effective through his economic commitment. In fact, as owner of the house, he is the one in charge of the entire family in taking care of all the members. He should provide them security, protection, food, education and initiation into life etc. A boy will be a disciple of his father while a girl a disciple of her mother as far as farming and household activities are concerned. And this constitutes an integral part of the education and training procedures. The purpose is to train them to be in future, responsible men and women whose entire life and reputations will honour the family and promote its reputation in the society and beyond. Children education in general is a shared responsibility in Dagara society: *Bie bɛ tɛr sob e* (A child does not belong to anyone). Moreover, the division of labour features the complementarity between husband and wife. All the hard works belong to the man, weeding of farms (*pire- cɛb*), ploughing (*kɔb*), harvest (*kyi-pɛlo*). His farming tools are mainly the hoe (*kuur*), the pickaxe (*lɛr*), machete (*so-kpɛɛn*) etc. Women clear out the farms (*vaara*), sow (*buru*) transplant (*sɛlo*), harvest comestible leaves (*mwab*), carry the harvest home etc. Household and cooking activities constitute traditionally the first duties of women. The children are important help to their parents. And this is one of the social factors of polygyny in Dagara society. For the more a family disposes plentiful manpower the more plentiful is its production. Nowadays, hunting has become less relevant due the scarcity of bushes. For instance, one of the reasons why hunting is becoming rare is that, most of the bush areas are now villages and farming settlements. Moreover, craft works constitute areas where the Dagara specialise most in lucrative activities such as carving, smithy, pottery, wickerwork etc. for personal incomes. Apart from the millet selling which is culturally forbidden, other privately-owned products such as groundnuts, yams, vegetables, potatoes, cattle and poultry etc. are important sources of income. Generally, aside this occasional trading, the Dagara is

not naturally inclined to trading business compared to other people such as the *Mossi*. Some Dagara ventured in that field, but failed miserably as a result of the kinship ties[22].

2.7 Dagara Social Organisation and Political Institution

The unifying factor of Dagara society is less their chieftaincy system than their kinship system. The only political leader at the village level as already stated is the *Tegan-sob*. His political authority is embedded in his religious performances as the invested priest of the *Tegan. Tegan-sob* etymologically means the 'owner of the land or the village territory'. He is the one who grants the plot of land to any migrant for economic exploitation and house construction purpose as well. However, any attribution of piece of land requires a specific rite (*Nɛb-zie*) to be performed by the *Tegan*-sob. This rite is meant to appease the spirit of the land and therefore God the creator himself. C. Dabire (1983) describes in detail that process of *Nɛb-zie*[23]:

> "Whoever requests a piece of land for an economic need, begins by giving a symbolic offering to the *Tegan-sob*: a white hen and a four-legged animal *'duw-sɛbla'*, usually a young ram. *Tegan*-sob makes the sacrifice to the spirit of the land with the hen, then -leads the postulants into unoccupied ground. His back turned to the already occupied plots, he indicates with a gesture of the hand the part to occupy. It is the rite of *'Nɛb-zie*' which consists of a march ahead of the *Tegan*-sob followed by

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[22] Some of the relatives, based on the kinship ties with the shop sellers, do not pay the money of the items taken from the shop, on one hand. On the other hand, the salesmen themselves for the same reasons dare not reclaim their money back.

[23] Celui qui demande un lopin de terre pour un besoin économique, commence par donner une offrande symbolique au chef de terre : une poule blanche et un animal à quatre pattes '*duw-sɛbla*', généralement un jeune bélier. Le *Tegan-sob* fait le sacrifice à l'esprit de la terre avec la poule, puis conduit les postulants dans un terrain inoccupé. Le dos tourné aux surfaces déjà occupées, il indique d'un geste de la main la partie à occuper. C'est le rite du '*Nɛb-zie*' qui consiste en une marche en avant du *Tegan-sob* suivi de ses assesseurs, les demandeurs de terrain ferment la marche. Tout en marchant il indique les points de repères de ce qu'il concède. Les bornes limitrophes sont souvent les arbres, les crevasses, les monts, les cours d'eau ou les terrains déjà mis en valeur. Tous les éléments naturels (cours d'eau monts, arbres fruitiers) suivent la règle du droit d'usage de la terre.

Pour construire une maison c'est la même procédure qu'il faut observer pour avoir le terrain. Seul le rite change. En matière domaniale, après le sacrifice à la terre, le *Tegan-sob* accomplit le rite du *cɛ-tan* ou *cɛ-tan-bow-nuor* : Le jour fixé pour le démarrage des travaux de construction, le *Tegan-sob* se rend sur les lieux avec son conseil. Le premier, il se munit d'une daba (instrument aratoire), donne trois coups dans la terre. Puis avec la même daba, il prend de la terre 'tan' sorte de mortier apprêté pour l'élévation des murs et la dépose à l'endroit des premières fondations. Par ce rite, il a délivré le permis de construire.

his assessors, the land seekers end the queue. While walking he indicates the landmarks of what he concedes. Boundaries are often trees, crevices, mountains, streams or land already developed. All natural elements follow the rule of the use of the land. To build a house follows the same procedure as the acquisition of land. Only the rite changes: After the sacrifice to the spirit of the land, the *Tegan*-sob completes the rite of the *cɛ-tan* or *cɛ-tan-bow-nuor*: The day fixed for the start of the construction works, the *Tegan*-sob using a hoe (tillage instrument), gives three shots in the prepared material for the construction of walls, takes off some portion with the hoe and deposits that portion at the very place of the first foundations. By this rite, he issued the building permit."

Once the plot of land is given, it is forever unless the beneficiary has committed a serious offense that may *ipso facto* cause him an immediate expulsion from the village. The authority of the *Tegan*-sob is highly respected because of his capacity to curse in the name of *Tegan* which is one of the most feared and redoubtable spiritual powers to the Dagara. His words are effective and authoritative especially when speaking "in persona *Tegan*". He is in charge of the integrity of the whole village and its internal and external security. This political and religious authority also gives rise to his judicial authority. For the whole population relies on him to settle the inevitable conflicts among the inhabitants. *Nyow-ceni naa-yir* means to report somebody to the chief or to take somebody to court in the traditional setting especially in the context of conflicts, adultery or fornication in the bush, stealing and public scandals etc. And in conflict situation, the *Tegan*-sob inflicts onto the culprit a fine to pay proportionally to the offense committed. To implement the traditional law, his armed forces are malediction and the youth of the village are at his disposal. However, *ku-bɛr sob* (Someone who is not permissive) is the accredited person who is in control of how fair or unfair the *Tegan-sob* manages his religious, political and judicial authority.

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I can therefore conclude that Dagara society is an egalitarian society because an absolute authority does not exist any way. Authority is a shared reality to the extent that even the *Tegan-sob* himself is under control and usually treated as an ordinary person among others in the village. C. Dabire (1983, p. 205) also observes that authority at the village level functions well through the exercise of family authority. Succession as far as authority is concerned is based on age (*Danw nyɛ caa*). Thus, the right of primogeniture is an important criterion or principle of hierarchy or order of importance. Likewise, sex is also another principle of primacy such that a woman is cadet to a man always and everywhere.

To conclude, I insist that the chieftaincy system beside the *Tegan-sob*'s authority in Dagara society today is an inspired adoption from other surrounding cultures and sometimes under the instigation of the modern administration. In other words, apart from the little amount of political and administrative authority into the hands of *the Tegan-sob*, the Dagara initially and culturally do not have any structured or centralised chieftaincy system as the Ashanti of Ghana. And so many scholars such as Goody (1962, p. 3) are unanimous about this absence of centralised political system in the Dagara social organisation, "The people with whom I am dealing with have no centralised political system and settlements do not automatically group themselves into larger territorially defined units that one can call a society or tribe." C. Dabire (1983, p. 206) also explains this innovative centralisation of political and administrative power in the following terms, "the colonial and actual organisation of Dagara land into districts and regions is a complete innovation hardly incorporated by the Dagara and the village chiefs especially when they do not belong to the royal family that is the family of *Tegan-sob* are more or less considered as interlopers whose authority is questionable and challenged." To C. Dabire (1983), if the Dagara had never been easily conquered by the invaders, it is not because they were extraordinarily powerful but because

they did not have any single chief who might be captured to the extent to force *ipso facto* his subjects to subjugate.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter aimed at an overview of the socio-cultural nuances of the Dagara people of Burkina Faso in which I have discussed their origins, worldview, kingship system, and their socio-economic activities. I have mainly tried to identify how similar they are to their kinsmen in Ghana yet bring out their uniqueness based on their geographic location. In regard to Bronislaw Malinoski's biological functionalism and A. R. Radcliffe Brown's structural functionalism I can conclude that the sustainability of the Dagara socio-cultural system and practices are fuelled and cemented by their kinship system. The kinship system ties all the social institutions through which the Dagara meet the physiological needs. Indeed, the Dagara people economically are mainly farmers and breeders. Geographically, they are located in the south-western region of that country around the border line between Burkina Faso and Ghana. Historically, they split from the *Dagomba* of Yendi in Ghana and gradually migrated through the now Upper-West region of Ghana. Culturally, their kinship system is the basic foundation and the most prominent factor of their entire social life. In that regard, their social, political, economic, religious and educational organisations are strongly embedded in that kinship system.

Their worldview and their kinship system constitute the main principles of their social life and organisation. They are basically monotheist and believe in one Supreme God (*Naamwin*) whose representatives on earth are the nature gods, the lesser gods and the spirits of their ancestors. *Naamwin* is the creator of the universe including human being. But the Dagara relationship with the representatives of *Naamwin* is more concrete and direct compared to that with *Naamwin* which is simply evocative. They also attach a dualistic

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conception and gender-based perception to any related couple of elements usually in reference to the abiding antithesis between man and woman: *Saa* (male) and *Tegan* (female), *gyil-daa* (male) and *gyil-pɔw* (female) etc. A Dagara as a human being is a web of relationships belonging mainly to two families within the double unilineal system with a major focus on the father's line as far as the descent and the inheritance systems are concerned.

The village protected by the *Tegan*, the spirit of the land, is the biggest geographical and administrative entity under the authority of the *Tegan-sob* who is at the same time the priest, the leader and the judge of the village etc. But his authority is strongly related to his religious status as priest. In Dagara land, the village, indeed, is a set of different families (houses) which are the symbols of the *dowlu* or lineages. These families are the very places where the social institutions are more concrete and effective. Hospitality and solidarity are the most expressive forms of the kinship ties in the village in general and in the family in particular. Dagara society is an egalitarian society where authority shared by the *Tegan-sob*, the village elders and the family heads at different levels is neither centralised nor well structured. And this is so true that in politics and business namely the Dagara are really gauche as a result of their philosophy or mentality in relation to politics and business.

CHAPTER THREE

DAGARA PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore the philosophy of music-making among the Dagara people of Burkina Faso and the extent to which performances of their various musical genres are defined and regulated by particularities. That philosophy, indeed, embraces their perception, understanding and the aesthetic expressions of the music. Alan P. Merriam, Robert Kauffman and J.H. Nketia, argued that 'aesthetics' concept becomes more meaningful when reinterpreted in cultural context rather than from a western ethnocentric viewpoint. In that sense, Dagara's perception and understanding of their musical aesthetic conventions undoubtedly become comprehensive and comprehensible when they are contextually approached in the cultural context of the Dagara. For, according to Nketia (1981), music derives its meaning from culture. Furthermore, the study makes a descriptive inventory of the various musical genres out of which three will be the focus of the study. Finally, it describes the construction of musical instruments regularly associated with *Bɛwaa, Bawr-binɛ* and *Ko-gyil* performances. In short, the discussion will be driven by the following double question: What is good music for a Dagara in Burkina Faso?

3.2 Ethnosemantic analysis and native category

 "What is the Dagara word or concept for music?" This is the question to two educated Dagara in February 2019: Rev. Fr Thadée and Rev. Fr Nestor. The former has a musical background while the latter is an expert in translating any French concept or word into dagara sometimes humorously. And from facial expressions I could see the embarrassment that question actually caused them. Finally, *yielu mwɛb* had been the answer given by Fr Nestor. This expression was an attempt since the respondent himself seemed not satisfied with his own answer, as *yielu mwɛb* is so restrictive and exclusive in scope. Fr Thadée did

not make any attempt. That difficulty in conceptualizing the music of the Dagara, confirmed my assumption that no single word in Dagara can capture the concept of music as this is the case of many African music. However, the absence of a single vocabulary or concept for music does not necessarily mean the absence of music reality. For it is possible to understand and explain the holistic concept of music through different terminologies or concepts. What do the Dagara people say about their music? This is the question that the following discussion tries to address in examining how the Dagara perceive their music and what understanding does this perception provide.

3.2.1 Music and human senses

Dagara's perception of their music refers to the psychological approach of the music based their human senses. In fact, sense perception appears to be an indispensable basis for musical aesthetics as well. In that regard, so many sense verbs or words in Dagara language are meaningfully informing and instructive.

Tô (verb) or *tob* (noun) means to touch. A xylophonist may ask another xylophonist playing the gyil: *Wan i tô kaa ɛ kob*: this literally means, 'let me touch it and give back to you or let me play and give back to you'. In this context, the musical instrument is touched to test it. Thus, the above dagara expression not only insists on the sense of touching, but also on the interrelation between both senses: touching and hearing. In that sense, the player just wants to try and see which means touching to hear and appreciate the musical sound produced by the instrument. Obviously, here 'to hear' and 'to see' are semantically synonymous, chronologically subsequent to the sense of touching, and intentionally suggest the same result of appreciation: *I mwɛ nyɛ* (let me play and see or let me try it…).

Nyɛ (verb) *or nyɛb* (noun) is the *dagara* word for "to see" or "sight". Most of the concepts or expressions usually end with the suffix "*nyɛ*" which does not necessarily and literally mean 'to see' in its proper sense. Depending on various contexts and words association, the suffix *nyɛ* bears different meanings and is frequently associated with other sense verbs such as to touch, smell, to taste, to hear and even to look*: tô-nyɛ* (touch and see)*, nyuuri-nyɛ* (smell and see)*, linm-nyɛ* (taste and see)*, bɛrwo-nyɛ* (hear and see)*, gyir-nyɛ* (look and see) etc. In that context of words association, the suffix *nyɛ* specifically refers to the concept of appreciation (to appreciate) or of understanding (to understand). For, we only appreciate well, once we understand perfectly. Thus, the musical term for appreciation and understanding is *nyɛ* which is a sense word for sight or to see. Therefore, the Dagara touch in order to see, smell in order to see, taste in order to see, look in order to see, and finally hear in order to see whether it is bad or good. In other words, they see all with their body eyes, hand eyes, tongue eyes, nose eyes, ears eyes and even their eyes eyes.

Limnu refers to the sense of taste. But the idea of taste is best conveyed by the concept *miilu. Miili* (verb) from *miilu* (noun) is the culinary term for cooking food by adding ingredients in order to improve on the taste of the stew *(miili ziɛr).* That same term best expresses the concept of improvisation through which the performer adds some 'ingredients' to his performance which metaphorically can be considered as the *ziɛr* (stew or soup).

Like the above word *nyɛ*, *nyuu* (noun) from *nyuuri* (verb) also contextually ends some expressions and sentences mostly where both words 'hearing' and 'smelling' are in direct relation. For instance, to point out the avidity of someone, the Dagara would say: *U bɛ wona bon nya nyuu zie i,* that is, he or she does not 'hear' this or that thing smelling at all without being moved. In other words, he or she cannot control himself or herself in view of

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something. In that sense, music can 'smell' in term of sounding in such a way that its listener might be irresistibly attracted. To the Dagara, therefore, a sound can smell in term of getting to the ears.

The verb *bɛrwo* (to hear) is semantically much more comprehensive than the other sense verbs. It means to perceive by hearing. Hearing, indeed, is the most suitable human sense for music appreciation. *Tɛr-toob* which literally means "to have ear" in the sense of having good hearing, is the most expressive concept for musicianship. For someone who is said to have "good ears" in a musical performance context is someone whose musicianship is very high. The sight perception does not bear much important in music-making. The *gyil* player does not look at the *gyil* keys before playing. And this is so true that among the *gyil* players some are even blind persons. In addition to the human senses, the Dagara language is another important source for music perception and understanding, both of them being significant factors for the establishment of aesthetics conventions in Dagara musical tradition. I can conclude from the above discussion that the Dagara's best human sense for music appreciation and understanding is the sight. In other words, they appreciate anything including music through the sight sense which is not necessarily physical. Thus, sight bears different meaning in nature: it may be corporal, tasty, aural, visual and nasal etc. However, their favourite sense for musicianship is undoubtedly the sense of 'aural' hearing to the extent that musicianship is tributary to the sense of hearing.

3.2.2 Evaluation of musical expressions and processes

In Dagara society, vocal music through songs seems to be the most significant aspect of Dagara music, as the audience is attracted by the messages conveyed by the texts of the songs. This significance of vocal music is further high lightened by the social significance of *gyil* being personified and endowed with human voice by the Dagara. In that sense, *gyil*

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sounding or surrogacy is no more perceived as such, but as singing and can therefore be classified by the Dagara as vocal music. It is effortlessly verifiable that most of the Dagara musical terminologies or concepts are derived from the *gyil* music in particular and the instrumental music in general. The following paragraphs analyse a sample of these concepts or expressions for the purpose of abstracting the philosophy of music embedded in them.

In Dagara society, in general, all musical instruments 'cry' or 'weep' apart from the voice that sings (*yiele*). *Kon* or *kone* is the *dagara* verb referring to 'to cry' and 'to weep'. But in musical context, it means sound or pitch. *Mwɛ* or *mwɛb* meaning to strike, to beat or to play is another concept for percussion. According to the Dagara, crying or weeping only occurs when someone or something is beaten or hit. The *gyil* which also falls under the instrumental music cries as well. *Gyil mwɛb* refers to the playing of *gyil*. *Mwɛ* which is derived from the substantive *mwɛb* means to beat, to hit or to play. It applies to the articulation of sounds in any instrument used for making music among the Dagara. *Mwiɛrɛ* which means player is used as suffix to the local names of the musical instruments to designate the players of those instruments. The Dagara, thus, speak of *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* (xylophone player or xylophonist) or *kɔ-mwiɛrɛ* (gourd-drummer). *Mwɛ gyil* (to play the *gyil*) or *gyil Mwɛb* (playing of *gyil*) literally means to strike or to beat the *gyil* like a child. This expression for *gyil* playing clearly shows the percussiveness of the *gyil* music. Moreover, the analogy from the ordinary life is obvious and direct: when a mum beats her stubborn child, that child evidently cries. Likewise, when the performer 'beats' the keys of the *gyil*, they cry as well. And from that perspective, a *gyil* that 'cries' or 'weeps', is a good one or a sounding one: *A gyil kon* or *a gyil kone ni vla* (The *gyil* is crying well or the *gyil* is sounding good). *Gyil* also cries because it is believed to have a voice.

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Gyil Kɔkɔr (The voice of the *gyil)*: This expression clearly personifies the *gyil*. Indeed, the Dagara have attributed to the *gyil* a voice in the likeness of human being. Therefore, *gyil* has a voice and can also talk: *a gyil yɛr-bi*e, that is, the words of the gyil. *Fu won na gyil na yela*? Have you heard what the *gyil* said? In that sense, to the late Bɛrgyirɛ, indeed, *gyil*, like human beings talks or speaks: *Maa bɛ nu yel e, gyil bir-u yel*: 'It is not I who said, but the *gyil*'. In other words, 'this is not my words but those of the *gyil*'. I can therefore conclude with Dankwa (2018) that the *gyil* possesses a language like the talking drum *atumpan* of Ashanti in Ghana, and can speak or deliver a message as well. "In anthropomorphic terms, the Dagaaba speak of the *gyil* as having a voice (*gyil Kɔkɔr*, i.e. xylophone voice), able to sing (*yieli*) songs, and also speak (*yɛru).* For, those who are more familiar with the *gyil* language, 'the *gyil* has been substituted for spoken verses where human speech has not been reverent enough, or at distances greater than that which human speech itself can cover (Dankwa, 218, p. 63). In the same vein Kuutiero (2006, p. 110) also acknowledged the language of the gyil and its poetic nature. According to him the *gyil*, a speaking instrument, has its own grammar and syntax similar to those of a poet and its language mainly grounded in the spoken language of the Dagara.

Gyil Piiru or *damnu* as warming up or prelude appears as a pigsty or mess performance. But in reality, it is like a warming up of a symphony orchestra in the purpose of seeking the tonality of the instrument. Secondly, the player through that performance wants to make sure that the instrument is well fit enough. And this is the reason why some players, when testing the instrument, spontaneously adjust the keys of the *gyil* to pair them well with their corresponding gourds for better sound production. It is a kind of prelude where the player and eventually the singers agree with the tonic key. For instance, in funeral music context, the *gyil* player and the *lanw-kone* need to agree with one another about the suitable tonality before the core of the performance. *Piiru* or *damnu* section is also where the player displays

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his or her virtuosity beforehand by playing some short well-known melodic patterns enriched by his exceptional playing techniques and skills. It is an integrated part of the *tchɔmb*.

Gyil tchɔmb means to play the *gyil* in *crescendo* or/and *decrescendo* through which the player shows his or her playing skills, techniques and virtuosity through his sense of harmony and rhythm. It is similar to *gyil damnu* (shaking of *gyil*) which simply consists of testing the *gyil* in order to know its sounding quality. *Gyil cɛb* means to start, to begin with or to introduce, especially in the context where the *gyil* player or a leading voice has to introduce the song or the piece for the rest of the chorus or the ensemble to pick up. *Cɛ* from *cɛb* and *kpa* from *kpab* all refer to the starting point or beginning of a piece. However, in the context of *gyil* duo performance, *cɛb* refers to the melodic part played by the supporting *gyil* player and harmonised by the lead *gyil* player. Another term for the accompaniment of the supporting *gyil* player in another performance context is *''lenu*. The same relationship occurs between two *lanw-kone* during funeral ceremony where the *ciɛ-ciɛrɛ* (supporting *lanw-kone*) and the main *lanw-kone* interact in call-and-response way. But, on a bigger level, both of them in regard to the crowd surrounding them constitute the couple of 'callers' to the crowd seen as the group of 'answerers' or audience members. Among the two *lanw-kon-bɛ*, the *ciɛ-ciɛrɛ* or supporting *lanw-kone,* though he is less important, always takes the lead of the main *lanw-kone*. The following statement by Mathias Somda, a virtuoso *lanw-kone*, confirms that structure: "*A ciɛ-ciɛrɛ nu mi de niw ɛ a konkone tuur.*" The same thing happens *in nuru-loba* context where the female soloist is called *ciɛ-ciɛrɛ* and the chorus called *sowsowbɛ* (Those who answer). In the *lanwni* context, *Cɛb* and *''lenu* are similar in regard to the role played; because all is about accompaniment. But out of that context, they are totally opposite in meaning: *cɛb* implies 'main' and *''lenu* connotes the

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idea of accompaniment. Moreover, *cɛb* is more appropriate for vocal performance and *'lenu* is more specific to instrumental performance.

'Lenu (Accompaniment) simply means accompaniment, going along with or following. All these concepts convey the idea of accompaniment. The following metaphoric explanation of the concept *'lenu* given by Anaclet Meda is very meaningful of the ideas of harmony, polyphony and rhythm as far as Dagara instrumental music is concerned: "*A sob nɛ na 'lene a gyil a, u mi tuuri a ciɛ-ciɛrɛ, mwiɛra gyil bie nɛ a ciɛrɛ na mwiɛra. A ciɛ-ciɛrɛ mi cere na ɛ u tuur, mɛ nibɛ a yi na lanw lo sor a; u bɛ tɛr sor kuu zorɛ i, bii cen zuo u bɛrɛ.*" (Ferdinand Hien, 2016: 74). With that semantic connotation, the word *ganu* is more synonymous to *'lenu* to the extent that *'lenu* and *ganu* beyond the simple fact of accompaniment appear as the Dagara favourite concepts of harmony, chords or pitch simultaneities. Though it has a clear pattern, the *'lenu* is also improvisatory. When a solo player is performing, his left hand constantly plays the accompaniment while his right hand plays exactly the melody as it is in piano playing. When playing in *duo*, the main player plays constantly the melody while the second player plays the accompaniment.

Another harmonic concept is *lanw-loba*. The concept of *lanw-loba* (falling together) and close to it, *lo-di* or *de-taar* (to accept one another or to agree with one another) are generic terms referring to the concept of synchronisation in orchestral performance situation such as the *gyil* ensemble which include *kuɔr* (drum) and *kpawru* (time-line). Among the two *gyile* (*lobri* and *dɛgaar*), it is commonly shared that the *lobri* or *lo-gyil duo* depicts the most perfect harmony and polyphony on one hand; and on the other hand, the most complex rhythm in Dagara musical tradition (Mukassa, 1976, p. 40, Ferdinand Hien, 2016). *Lanw-loba* is the concept that best suggests the idea of rhythm. Other attributes such as *pawr* (fast) and *bɛl-bɛl* (moderately) express more the idea of tempo mark than that of the rhythm. The

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expression *mwiɛr zarɛ* describes the anarchic and speedy play of a particular instrument player. *Varɛ gyil* (an exaggerated loud playing of *gyil*) also connotes the idea of non-aesthetic performance. It describes the exaggeratedly sound production on the *gyil* by the player who strikes the keys strongly by over lifting up the beaters. It is a non-aesthetic expression that depreciates this type of performance. *Tchore* is more related to dance where the dancer who *tchore* completely goes off rhythm and tempo. *Mwiɛr zarɛ*, *varɛ gyil*, and *tchore* are non-aesthetics concepts referring to bad performances.

Kpawri (verb) from *kpawru* (substantive) refers to the time-line of the supporting *gyil* player who plays a regular pattern by means of sticks or the wooden parts of the beaters struck on the pitchless key called *kpawra* only meant for that purpose.

I can conclude, from this semantic exploration that, Dagara perception of music is basically sensual, in a sense that, all human senses are proportionally involved in the perception of music in the community.

3.2.3 Musical attributes

Semantically, *yielu* (song) and *gyile mwɛb* (instrumental performance of songs) seem to be the most expressive concepts of the music of the Dagara, although each of them is restrictive in scope. An overall view of the concepts discussed earlier on, let us observe that the ones related to *gyil* and its usage are extremely dominant. That quantitative disproportion of musical vocabulary underscores the prominent nature or primacy of *gyil* over the other musical instruments and also suggests that *gyil* music is the core of Dagara musical tradition. And this is further confirmed by the leadership status of the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* (*gyil* player) over the other musical performers in any musical event situation. This leadership position of the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* is confirmed by almost all the informants, for

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instance, they acknowledge the importance of the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* over the *lanw-kone*. Although there is no single word used to conceptualise the music of the Dagara, there are attributes drawn from my field observations of the practices of the music.

a) **Divine origin of music**.

First of all, the music of the Dagara and musical competence are undeniably divine in origin. Dankwa (2018) rightly observed, on the basis of the well-known myth regarding the *gyil* origin, that among the Dagara indeed, isolating music from the realm of the supernatural is very unusual. Thus, Dagara's worldview holds music originated from *Naamwin* (The supreme god) and was passed down to humans through the *Konton-bili* (dwarfs) who also act as intermediaries between humans and *Naamwin*. It is believed that those intermediarie taught the Dagara's ancestor how to make music especially that of the xylophone. Dagara initial attempts at music-making took place in the context of an incidental discovery by hunters with the agency of the *Konton-bili*. Against this belief, exceptionally gifted musicians such as xylophonists are said to obtain their talents from *Naamwin*. The *lanw-yin gyil-mwiɛrɛ* or in-born xylophonist is said, as mentioned above, to be born with close (clenched) fists, the thumbs placed between the index and the middle fingers in the same way that musicians hold the mallets (*gyil bie* or, *gyil luorɛ*) when playing the instrument. Many of the interviewees acknowledge the origin of the extraordinary musical competence in these terms: "*A gyil banwfu i-n Naamwin bu kura*" or "*A gyil banwfu i-n bu siwra*" meaning that *gyil* playing competence is a gift from God. The same statement is made about the *lanwni*. To the Dagara indeed, musical competence as other human competences is graciously granted by God and transmitted from generation to generation. Thus, the original and exceptional competence of a musician informs about the divine origin of his or her gift whose symptoms can be recognised right at the would-be-xylophonist's birth. Since music is learned as any activities, a gifted or in-born *gyil* player

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will effortlessly learn how to play the *gyil* compared to the non-gifted one. Like the *gyil* player, an in-born composer can also be easily identified through the originality and quality of his or her musical compositions. And for that matter, the dream is perceived to be the divine way through which God graciously inspires the composer. During my conversation with Jacques Meda whose artist name is Jaki Meda, he underscored dreams as his main source of compositional inspiration as far as melodies and lyrics are concerned.

b) Flexibility of Dagara music as liberal art

The music of the Dagara is flexible and liberal. Indeed, within the broad context of orality characterizing the Dagara culture, the Dagara music in general and the instrumental music in particular is so liberal. A xylophonist for instance, does not scrupulously abide himself to the same playing techniques as his fellow may do in performing a particular song. Moreover, the songs book is the memory of the singer. The hymnal books as the only written musical materials in *dagara* language, are only found in Christian churches, but not during other musical events such as *Bɛwaa, nuru-loba* or *ko-gyil*. Although Dagara music does not have written texts, it has contexts for its meaningful understanding. This lack of commodification of the musical compositions exposes them to changes or modifications that sometimes result in different versions of the same song from one region to another. Moreover, that musical flexibility also includes the Dagara musical permeability to the extent that their culture in general and their musical culture in particular are also influenced by other musical cultures such as that of the Sissala. For instance, the Dagara adopted a particular dance of the Sissala called *'Lanwmɛ guola'*. I would conclude that, the musical flexibility of the Dagara, indeed, reflects their ontological nature to be always free as that freedom is also expressed through their historical freedom and perpetual migrations.

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c) Light music versus serious music

Dagara musical genres do not bear the same weight in terms of socio-cultural significance. The seriousness of a particular genre is embedded in the performance context and the social category associated with it. *Bɛwaa* for instance, is considered as light music compared to the most important music of funerals. But in general, light performance is musical performance that occurs in the contexts of individual private enjoyment, cooperative work, and communal recreational activities such as *bɛwaa* seen as a game *(diɛnu)*. On the other hand, musical performances related to funerals (*kuor*) such as *binɛ*, a social music and dance for men and women); and initiations (*bawr*) are said to be 'serious'; because they deal with serious matters. Thus, the "Dagaaba account for this discrepancy by arguing that funeral music and music of the cult groups occur in context where there is a meshwork of interactions between humans and supernatural agents, which is absent from the other performance contexts" (Dankwa 2018, p. 65). Considering these distinctions, musicians who perform 'serious music' are higher in the rank of Dagara musical specialists.

d) Percussiveness of Dagara music

The music of the Dagara is percussive in nature. The idea of that percussiveness is expressed by the verb *mwɛ* (to beat) or its substantive *mwɛb* which applies to almost all the musical instruments: the *gyil*, *the kuɔr*, the *gangaar* are beaten in the sense of played: *gyil mwɛb, kuɔr mwɛb* or *gangaar mwɛb* …etc. The same word *mwɛb* can also be used in case of a man beating his wife or child as this practice is common in the society: *Bo-n mwɛn a u bie* (this person has beaten his child)*; bo-n mwɛn a u pɔw* (He has beaten his wife). Semantically, this word implies the idea of energy production in the performativity of *mwɛb* (beating). Based on this omnipresent percussiveness in musical performance processes, Dagara songs are not seen to be accompanied; but rather to be played or beaten. *Yielu* is the *dagara* word for song. A song, from my personal observation, is always played but not

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accompanied, especially in any musical performance where *gyil* is involved. In such occasions, *gyil* does not stand as simple accompanying instrument, but an entire component of the performance resources. *Yielu mwɛb* is the recent concept coined for the developing neo-traditional music or Dagara popular music. As a concept, it is semantically more comprehensive and closer to the holistic concept of music on one hand; and on the other hand, is very expressive of the percussive nature of Dagara music. However, exception should be made about Dagara windwood instruments which are not played but blown; and the non-melodic *kuɔr* which accompanies the *lanwni* performance during infant funeral ceremonies where *gyil* is not allowed.

e) *Dagara music as a communal activity*

The sharp separation between performers and audience as it is in western art music context does not exist in Dagara musical tradition. Agawu (2016, p. 6) rightly pointed out that "in the traditional sphere, 'performing with' often predominates over 'performing to'". This statement also applies to most of the Dagara musical performances where there are permanent interactions between performers and "audience". For, audience participation is always expected as communal performance appears to be a visual expression of mutual belonging and feeling of unity in diversity. In other words, there is no passive audience in any musical events as it is in western classical traditions. Active participation is almost a rule, because the success of any social occasion involving the audience is determined by how deeply people get involved with the music. Likewise, the quality of musicians and the music they play are evaluated through the ecstatic feedbacks from the participants. Players who elicit intense responses from the people are often rewarded with gifts either in cash and/or in kind. The Dagara philosophy presumes that every individual present in a musical event contributes towards the musical performance through dancing singing, ululations, handclapping etc.

f) Dagara music as music for life's sake

Based on their philosophy and practices of music, the Dagara, as in most African music, perceive their music mainly as an art for life's sake. However, this perception of music as art for life's sake also implies the idea of music for art's sake. As it will be extendedly explored in chapter four, the musical genre that most demonstrates the double aspect concerning the music of the Dagara as music for art's sake and for life's sake at the same time is undoubtedly the funeral music. As it is about the essential meaning of art for life's sake, that genre includes the absolutist listening of music for contemplation and the referentialist and expressionist listening for mourning as well. In that perspective, music-making is part of their everyday life and is meant for the wellbeing of the entire human being, i.e. his body and mind. Dankwa (2018, p. 65) describes the functionality of Dagara music "as part of everyday life. *Gyil* playing in the farms by individuals who want to flex their tired muscles, lullabies sung by mothers to put babies to sleep, or the playing of the *wulee* flute by cowherds while tending cattle in the fields are all recognised as forms of performance". As an aspect of this functionality of music, Dagara music-making is a medium of expression and communication. For instance, like the *atumpan,* the talking Ashanti drum, *Dagara gyil* music, on its own can talk, speaks to the listener to the extent of touching his or her soul: *a gyil yɛr-bie tom a* (the words of the *gyil* positively touched me.). *A gyil yɛr bie dam u na* (the words of the *gyil* (music) are very touching or affected him). These statements are usually made in the context of funeral ceremonies where the songs played on the *gyil* convey touching messages and life lessons. According to the late Dabire (1983, p. 57-58), the Dagara mainly sing their life; and in their musical traditions art or pure music does not exist as such. To him, Dagara music which is a functional art always conveys messages more than the speech. Dankwa (2018, p. 63) similarly observes this functionality of Dagara music by linking dance to music as two facets of the same coin: "Unlike some societies where dance is treated as an independent art, the fact that among the

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Dagaaba there is no dance without singing or playing of musical instrument makes the two art forms inseparable." This observation is so true that dance (*yawfu* or *binɛ*) and music, in terms of terminology, are interchangeable in Dagara language. For instance, when referring to funeral music, some may term it either *ko-gyil* or *ko-binɛ* which is practically understandable in both contexts.

However, there are some few performance occasions where pure music, that is instrumental music without any particular meaning with it, can be performed. *Piiru* or *damnu* for instance can be seen as pure music or music for art's sake as far as their content and performance are concerned. As stated earlier on *piiru* or *damnu* are semantically similar as they refer to the action of trying the *gyil* by performing some short instrumental melodies that do not follow any fixed rhythmic pattern nor do they signify any particular message at all. The same thing can be said about the *'lenu* which is an accompaniment in *ostinato* form. Despite the apparent "pigsty" of *piiru* and *damnu*, their inherent harmonies are quite remarkable. It is essentially an improvisatory procedure through which *gyil* players perform their warm-up exercise. A virtuoso xylophonist is spotted out right from the *piiru* phase. This phase can be compared to a signature tune as it is possible to identify even from a far distance the *piiru* of a particular musician. This section has investigated what music means in the lives of the Dagara. The following section further deepens that meaning by looking at what music means in aesthetic terms.

3.3 Aesthetic Conventions of Dagara Music

Dealing with the difficulty of finding western aesthetic concepts in non-western societies, Merriam (1964) concludes that certain societies share some of western aesthetic concepts, but most do not. He hypothesised that a reinterpretation of aesthetics is necessary in order to render the term useful from a cultural rather than from a western ethnocentric viewpoint.

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The understanding of the society concerning its creative, artistic or skilful processes then becomes the focus of aesthetic study that involves morphological, psychological, and cultural value assessments. Munro (1956) sees the aesthetic process in relation to three dimensions: morphology, psychology and value theory. To him aesthetics dimension of art should take into consideration the morphology aspect of it that is the classification of types and shapes of art objects. It should also include the psychological dimension in terms of human reaction and pattern of behaviour in relation to art. Finally, it should be value theory based, that is, how art fits into various culture patterns. More specific to our study context, Nketia argues that the principle that must guide the study of the aesthetic dimension of music is that a particular music must be studied in terms of itself and in the context of its society and culture; since every musical culture has its own musical aesthetics conventions. Agawu also shares the argument made by Alan P. Merriam and J. H. Nketia about the notion of aesthetics. He further argues that performance errors can be extremely valuable sources of insight into musical aesthetics. In other words, errors made and corrected during rehearsal and performance can be hinted for determining aesthetic conventions for a particular musical culture. In that sense, "ethnosemantic[24]" as a theory and method consisting in analysing and getting the meaning of the vocabulary or words used by the indigenous people, is an important tool or method for understanding the aesthetic conventions related to the cultural system of the community. To be able to conclude that errors are valuable sources of insight into musical aesthetics, Agawu went through an ethnosemantic analysis of the Akpafu Todzi's musical performance and their native category or the ideas about their own music to be able to understand how attitudes of fetching, cutting, throwing or running away, and catching are or can musically be

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[24] "Ethnosemantics holds that conceptual categories reflect and create human perceptions of the word" (C. S. VanPool and T. L. VanPool (2009, p. 532). Thus, anthropologists and linguists use Ethnosemantics method to study culturally specific meanings of symbols and their associations with the purpose of capturing the local knowledge or the worldview of particular people (*ibid*). I use it to capture the local knowledge or ethnodoxology concerning the music of the Dagara.

understood in terms of call-and-response for instance. The same "ethnosemantics" and "native category" that is the (native) viewpoint of the indigenous people about their music have been used by Agawu in discovering that, through musical performance there is musical violence against natural or ordinary language. Furthermore, if it is possible for a society to understand its artistic creative process without developing a precise vocabulary to explain it, then it is not difficult to accept what Sieber (1959) calls the "unvoiced aesthetic". Adrianne Kaeppler in his study of the music of the Shona in Zimbabwe pointed out that the Shona's aesthetic conventions are based on tactility from the ethnosemantic 'kunzwa' meaning' touch'. This tactility (*fâ*, *dâ*) among the Akan of Ghana according to Nketia conveys aesthetic validity. Another but less aesthetic principle is visuality. Any aesthetics principles must stem from these aspects: tuning system, musical structure, mode of expression, performance practice, mode of presentation, other musical connections.

The above arguments contextualise the present discussion of the aesthetic principles concerning the music of the Dagara. This discussion deals specifically with the theory fold from Feld's six-folds framework by answering the question, is music verbally and non-verbally rationalised? It also abides with Nketia's (Aesthetic dimension) argument that 'aesthetics' study can be an 'analytical tool' that is an analytical method for capturing choices, preferences and concepts of music makers and users about their music. Thus, Dagara aesthetic conventions constitute an analytical tool for deeper understanding of their music. However, these conventions can be considered as unvoiced aesthetics, since in Dagara musical tradition; there is no formal set of aesthetics criteria guiding their musical performances. Although the Dagara do not have standards set of aesthetic conventions, aesthetics appreciations in terms of the good and the beautiful in Dagara music, are diffused throughout their philosophy and comments about their music, especially in musical performance situations.

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Among the Dagara, the key words used in aesthetic descriptions are usually *viɛl*, *numɛna, tɛr-bii*, *kyirɛ-yaw* and *damnu or to so-kyir*. The word for beauty *viɛl* is used to refer to objects, human bodies, speech, pleasant statement, story, news, conduct or behaviour: For instance, *a fo ib viɛl* means you have a good behaviour or conduct. With regards to music, it is used to refer to voice, song, and performance as well: *A bo-n yielu viɛl-a* meaning his or her song is good. In fact, *viɛl* (adjective) or *vielu* (noun) can be used for either physical or moral beauty, but the specific word for physical beauty is *pol*: *A bo-n viɛl-a* or *a bo-n pol-a* means he is handsome or she is beautiful. The word for sweet, happiness or taste *numɛna* or *nuo*n is used to refer to the quality of comestibles. But, the same words are also used in connection with music for purpose of aesthetic description. *Tɛr-bii* refers to the substance or savour of meat in very tasty soup. In connection with music, the word *tɛr-bii* assimilates a particular musical performance to a tasty soup. A tasty music definitely produces an effect to the soul of the listener. And that effect is described by the following aesthetic expressions; *kyirɛ-yanw* or *dam so-kyir* or *to-so-kyir*. *Kyirɛ yanw* is more about excitement while *dam-so-kyir* to *to-sokyir* is more about emotiveness. These aesthetics terms, in connection with performance, express ideas of beauty in relation to shape, design, movement and gesture etc. Thus, the general concept of beauty is not only linked to physical beauty but also to moral and musical beauty, for beauty is something desirable in any case. Music-making in general and musical performances in particular involve visual and aural aspects in the form of movements, appearance, dance, gestures as reactions to the music. Thus, music, either vocal or instrumental, is described as beautiful or good when these aspects are taken into consideration and when its taste refers to the emotional effect produced by it.

Vocal music is essentially more important to the Dagara than instrumental music. In that regard, musical instruments perceived as possessing a voice (*kɔkɔr*) all fall under the same

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category of vocal music in terms of status; and it is in that sense that the *gyil* is the most important instrument for the Dagara musical expression. A good voice or liquid voice featuring that of a female determines the quality of a musical performance. In other words, the quality of a voice affects necessarily the quality of the vocal performance. Moreover, some concepts or expressions related to vocal music are also meaningful as far as voice registers are concerned. For instance, *kɔkɔr wele* (whistle or flute (*wele*) voice or treble voice) describes not only the relatively high register of someone's voice but the purity of the sound produced by that voice. This is the register for women, children and tenors among the men (*Pɔw kɔkɔr*). The low register is termed as *kɔkɔr kpɛɛn* or *kɔkɔr bɛru*. This register stands for men and the baritones among the ladies (*dɛb kɔkɔr*). *Kɔkɔr pan-pir* (spider's web voice) refers to a buzzing voice-like. For, the vocal chords vibration is very perceptible when the person speaks or sings. In terms of performance quality, those from the high register are considered as having very good voice based on the likely purely sound produced by their voices. On the contrary, those who belong to the low register or whose voices are buzzing-like are hardly seen as good singers.

Furthermore, the Dagara best express their musical thoughts for vocal music through comparison or allegoric speech. Indeed, as they personify the *gyil* by attributing it to a human voice, on the other way round, they also 'animalise' human being through comparison. From the tales telling, the Dagara have culturally categorised some of the animals as being symbols of bad and good voice or metaphorical examples of bad singing or good singing. The purely vocal music, that is, without any instrumental accompaniment, is usually performed in tales telling contexts. Most of the tales songs try to imitate the personage or animal's singing. For instance, nightingale (*bɛlin-bɛwr*) as symbol of beautiful singing and hyena and crow (raven) for ugly singing are the common singing personages. Naturally, the singing of the nightingale is very pleasant to the ears, whereas that of the

raven or the hyena is very ugly. Thus, when the Dagara identify somebody with a nightingale (*bɛlin-bɛwr*), it means the person has a sweet voice. And a beautiful singer is said to have a nightingale's voice: *U tɛri bɛlin-bɛwr kɔkɔr*. On the contrary, someone with bad voice is assimilated to a hyena or raven: *U tɛri gbongbor bii gbagba kɔkɔr*. The voice quality and the sound quality or timbre of an instrument is what attracts first, the Dagara aesthetic appreciation before any aspects of a given musical performance.

Dagara music is basically associated with dance to the extent that the same word or expression can be used interchangeably to designate both. In respect to musical genres, the rhythm in general and the speed or tempo in particular must be tempered, that is, not too fast (*mwiɛr pawr/mwiɛ zarɛ*) and not too slow (*van-van*). It should be noted that *van-van* and *bɛl-bɛl* are closely similar but not identical. Tempo is not just speed but quality, something that defines the groove of music in Dagara community. A performance especially instrumental performance which is not too slow nor too fast is appealing to dance. A too slow or a too fast musical groove is not really exciting as far as dancing to it is concerned.

The aural dimension with regard to aesthetic has to do with intensity and tonality of musical sound. A musical performance either vocal or instrumental should be audible enough to enable the listener or audience to access the message conveyed by the musical sound. That accessibility of the message is tributary to the intonation of words, as *dagara* language is tonal. In other words, the intonation of a word is not observed, the word automatically changes in meaning. For instance, *baa* according to the intonation may mean friend, river, dog, or to plant. Likewise, *saa* means rain, father or visible etc.

To the Dagara aesthetics and ethics are strongly interrelated and complementary. Thus, a good *lanw-kone* is ethically unblemished and irreproachable. He praises the deceased and his or her families, appeases grieved relatives and sympathisers by dealing with death and social issues simultaneously. A bad *lanw-kone* is money minded and does not hesitate in uttering insults and complaints without any compassion and sympathy. In the same way, a good song always carries or conveys an instructive and constructive message to the listeners. A bad song carries insanities or nothing. At the funeral ground, people usually listen to two performers: *lanw-kone* speech and the *gyil* surrogacy (*Zu-kpa bie*). It is, indeed, the understanding of their messages that bring about emotiveness of music or emotive meaning of music.

Among the Dagara musical genres, the most emotive music is funeral music. The association of *lanwni* and *gyil* surrogacy makes people burst into tears at funerals. The Dagara perfectly agree with Scheibe and Mattheson that a good music is emotive. This can be testified by this typical statement commonly made among the Dagara in the context of musical performance: *Uu gyil mwɛb mi kyirɛ ni yanw*, that is his (about particular player) *gyil* playing is very exciting. This positive assessment conveyed by this expression refers to the psychological, emotional and physical effects of music. Music is something to be heard and felt rather than to see

In Dagara community, a well-attended musical performance or positive reactions to musical performance, is a sign of good performance. In fact, when the audience is emotionally moved by the music, they participate in the performance in several ways. They express their enjoyment and enthusiasm through ululation cheers, yodelling, dancing, clapping of hands, rewards in cash or in kind. Based on audience participation, musical performance seems to

function principally as a way of organizing group behaviour and response to situations. And dance is an integral part of the musical structure.

To conclude the exploration on the understanding and aesthetic qualities of the music of the Dagara, I would like to acknowledge this cause-and-effect relationship between the lack of musical theory and that of musical vocabulary concerning Dagara music. In fact, since Dagara music theory is not extensively developed by scholars, consequently the vocabulary or concepts and aesthetics principles of the music are also limited to the extent that the few musical concepts and expressions explored above are not specifically musical terms, but rather concepts and expressions borrowed from the ordinary language that always need to be musically contextualised for meaningfully appropriation. For instance, *miilu* which is, in Dagara context, a musical concept for musical taste is also used in culinary art for dietary taste. However, another area of interest for deepening the understanding of the music of the Dagara is through the analysis of the oral commentaries and jargon of musical specialists.

3.4 Dagara Musical Specialists

Dagara musical specialists are not professional musicians, since music as such is neither a profession nor a business on its own. The concept 'musical specialists' here embraces Dagara musicians and music amateurs. However, it should be noted that instruments constructors are not necessarily musicians even though they may have some musical knowledge limited to their works. For instance, an hour glass drummer maker is not necessarily a drummer. But, it is exceptionally rare to see a xylophone maker who is not a xylophonist. The concept therefore covers the vast range of soloists and instruments players. They are the best dealers of musical sound production. This discussion on Dagara musical specialists distinguishes the two main types of musical specialists grouped into soloists and instrumentalists. It examines the identity, functions, roles, performance structures,

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competence and social status of the musicians in Dagara community as the exploration of these areas effectively helps in capturing the philosophy of the Dagara about their music. Finally, the discussion is framed within four of the Feld's six-folds framework: competence, form, performance and value and equality.

3.4.1 Vocalists

In Dagara society, the soloists can be categorised regarding the musical genres. In that regard, three categories of soloists can be distinguished: female soloists, male soloists and neutral soloists (including both sexes). Similar to the division of labour which is mainly gender-based, some songs are peculiar to women, others are exclusively meant for men and finally some others can be either performed by both sexes.

a) Female vocalist

In Dagara society, the playing of musical instruments has been a prerogative activity pertaining to men. These male-based instrumental practices emanate from Dagara's worldview. That worldview has excluded women from many instrument practices such as the xylophone (*gyil*) for fecundity and femininity reasons. This female exclusion is reinforced and perceptible through the posture of the player at the instruments. For, a woman is not supposed to stretch out her legs to the extent of exposing her intimate parts. Meanwhile, at most of the instrumental postures, the legs of the players are stretched out for more comfort. Therefore, women who overcome the female-based taboos at their expenses are compelled to dress decently by wearing trousers.

i. Kpa-kon/Lanw-muol

Kap-kon and lanw-muol are the female forms of funeral dirges. *Lanwni* on the other hand, is the male form of funeral dirges around the *gyil*. Normally, women are not allowed to mingle

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into the male grouping at that particular place. They only come in occasionally to donate their financial support to the grieved members who, in turn, use that support to reward the instrumental performers including the *lanw-kon-bɛ*. The female counterpart of *lanwni* is therefore the *kap-kon* and *lanw-muol* performed generally by a group of women around the corpse exposed on the funeral stand. *Pɔwbɛ Kpa-kon* according to Dabire (1983, p. 14) is dirges performed by a group of women around an elderly person agonizing. But, this practice is extremely rare to the extent that I have never witnessed it before. *Lanw-muol* as female dirges is performed around the funeral pyre to sustain the mourning mood, especially when men are tired of their performance and the funeral becomes boring. As the *lanw-kone* or *kone*, a lead soloist or cantor who is knowledgeable enough in that matter plays the leading role assuring the calling part of the performance while the rest of the group constitutes the responding chorus. Women who perform these female dirges are experienced ladies. They are socially valued and respected as they share the same social esteem for the male dirge singers called *lanw-kon-bɛ*. However, they do not socially stand out as a result of the scarcity of their performances. The same performance structure and roles of these dirges are observed during the *nuru-loba* performance in the recreational context.

ii. Nuru-loba/Karri

Nuru-loba and *kaari* will be extensively described in musical genres discussion section. But, aside the *nuru* and *kaari* context, there is another context where women also display their soloist competence and qualities in the traditional way of grounding millet which is usually accompanied by singing. The songs performed at these occasions deal with different themes such as praises and complaints. Unfortunately, the modern grounding machine has substituted this traditional grounding practice and therefore evicted its inherent musical performance.

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Generally speaking, in any performance context, the cantor who plays the leading role is usually a good singer endowed with liquid-voice and good memory. The same vocal and memory qualities are required for the male soloists.

b) Male vocalist

i. *Bawr-mwɛb* and *Bawr-binɛ*

The male soloists are found in two main contexts: *Bawr* and *funeral* ceremony contexts. In the *bawr* context, the *bawr-saa* (the father of the initiation) is knowledgeable and highly ranked in the hierarchy of the *bawr* resource persons. He is the cantor of the *bawr* chant that traces the origin of the world, the migratory stages of Dagara people and knowledge about life. To perform *bawr* chant, the *bawr saa* sits in the middle surrounded by the candidates. While performing the long and oral text of *bawr* chant, he shakes rhythmically to the *sɛsɛwr* (a kind of maraca) to enhance the overall performance groove, however, with a particular focus on the message more than on the music.

ii. *Lanwni*

In funeral ceremony, *lanw-kone (lanw-kon-bɛ* plural*)* or *kone* (*Kon-bɛ* plural) or male dirge chanter is an improviser whose function is to recreate and reproduce knowledge of people's genealogy, and publicly express praises or criticisms to the deceased and his/her families. The *lanwni* literally means to gather together to mourn. The content of their song texts is a repository of family histories, praise names, and elaborations on family and individual qualities, achievements and good wishes to the deceased in his or her final trip to the departed world etc. They are also endowed with good voice and are responsible for stirring up emotions at the funerals. Here too innate ability is needed. *Lanw-kone* can be considered as a praise singer who is knowledgeable enough about clan and family praises and the

lanwni jargon. Some of them draw ideas from the melodic themes of the *gyil* music. Woma (2012) described the flexible structure that guides their public discourse as follows:

> As cantors of this social genre, dirge singers will usually begin their performance by first acknowledging their ancestor clan, the lineage of their family origin for people to know which clan or social group they represent. Next is the call on *Tegan* (the spirit force of the land) to protect them against any evil and finally, the call on God (*Naamwin*) for guidance through their performance (p. 65).

Though the *lanw-kone* may not be a *gyil* player, he should possess some knowledge about the *gyil* and be endowed with musicianship. He does not necessarily need to be endowed with a nice voice since his performance is not musically oriented, but message-delivery-based. His speech is synthetic and proverbial. His singing which is chant-like should be in tone with the *gyil* tonality.

The *lanw-kon-bε* always perform in *duo*: the main *lanw-kone (kone)* and the supportive *lanw-kone (ciε-ciεrε),* the latter structurally takes the lead. Both of them are usually surrounded by the mourning crowd in standing posture facing the instrumental performers. Some of their thoughts and ideas are embodied through gestures actions performed at their ease and comfort. In short, there are three categories of *lanw-kon-bε*: Some *lanw-kon-bε* are believed to have received their talent from God, others are said to have 'eaten' the *lanwni* medicine (*Tiin na bε di*) and others are self-taught *lanw-kon-bε*. But they commonly share the same performance aim. The *virtuoso lanw-kone* can perform without *gyil* accompaniment which is a very difficult task.

In conclusion, the *lanw-kon-bε* are praise singers or eulogists whose musical and oratory skills are very crucial to express their compassion and moral support to the grieved family and reveal the deceased prowess and achievements. Others may be harsh by uttering some

insults and nonsense through their speeches. Some others may be completely money-minded to the extent that they insult people when the money is not flowing. Mathias Somda, an experienced *lanw-kone* told me that *lanwni* originally, was not meant for insults, but for expression of solidarity and compassion through instructive and consoling messages by sympathisers to grieved families (from an interview). The *lanw-kon-bɛ* and the instrumentalists are symbolically rewarded with some coins. However, the performance of the *lanw-kon-bɛ* in the context of funeral is more mourning-oriented than musical performance. Therefore, it should not be a surprise if the Dagara do not see the *lanw-kon-bɛ* as musicians and consequently the *lanwni* performance as musical performance. However, instrument players such as xylophone players are considered as musicians or music specialists, though they are not professional musicians. Among these instrument players, the very common instrumentalists on which the following discussion is based are the *ko-mwiɛr-bɛ*, the *kpaw-kpawr-bɛ* and the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* based on the commonness of their performance occasions.

3.4.2 Instruments Players

a) ***Kɔ-mwiɛrɛ* (drummer)**

Kuɔr is the dagara term for drum and the drummer is called *kɔ-mwiɛrɛ*. By *kɔ-mwiɛrɛ* I mean any drummers including the *dala-mwiɛrɛ* and the *ganga-mwiɛrɛ*. *Dalara* and *gangaar* are types of drum different from *kuɔr* in shape and similar to it in the construction process. However, based on the contexts, they do not bear the same reputation. The *kɔ-mwiɛrɛ* (hour glass drummer) and the *ganga-mwiɛrɛ* are highly respected as a result of their musical role in the more serious contexts of *bawr* and *kuor* (funeral). In other words, their social reputation derives from the socio-cultural significance of these musical events. Their musical function is mainly rhythm-based and supportive. In any performance context, the drummer as a servant of the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ,* enhances the overall rhythm of the *gyil*. He lowers

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his drum when necessary by water or his own saliva to suite to the overall tonality. Being a bad or good drummer is crucial to the performance as the bad may mislead the *gyil* player and the good may on the contrary be helpful to the *gyil-mwiεrε*. When the *gyil* player is not performing well enough, some prefer dance to the drumming or the *kpawru* (time-line) rather than to the *gyil*. In the hierarchy of the instrumentalists of the *gyil trio*, the drummer is considered as the 'last born'. In the funeral context for instance, he is the one who shares the common reward and the last to take his share. Mathias Somda (Nyigbo), Anicet (Dissin) and Emile Kpowda (Forotew) told me that, initially the drummer was not even part of the sharing as he was dashed with some cowries. But, it is later on that he became a member of the *trio* as far as sharing the reward is concerned. To underscore the importance of the rhythmic role played by a drummer, Emile told me an anecdote where a drummer was slapped by a government official. The only justification was that the drummer, by his appealing drumming which added more attraction to the musical performance, kept people dancing instead of joining in the meeting called for by the official administrator.

b) ***Kpaw-kpawrε*** (**Time-line keeper**)

Kpaw-kpawrε is the time keeper. Like the drummer, he also enhances the overall rhythm of the music groove. Both play a supportive role to the main *gyil* player who always introduces the musical piece. However, in most cases the *kpaw-kpawrε* is also *gyil* player to the extent that, they may interchange roles during the same performance. This exchange of roles usually occurs when the *gyil-mwiεr-bε* are equally good and have good relationship or interaction. In funeral musical performance context, it is only a *gyil* player who can effectively assume the role of *kpaw-kpawrε* capable of playing the time-line with his left hand (right-handed) or right hand (left-handed) while playing the *ostinato* pattern with his right or left hand.

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c) ***Gyil-mwiɛr-bɛ* (Xylophone players)**

Among all the Dagara musical specialists, the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* or *mwiɛrɛ* is the most specialist resource person as far as music is concerned. Therefore, a family or lineage whose ancestral heritage is the *gyil* practice tends to be regarded as a musical family. In that regard, Dankwa (2018, p. 100) observed that "Families that have a long-standing tradition of xylophone playing ensure that the tradition is sustained by transmitting musical knowledge from one generation to another". Although the *trio* of *kɔ-mwiɛrɛ*, *kpaw-kpawrɛ* and the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* are socially valued for the musical roles and functions, their respective works are not considered as professions to the extent of being their main occupations. In terms of musical traditions, the Dagara have similar musical practices with the Igbo in Obimo (Nigeria). For instance, like the Igbo, people mostly are self-taught musicians through informal instruction contrary to the Hausa society in Zaria (Nigeria) where people become professional musicians through formal instruction (Ames 1973, p. 250-278). *Kɔ-mwiɛrɛ*, *kpaw-kpawrɛ* and *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* are from different backgrounds as they share the same economic activities like any ordinary member of the society. It is commonly shared in Dagara society that the rewards of the *lanw-ni* cannot buy anything apart from *pito* or local beer in the same way as the modest incomes earned by the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* are spent in addressing basic needs. However, a distinction of competence can be observed within the categories of musicians in general and instrumentalists in particular.

In the Dagara society, indeed, there is no formal hierarchy among the *gyil* musicians based on clear criteria of classification, but a clear distinction in terms of competence and talents can be observed among them. The beginners constitute the group of learners. They only perform privately as they are afraid of making mistakes publicly. The intermediate *gyil* players fairly performed well in public although with some imperfections needed to be polished up. They are still involved in the learning process. An intermediate gyil player is

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better than a *gyil* beginner and lesser than a *gɔba*. The *gyil virtuosi* called *gɔbr* (plural) are professionals as masters. They are the ones who have distinguished themselves as accomplished players at funerals. Most of the *gɔbr* such as the late Bɛrgyirɛ and Bernard Woma can play and sing at the same time. Kom from Nyigbo also has this exceptional competence since it is not common to all *gyil* players. Physically, a professional *gyil* player is recognisable through the calluses developed on his fingers, the lateral sides of his index and middle fingers. The belief that musical specialists are not equally gifted is very strong in *Dagara* perception regarding knowledge (*A bawfu b ɛ i been e or b ɛ zin taar ɛ*). To determine a *gɔba* at the funeral of a virtuoso *gyil* player, a competition is organised with a *gyil* whose keys are mixed up and mistuned. The winner is the *gɔba* who will successfully play that mistuned *gyil* (*gyil tul*). He is then rewarded with an animal tied to the pyre for that purpose. Mathias Somda and Emile Kpowda told me that in olden days, the *gyil* players were few and therefore hired to perform during funeral ceremonies even from far. Like the *lanw-kone,* the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* can appease, console, or insult anyone he or she likes through purposeful selection of melodic themes.

To conclude this discussion on musical specialists, I can confidently assert that Dagara society music is not seen as a profession that earns incomes to the musician to make his or her living. The musician such as the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* carries other activities along with music-making considered as secondary occupation. The rewards of the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* and the *lanw-kon-bɛ* are so derisory. Therefore, Dagara musical specialists are not Dagara musical professionals. Musical specialists, indeed, embrace the vocal soloists and the instrumentalists. The vocal soloists do not use instruments but may be accompanied by instruments during performances. The aesthetic qualities of their vocal performances rely on the good quality of the voice and a good memory for keeping history and knowledge. On the other hand, instruments are highly respected by people in the community based on their

musical competence. In general, Dagara society values musicians based on the musical genres and the roles and functions they play through their performances.

3.5 Dagara Musical Genres

The music of the Dagara is not a unitary art form since there are several musical genres associated with it. This section describes the minor musical genres focusing on their respective contexts and functions of performance. The major genres are postponed to the subsequent chapter. With regard to their usage, functions and regularities of occurrence, the various genres do not bear the same socio-cultural significance. Based on these differences of significance, they can be classified in two main categories: The minor and the major genres. These genres or styles of music should be understood as the songs repertoires that share the same performance context in the society. Moreover, the section also describes the construction and playing techniques of a sample of musical instruments. The aim of the whole discussion embedded in the environment fold of Feld consists of explaining how the Dagara relate to their environment in the context of music-making. It specifically answers the question about how the environment influences music-making and how in turn the music-making reflects the environment as well.

3.5.1 Instruments Description

The Dagara musical tradition encompasses a variety of musical instruments. The Dagara do not systematically classify their instruments in any way. But, the discussion on these instruments is accommodated within the four standard organological categories as suggested by Hornbostel and Sacht: chordophones, membranophones, aerophones, and idiophones. However, this does not necessarily mean that the Dagara musical instruments bear in detail the same characteristics as those classified in these categories. Although many of the instruments would have been in a museum, if there were any in Dagara community,

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this instruments description covers a number of instruments for the purpose of showing the richness of the Dagara's set of instruments, and at the same time, the lost caused by the disappeared and dying-off instruments. It may not be possible to describe exhaustively all the instruments due to the fact that some are no more in existence and probably to the centrality of the *gyil* as well. However, the focus of the description will be mainly on those that are related to the three genres targeted by the present study. The description of each instrument covers its construction, playing techniques, uses and functions as this is another way of getting the Dagara philosophy and worldview attached to their music.

a) **Chordophone instruments**

i. **The *kankaara***

Kankaara is a musical bow, a stave or flexible stick to whose two ends a string (nylon or wire) is attached. *Pii-mur* is used to plug the string placed in-between the upper and the lower lips of the mouth used as resonating chamber. Dankwa (2018, p. 60) explains in details the playing techniques of *kankaara* as follows: "The player holds the bow at the farthest end and directs the other end in such a way that the string passes in front of the mouth, which then serves as a resonating chamber. Different pitches are generated when the string's tension is manipulated by slightly bending forward or backwards, the farthest end of the stave. The tone quality produced depends on how the player may shape the vocal cavity-the resonating chamber." The melodies produced on the *kankaaara* are so sweet and relaxing. *Kankaara* music is suitable for relaxation at home in evening time after works. The hunters use *kankaara* for two main purposes: as a weapon and as a musical instrument for music-making (*ibid*). Unfortunately, the instrument died off due to the scarcity of hunting activities factored by the lack of bushes becoming more and more farming and village settlements.
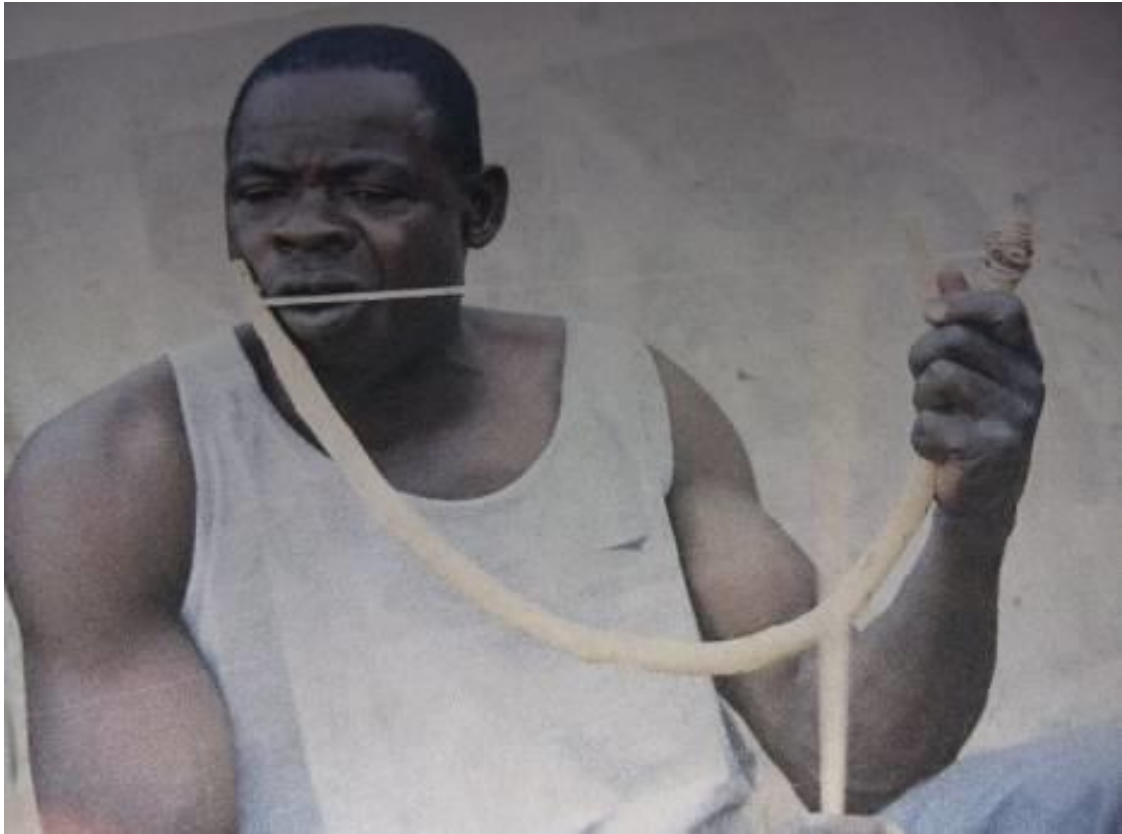
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Figure 3.1: Picture of *kankaara*.
Source: Photo by Hien Ferdinand (Hien Ferdinand, 2016, p. 31).

ii.   *Pɛnɛ*

Pɛnɛ seems to be the most fragile instrument based on the precarious material employed in its construction. It is made out of a set of straws or stalks called *pii-mie* or *mie*. The number of straws varies depending on the desire of the instrument maker. The straws are equally cut and cleaved towards both ends of each. Two other straws are perpendicularly inserted beneath the chords made out of this cleaving process. These perpendicular straws hold all the cleaved straws together and the more they are pushed towards the extreme ends of the straws, the tighter the chords are. The musical sound is produced by plucking these tight chords with the two thumbs. Dankwa (2018, p. 6) describes the socio-cultural context in which *pɛnɛ* music is performed: "During moments of leisure, especially after dining in the evening, a male person from the household may play either the *pɛnɛ* or *koridjom* while

others sit and listen, or sing the songs whose melodies are being played. These musical instruments are mostly used for personal entertainment. They may serve the purpose of entertaining oneself at leisure or release boredom when embarking on long journey by foot."

Figure 3.2: Picture of *pɛnɛ*.
Source: Photo by Hien Ferdinand (Hien Ferdinand, 2016, p. 32).

iii. *Koridjom*

Morphologically, *koridjom and kankaara* are said to be similar, except that a big calabash instead of a human mouth, is attached to the low end of the bow as a resonating chamber. To the two ends of the bow are attached five strings in cotton that are plucked by the fingers of the player while the resonating chamber is leaned against his belly. Like the *kankaara* and the *pɛnɛ*, *koridjom* is used for relaxation. A photo of it is missing, because the instrument cannot be found.

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iv. Dɛ-gungunɛ-gunɛ

Like the *kankaara*, *dɛ-gungunɛ-gunɛ* is a single string instrument. That string may be in different nature: nylon or wire wool etc. The resonator may also be in different nature: either a piece of calabash, a metallic box or any box at all capable of resonating. To perform on the *dɛ-gungunɛ-gunɛ*, the right-handed player holds the instrument under his left arm-pit -and the reverse is for the left-handed player. Some players may wedge the resonator into their legs. Different pitches are produced through combined actions performed by the instrument player. While plucking the chord with a finger or a peg, the same chord is tightened and unloosed by the activation of the flexible bow in backward and forward movements. The plucking of the alternatively tightened and unloosed chord creates the melodic notes for the song being played. Literally the word *dɛ-gungunɛ-gunɛ* refers to the laborious walking pace of an old stooping man or sick person. Initially, the instrument was played to imitate in sound that physical display. Secondly, *dɛ-gungunɛ-gunɛ* is a kind of onomatopoeia derived from the sound produced by the instrument. Thus, the tonality of the word refers to the tonality of the traditional melody played on the instrument. *Dɛ-gungunɛ-gunɛ* is played for self-entertainment.

Generally speaking, the Dagara chordophone instruments are chordal instruments irrespective of the number and the nature of the strings used in the construction of the instrument. For the construction of some instruments, nylons are used while in that of *dɛ-gungunɛ-gunɛ*, it is rather the wires or iron strings that are employed. Some other instruments such as *pɛnɛ* are termed as chordophones because of their similarities in shape with the string instruments. Plucking and striking are the common techniques of playing them. It can also be observed that music of the chordophone instruments is privately performed for the purpose of entertainment or recreation. It can therefore be considered as

light music, based on its private nature and the fact that it does not deal with serious matters. The same observation can be made regarding some of the woodwind instruments.

b) Woodwind instruments

i. Nufola

If human voice is an instrument, then *Nufola* can be seen as the first aerophone instrument since it is bodily constructed. As musical instrument, it is made from the combination of both hands of the player: for a right-handed person, two fingers (index and middle fingers) are jointly against the left thumb to create a resonating cavity between the back of the right hand and the palm of the left hand. That resonating chamber also accommodates the chin of the player who blows into it to generate melodic pitches. This bodily instrument is a favourite instrument used by herd-boys and girls to entertain themselves when taking their animals for pasturing. *Nufola* music to them is also a sonic call or signal for their encounter for pasturing. The *wele* music also plays the same role in the same context.

ii. Wele

Wele is a traditional wooden flute. The instrument is hollow with four to five lateral holes. A bigger hole is pierced in the upper end of the instrument into which the player blows. The fingers of both hands are used to alternatively cover and open these lateral holes in order to generate the melodic pitches. In addition to its recreational and call purposes, *wele* music is also used by herdsmen as an alert in case of bewilderment in the bush. *Vulo* is said to be morphologically and organologically similar to *wele,* except that of the number of its holes are lesser than those of the *wele*. And this similarity is also functional and contextual. Both are used in the context of hunting: *wele* as an alert in case of bewilderment and *vulo* as signal for fruitful hunting.

Figure 3.3: Picture of *Wele.*
Source: Photo by Hien Ferdinand (Hien Ferdinand, 2016, p. 30)

Wiɛ and *iil* (horn*)* which are horn flutes from animals such as cow or antelope are also contextually and functionally similar to *wele* and *vulo*. W*iɛ* and *ill* are used to summon the hunters at the beginning of a hunting expedition and also as an alert means in the bush. *Wiɛ* and *iil* are semantically interchangeable, as *iil* is more about the nature of instrument (horn) while *wiɛ* is more about the function of instrument (aerophone). They produce heavy sound like the *'la-lir* and the *fan-fan. 'La-lir and fan-fan* are bamboo flutes that produce sweet and heavy sound, suitable for attracting animals.

In general, woodwind instruments can be described as hunting instruments occasionally used by the herdsmen who also face the bush challenges in their pasturing fields. They seem to be the most diverse and superabundant in number. Unfortunately, their quantitative importance does not reflect their socio-cultural significance. Their main and common

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playing technique is the blowing of air into the instrument for the sound production. While blowing into the instrument there is an alternative covering of holes and release of air in order to produce the melodic notes. It is that playing technique that specifically classifies them as woodwind instruments.

c) Membranophone instruments

i. Dalara

Dalara (plural *dalari*) is the Dagara tambourine. Its frame is jar neck covered with a membrane which is an animal skin. Initially, the skins of *uu* or *wuo* (alligator) were preferred as the best membrane for the construction of *dalara*. But, the scarcity of these reptiles has factored the use of any sustainable skin such as those of the goat or monkey for *dalara* making. A special glue which is the sap of an herb called *kornyɛ-ci* is used to paste the membrane into the jar neck frame. The fresh instrument is dried in the sun or at any source of heat such as fire. The same process of drying is used to raise the pitch of the instrument. On the other hand, the pitch is lowered with saliva or water to soften the membrane. The *dalara* player firmly holds the instrument in-between his legs, just above his knees, and slap rhythmically with his hands.

Based on the size, *dalara* can produce from very low to high pitch. Thus, the *dalara* musical performance involving several *dalari*, depicts the polyrhythmic and polyphonic nature of that instrumental music. *Dalara* is not a melodic instrument, but the *dalara* ensemble generates polyphonic sound as a result of the combination of different pitches represented by each *dalara. Dalara* musical performance, first of all is meant to accompany young male recreational whistling (*mob*) as a counterpart of the female *nuru-loba*. For, usually these recreational activities occur in the same space and time, traditionally at the moonlight during the harvest season. The contemporary use of the instrument may add it to

the *bɛwaa* drumming as a supportive drum. It may also be used in the initiation context for the same purpose.

Figure 3.4: A pair of *dalari*.
Source: Photo by the author (2019).

ii. *Gangaar*

Gangaar is a cylindrical hallow log drum. Its frame is a hollow log carved from a tree and covered with cow skin. There are types of *gangaar*: the double heads *gangaar* and the single head *gangaar*. The two ends of the double heads *gangaar* are covered and firmly attached with animal skin. The single head *gangaar* has one of its ends covered and the other open. The *gangaar* frame used to be in wood, but for one reason or the other some constructors use barrels as drum frames. Such iron drums are mostly used for Christian worship.

Figure 3.5: Picture of a *gangaar,*
Source: Photo by the author (2019).

In fact, it is the enculturation of the Gospel encouraged by Vatican II since 1963 that introduced the *gangaar* drum into the Church, otherwise, the general context of *gangaar* use is funeral context. In funeral musical performance, there are two main rhythmic patterns which are gender-based. The rhythmic pattern *vignɛm-vignɛm* sonically informs about the death of a man (*dɛblu*), whereas the death of a woman is depicted by the *kpatu-kpatu* pattern (*pɔwlu*). In Dagara land, the use of *Gangaar* is prominent in Dissin and Zambo areas as it is among the Lobi and the Birifor. Normally, *gangaar* is played with sticks while being laid on the ground and controlled with one leg of the drummer. Contrary to that the *kuɔr* is played directly with hands. *Gandaar* is favoured to accompany *lo-gyil* music in Dissin and Zambo areas; while *kuɔr* is mostly used for the music of *lo-gyil* and *dɛgaar* in Nyigbo, Koper and Dano areas.

iii.   *Kuɔr*

Kuɔr is a spherical gourd drum (big calabash) in an hour-glass-drum shape. Etymologically, *kuɔr* derives its name from the gourd resonator which bears the same name as the drum; because gourd in *dagara* means *kuɔr*. Though their frames are different, the membrane used in *kuɔr* making is the same as that of the *dalara*. Their processes of construction are almost the same; except that some small brads are sometimes used to strengthen the pasting of the membrane into the gourd. Its playing techniques are likened to those of the *dalara*.

While it may be employed in other performance settings such as *bɛwaa and bawr-binɛ* music, *kuɔr* is essentially a funeral drum, used to accompany the xylophone during performances of the *ko-binɛ* (funeral music). It is the only musical instrument used for children funeral where the *gyil* is not allowed. Moreover, as a result of cultural influences and borrowings, a non-indigenous drum called *djembe* is occasionally used in certain performance contexts. And it must be noted that the *djembe* is gradually being incorporated into *gyil* ensemble in most Catholic congregations in a number of *dagara* speaking parishes.

Figure 3.6: Picture of *kuɔr*
Source: Photo by the author (2019).

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In conclusion, the membranophones gain their musical and socio-cultural significance as they are seen and treated as 'servants' of the prominent *gyil* in assuring their supportive rhythmic role as some idiophones do. Dagara membranophones are instruments covered with membrane which is always an animal skin. This use of membrane in the construction process is the main criterion for classifying these as such. The playing techniques are of two types: the instrument is either slapped with the palms of the player (*kuɔr* and *dalara*) or struck with some sticks as it is in *gangaar* playing.

d) Idiophone instruments

i.   *Sɛsɛwr*

Originally, *sɛsɛwr* is a small stalked gourd whose pit is emptied through a hole and is, by the same hole, filled with little stones, seeds or an aggregate of both that hit the internal wall of the gourd when shaken. The stalk of the gourd is used as a handle by the player who shakes the *sɛsɛwr* to produce the rhythmic sound. The original type of *sɛsɛwr* is used to enhance the rhythm of *bawr-sɛb* during the festive stage of *bawr* (Initiation). A more recent type of *sɛsɛwr* is used for the same rhythmic purpose in Christian worship. Its content is the same as the original *sɛsɛwr*, but its frame is woven with herb called *gyi-mie*. One of the ends of the frame is larger and covered with a piece of calabash shaped into that end. The other end is tail-like which serves as handle. It is the Dagara maraca.

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Figure 3.7: Picture of *sɛsɛguɛ (sɛsɛwr* **singular***)*
Source: Photo by the author (2019).

ii. *Nu-pra*

Nu-pra is an iron castanet or a finger bell timekeeper in two pieces: an iron ring and a hollow mango-pit-like also in iron. The player wears the ring into either his index or middle finger and the iron cockle into the thumb or vice-versa. The rhythmic role of *nu-pra* is time keeper or timeline.

Figure 3.8: Picture of *nupra*
Source: Photo by the author (2019).

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iii.   *Kur 'lerete*

Kur- 'lerete is the Dagara double headed bell also found in other musical cultures. The main body of the instrument is made of two metallic funnels with different sizes soldered together. A beater in iron or wood is used to hit the two metallic funnels rhythmically in a way to enhance the rhythm of a musical groove. *Gbel-nyɛ* is another bell instrument whose pit of instrument is a piece of iron. Its function is purely religious based. It is employed in the initiation process (*bawr-gbel-nyɛ*), for divinations etc. After consultation with the *bawr-buurɛ*, some babies are required to wear the *gbel-nyɛ* for spiritual protection or healing. Morphologically, *gbel-nyɛ* and *buule* are similar, but functionally different.

Figure 3.9: Picture of *ku'lerete*
Source: Photo by the author (2019).

iv.   *Buule*

Buule is a wrist jingles. It can be described as two *gbel-nyɛ* held together by soft animal skin whose extreme ends is endowed with two laces. The right-handed player uses the two laces to tie the *buule* to his right wrist and vice versa for the left-handed. The two bells attached to the *buule* activate to equally reinforce the percussiveness of the music when the hand is in motion. It is specifically employed to rhythmically strengthen the percussive vitality of a particular genre of funeral music called *dɛgaar* meaning the music of *dɛgaar*. Any *gyil*

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player does not wear the *buule* unless he has eaten the *gyil-tiin* (gyil medicine). *Buule* and *nu-pra* are body extensions in musical performance contexts.

Figure 3.10: Picture of *buule*
Source: Photo by the author (2019).

Balɛw is a manger for puppies. It is a hollow log of wood carved from a tree for animal feeding. The big *balɛw* is meant for the cows and pigs etc. The small *balɛw* which is used as a musical instrument is meant for puppies and dogs. In fact, the Dagara do not see it as musical instrument, but based on its rhythmic involvement in the *bawr-mwɛb* recital, it could be definitely classified as an idiophone and percussion instrument. It should be noted that most of the instruments, regardless of their categories, have been socio-culturally eclipsed by the centrality and the prominence of *gyil*.

v.   *Gyil*

Gyil is the most percussive instrument among all the Dagara musical instruments. Mythically the origin of *gyil* is linked to funeral ceremony. And that connection is still valued by the Dagara today. It has evolved from earth pit xylophone (*kpan-kpol*) to slop – frame and fixed keys xylophone with the smallest and highest pitches keys placed at the low end of the frame. The biggest and lowest pitches keys are located at the upper end of the frame. The wooden slats are attached to the frame by cords wrapped towards the ends of the slats.

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- *Gyil* **frame**

As the *gyil* is playing, the *gyil* construction is also complex including the materials processing and the tuning system. The tools for *gyil* construction include the following: *lɛr-pɛna* (socketed adze), *suo* (knife), axe for splitting logs, local glue from shea nut tree, the *gyil ganɛ*, *panpiɛ* (singular *panpir*) spider's egg membrane for buzzing effects, goat hide, cow hide. *Liga* tree (*pterocarpus erinaceus*), a type of mahogany, is the most suitable wood for carved slats (keys) because of its durability and surrogate qualities. *Liga* comes in two main colours: white and brown or red. But the red or brown or red *liga* is more preferable for its physical aspect and sound quality. The hardness of *liga* in general and the red *liga* in particular, repels the termites, fungi and the moisture, resulting in more sustainability. The spiritual dimension of *liga* considered as the dwelling place of dwarfs (*Konton-bili)*, makes it a mysterious tree. It is more dangerous when alive and less dangerous when dead. Therefore, the *gyil* constructors will easily go for the dead *liga*. The processing of the slats is time-consuming. Sacrifices are necessary for appeasing the spirit of *liga* tree before 'killing' it. But, other makers may not go through these rituals, but will rather go to look for already dead *liga*. The logs of *liga* are roughly cut into slats size for the firing process to start. That firing process is done in so many ways by makers. Besides this, the most important concern here is to get dry trunks of *liga*. For the better the wood is dried, the greater the resonance and vitality of the instrument. After the rough slats are well dried, the subsequent processes of carving and tuning may begin. But, concomitantly other related activities may be done such as the construction of the *gyil* frame.

This sloped frame construction includes other types of wood such as *gaa* (*Diospyros mespiliformis*), *susuule, nyaara* and *yila*. All these trees grow in the savannah area with the *yila* which, more precisely, grows at the river side. The four poles of the *gyil* frame are made from *susuule* tree. The two long and horizontal pieces of wood that connect the four

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poles together are made from the *gaa* tree. Above these horizontal pieces of *gaa* wood are suspended other flat pieces of *gaa* wood to which some battens from *yila* tree are firmly tied. On these flat *gaa* pieces are hung the gourds (*koi* plural of *kuɔr*) that serve as resonators.

Figure 3.11: The frame of the *gyil*
Source: Photo by the author (2016).

- **Tuning system**

Gyil is tuned to the pentatonic scale either from an old xylophone or a particular key called *kyɛra*. The tuning process from an old *gyil* gives impression that the *gyil* ranges in Dagara society depend on the lineages. Tuning process indeed, begins when the slats are shaped by scooping the middle of the under part of a *gyil-bie* (slats) to lower the pitch and by chipping off the ends diagonally towards the edges to raise the pitch. Relying mostly on their human memory, some makers tune the higher pitches first while others begin from the lowest pitch". Yel-ku-naa, a gifted *gyil* maker and player started tuning from low to high keys. But, in general, the tuning process involves two steps: The slats are primarily tuned and the resonating gourds are then tuned to them accordingly. It should be noted that it is the intervallic consistency within and between 'octaves' that makes the tonality of Dagara *gyil* specific and original as such. The *gyil-bie* or slats, laid on the frame in order of size and

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pitch, have specific names. As it is among the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ (gyil* players*)*, there is also a difference of craftsmanship among the *gyil-maalɛ (gyil* makers*)*. From a survey on the *gyile* at different occasions such as festivals or funeral grounds, it is easy to discern varying degrees of skills in the manufacturing of the instruments. Some of them are very good while others are mediocre. The *gyil* tuned to an older *gyil* results to the purpose of standardisation and ownership and distinctive feature. Those endowed with high musicianship make the distinctive differences in sound among the *gyile* from different families or constructors. Two *gyile* from the same maker are likely to sound the same. And the more the *gyile* sound the same, the more harmoniously they can match together and be performed in any given situation. Although two *gyile* can perfectly match, they can be distinguished as male (*gyil-daa*) and female (*gyil pɔw*). The *gyil-pɔw* is characterised by its treble sound like female voice, while the *gyil-daa* sounds more heavy and dominant. It should be therefore understood that when two *gyile* do not match together in sound, it means that there are likely to be made by different constructors.

The *gyil* keyboard is divided into two sections: *gyil-pɛr* (*gyil* bottom) which is the section of high-pitched slats or treble slats: the *gyil-zu* (*gyil* head) which comprises the lower-pitched slats or bass slats. Other scholars may divide it into three parts with the middle part called *gyil sow*. The height of the *gyil-zu* is purposely meant to lodge the big gourds under their corresponding keys. The sloped form of the *gyi*l is shaped to enable the player to have access to both ends high and low. Two playing beaters are associated with the entire body of *gyil*. According to Your-kpɛ Kpowda, a player and maker, stated that, from high to low pitches, the highest tonic of human voice is the *tigbe* and the lowest tonic is the fifth key.

The *gyil* speech surrogates for the announcement of death in Dagara society. Principally, there are two types of *gyil*: *lo-gyil* and *dɛgaar*. *Lo-gyil* has 14 slats and is mostly used for

funeral and recreation; and today in Catholic mass. It is also employed for announcing death through the performance of funeral tunes (*zukpa-bie*). Mythically the cadet *dɛgaar*, as already mentioned, originated from the elder *lo-gyil* through the addition of extra keys or slats; and has been strongly linked to the funeral ceremony. Both are used for the Catholic mass. The following discussion will provide more details regarding the uses and the functions of *gyil*. But, before that, it is worth mentioning, that, *gyil* is the principal instrument around which Dagara musical activities resolve. And the *dagara* word for xylophone is *gyil*, a word which means 'surround'. *Gyil* etymologically refers to how music is made around the instrument since in traditional performance contexts people often surround the instruments with the players in the middle.

Nowadays, changes can be observed regarding *gyil* and contextual performances as well. The construction changes, particularly, have affected the materials. Due to their scarcity, the spider's membrane used for the 'buzzing effect of the *gyil* has been gradually replaced by thin rubbers. The strips of leather are mainly used to fix the slats together and into the frame. The *liga* may be substituted in some places with another tree which features similar qualities of *liga,* that is, sustainability and surrogate qualities. Moreover, there is indeed a commodification of *gyil* music within the framework of transnational cultural business where some *gyil virtuosi* perform on concert stages and also organise workshops and lessons in *gyil* playing for incomes.

Figure 3. 12: The full *gyil*
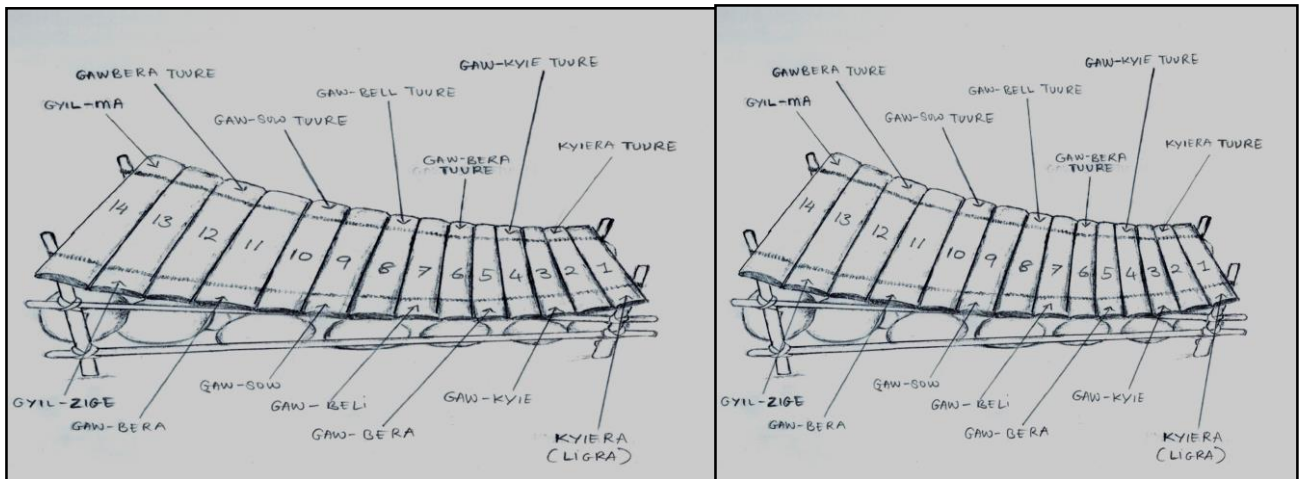Source: Photo by the author (2016).

Figure 3. 13: The names of the keys
Source: Photo by the author (2016).

Beside their accompaniment role, Dagara musical instruments are successful in expressing what human capacities or competences fail. For instance, the emotion that human voice cannot express is externalised by the *gyil*. Unfortunately, a number of Dagara musical instruments died off due to so many factors and reasons: the scarcity or disappearing of the events that their uses are associated with, the substitution with better instruments, the lack of the raw materials for their construction, the centrality and predominance of the *gyil*; and the influence of popular music etc. Nowadays, one of the Dagara praise songs in the Catholic hymn books mentions the names of some died off instruments such as *koridjom*

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and *kankaara.* It should be observed that most of the instruments which died out, are the chordophones and the wind wood instruments over the 'alive' membranophones and idiophones, the first being 'good servants' for the latter, namely the *gyil*. *Gyil* or xylophone is not an exclusive or prerogative property of the Dagara. Xylophones with different names and shapes are distributed across West Africa (Sierra Leone, Guinea, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroun), East Africa (Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Southern Africa (Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Malawi) and Central Africa (Central African Republic).

3.5.2 Minor Genres

In Dagara land, hunting is exclusively a male activity and music (*Nabawlɛ yielu*) associated with the activity is also limited to men only. Women do not hunt, but they only wait for the games for cooking of food. The departure for the hunting is usually located at the vicinities of a house sited at the bush side. The gathering of the hunters occurs at the very place; and the date is orally announced from mouth to mouth forehand. Before the day of hunting, everyone prepares his hunting tools: slingshots, dogs, bows and arrows, guns etc. The hunting starts in the morning and ends in the evening. The hunters usually walk in horizontal line in such a way to disturb the hidden animals and hunt them down. A sharing system or solidarity system is instituted to the extent that one may not kill an animal and still have meat for his family. For instance, when somebody kills a big game such as hare or antelope, another hunter will hold it for him to the end of the hunting. At the closing of the hunting, the owner of the game gives a specific portion of the game, usually one foreleg and the head of the animal to his helper.

So many trials go along with the activity: the trial of thirst, the trial of tiredness and the trial of bewilderment just to mention a few. In case of bewilderment, music is performed to

enable the lost person to locate the group. Likewise, music is performed at the gathering venue to direct people and to announce the start of the hunting activity. Music is also performed to announce a fruitful hunting. It should be noted that all the instruments used for hunting music performance are aerophone instruments probably for their capacity of carrying far away the produced sound. Since women are excluded from the activity, therefore, they are also excluded from the performance of the music associated with it. Unfortunately, the traditional way of hunting is dying off because of urbanisation process. And as a matter of fact, the music and the instrument associated with that music exclusively instrumental music are also disappearing.

Unlike the *Nabawlɛ yielu* (hunting music) which has nearly died off, *Naa-ciimɛ yielu* (herding music) is dying off and also seasonal. In Dagara society, herding animals (cows and sheep) was initially assigned to the male adolescents (about 5 to 15 years old). Some family heads employ Fulani for that assignment. Later on, in some areas, female adolescents, maybe per lack of boys, are found as herd girls. Some adults as herdsmen are very rare in Dagara society. During the dry season, animals are more relatively free in their movements, because there is nothing as crop they can waste. However, during the rainy season they are tightly looked after from morning to the evening time. The herdsmen alternatively send their flock to the bush and river for pasturing. At the sun set, the flock is brought back to the shed and locked in for the night. Like the hunters, herdsmen also face the bush related trials; and they use music to solve some of their problems. For instance, they may perform the *nufola* music to gather themselves into an agreed particular place. Some may use the *wele* instead of *nufola* for the same purpose. *Nufola* and *wele* music is a sounding signal for locating each other in the bush. Besides that, herds' boys may perform songs to guide their flock onto a particular direction or to instigate some of them to fight each other to entertain them. In accompaniment of the animal fighting, some songs (*nii*

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suonfo) are performed with the aim of exciting them for more vitality. Herds' boys are competent in playing with the natural instincts of animals. With the long contact with the flock there is a kind of familiarity between the animals and their boys to the extent that they recognise instinctively his voice. The boys can also name them and call them by these names. He can even speak to them like to a human being. Naturally, it is rather the sound that is captured by the animals and not the interpretation of the words. Herding music is occasional music only known by herdsmen to whom the music is contextually limited. Based on its context and the social category (herdsmen) associated with, herding or pastoral music is less significant compared to other musical genres such as *suolu yielu* which conveys some moral lessons.

Suolu is the Dagara term for story telling which occurs at night time after the super. The social category associated with it, is the group of children of both sexes, but some interested adults may join the group. *Suolu* may be organised and animated by an elderly person such as a grand-father or grand-mother who is knowledgeable enough in that matter. In the compound or on top of the house, the listeners are grouped around the narrator or narrators. Usually, the tales are fables based on the animal stories. These stories convey meaningful moral lessons for life in general though personages are animals. Therefore, sustainable attention is required from the listeners to be able to capture the morality of the tales. The music called *Suolu yielu* (tales telling songs) is used to capture that attention. Music associated with tales is purely vocal. No musical instrument is involved except the narrator's voice. Songs, furthermore, are incorporated in the general structure of tales telling. Singing as part of tales telling brings, indeed, more vitality and make the listeners awake throughout the narration. The lyrics of a particular song may be meaningless apart from imitating the bad or good voice of a particular animal such as hyena or nightingale: *kulur* (turtledove or pigeon), *kyokɛ* (guinea fowl), *piyoro piyoro* (nightingale). When the

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music is full of onomatopoeias, it means that the attention of the listener is melodic oriented. However, some discrepancies regarding songs in particular and tales in general can be observed from one region to another. The discrepancies of tale songs can be either at the melodic level or the lyrics level.

In conclusion, tales telling as hobbies for children entertainment constitute an important educational and instructional tool for life. Thus, the song structurally may be the focal point of the narration in summing up the essence of the tale. Some tale songs had been borrowed by popular musicians such as the late Dabire Nicolas and Julien Somda in their album: *I baa bɛ nyo wala-i*.

In Dagara society, due so many factors or reasons, women are not instrumentalists; they are rather vocalists to the extent that vocal music seems to be their prerogative. For instance, the grinding songs on the traditional millstone called *niɛr* are unaccompanied. There is no way a woman singer can play an instrument while grinding millet with her two hands already occupied. *Nuru loba* is exclusively female musical event for entertainment. *Nuru loba* is so called because it mainly consists in singing and dancing to the rhythm produced by the clapping of hands (*nuru*). As already mentioned, the male counterpart of *nuru loba* is *dalari mwɛb;* because the two musical events occur in the same period of season ('*uon-yi-paala*) and in the moon night usually. Traditionally, the two groups set in the same place for their recreational activities. On the ground, the young ladies form a complete circle or half circle. The musical performance involves a soloist and the chorus in call-and-response form. The soloist or cantor called *nu-ciɛrɛ* leads the performance. While singing to the rhythm of handclapping a dancer moves from the circular line to the middle, shortly perform a dance movement, stretches out her hands and simulates a falling backward movement into the

hands of the other participants. The other participants hold her and throw her up in such a way that she falls on her feet harmlessly.

Nuru-loba as recreational events generally involves two sections: the *nuru* section and the *kaari* section. The *kaari* section is the dance section. The *nuru* songs are characterised by slow tempo, while the *kaari,* also accompanied by handclapping, is faster and danceable. It happens that some ladies drum on their cloths stretched by their legs. The structure or form of the *nuru* and *kaari* songs is call-and-response form. The stanza or call is performed by the soloist or cantor to the audience members (chorus) who respond by the refrain. The refrain or answer does not change. It is the same melody with the same lyrics. However, the call or stanza changes only at the lyrics level. The cantor improvises a lot according to her musical competence and skills. The themes developed by these songs are mainly satirical and apologetic. Through these songs, women who are said to be physically weak depict social misconduct on one hand and on the other hand, commiserate about their maltreatment in the society. *Yanw ni fu ni yielu* means to ridicule somebody through songs in satirical way. In that sense, *nuru* and *bɛwaa* are potentially social control factors. If *nuru loba* is exclusively for young females and *dalari mwɛb* exclusively for young males, *bɛwaa* is the musical event that groups the two sexes together.

The above minor genres are musical styles which are performed only during some specific occasions to which they are strongly and meaningfully related in such a way that their regularity of occurrence is tributary to that of the related occasions. Thus, some of these occasional musics are even dying off since their related occasions or events are also dying off over the years. The major genres which constitute the focus of the study will be extensively discussed in the chapter.

3.6 Conclusion

The investigation on the music of the Dagara has revealed that the music is not a unitary art, but art with several facets considered as musical genres. It does not have exclusively its own terms; but borrows them from the ordinary language. As it is in other non-western cultures, the Western concept of music has no equivalent in *dagara*. Instead, there are terms for specific musical actions such as singing, drumming and dancing. It is from that borrowing process that the Dagara philosophy and aesthetics principles are rationalised. Music is, thus, deduced from combined activities and terms expressing the idea of music such as *mwè yielu*. The absence of exclusive musical concepts and scholarship can be explained by the fact that the whole culture is subject to orality.

In Dagara society, music is neither a profession nor business on its own to the extent that the rewards earned by musicians are not substantial enough to enable him or her have a good living. Therefore, musical activities are carried along with other ordinary activities such as farming. In Dagara society, music-making, as a social fact, convincingly demonstrates the central role played by musical performance in the transmission of knowledge, practices and values, as well as the reaffirmation and transformation of relationships. In general, musicians are valued based on the socio-cultural roles and functions they play through their musical performances. Unfortunately, the gradual disappearance of a number of musical genres is intrinsically linked to the dying off of some inherent instruments or events and vice versa**.**

CHAPTER FOUR

ETHNOGRAPHY OF MUSICAL PERFORMANCES

4.1 Introduction

The chapter discusses the ethnography of Dagara musical performances. As far as these musical performances are concerned, I purposely targeted those of *Bɛwaa*, *Bawr-binɛ* and *Ko-gyil*. As already stated earlier on I personally observed that these three genres capture the essence of Dagara musical tradition. The ethnography investigation will therefore consist of providing answers to the following questions: How does the significance of the three genres within the Dagara society in Burkina Faso resonate with the relationships that exist in their music and the society and what does that mean to their socio-cultural life? Since the ethnographic interest is based on the performance of music and its relationships with other aspects of living culture, the main argument of the discussion is to first of all establish the social significance of these three genres by examining on the basis of textual analysis, their respective social functions and performance structures. On the other hand, it correlates the musical performance structures with the socio-cultural life in the perspective of music as culture according to Merriam (Herndon & McLeod, 1980). Focusing on these musical events as they occur in the cultural context, the discussion on the performances is structured around these concepts: structural distinction, musical meaning, textual distinction and an approximation of each as culture, that is, the inter-relationship between the music and the socio-cultural life.

4.2 The structure and performance of *Bɛwaa*

Bɛwaa is one of the most popular recreational genres in Dagara society. It is the recreational music and dance for the youth of both sexes. Traditionally, it is performed in a specific time when farming activities are completely halted and precisely during the harvest time when people and particularly the youth end the farming activities. Thus, *bɛwaa* season is a time of

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leisure. It is usually performed in the night at the village square, a place which is accessible to everybody.

Nowadays, *bɛwaa* is also performed timelessly as entertaining music for social events such as marriage, installation of a new chief, and welcoming of government officials. It can also be performed at any gatherings such as drinking spots, markets etc. with the same purpose of entertainment. Its playful and humorous nature excludes it from the sorrowful context of a funeral. However, it may be occasionally performed during the funeral of a deceased belonging to a *bɛwaa* group for commemorative and welfare purpose (*zannu-iru*). *Zannu-iru* practice is very common in Dagara society as it serves as homage to the deceased. At the funeral of any deceased person who belongs to a particular group bound through the same work or performance, his colleagues shortly perform the work they were doing together as a sign of commemoration of welfare to the deceased's honour. At the funeral of a very old person *bɛwaa* may also be performed, but at the end of the funeral.

In general, *bɛwaa* as a social event is perceived as a game. Therefore, *Bɛwaa* music is seen as *diɛnu* music in a sense that it is considered as light or non-serious music based on its recreational or playful function. And that may account for the non-involvement of the elderly persons in the performance. However, some of them engage in *bɛwaa* performance as guides and counsellors, especially when the performance is formal or competitive.

4.2.1 The organisation of music: Structural distinction

Formally, *bɛwaa* was performed only on *kpan-kpol*, the predecessor of *gyil*. But now, it is always performed on any *dɛgaar*. Most *gyil* players started learning the instrument with *bɛwaa* repertoire which is relatively easy in terms of rhythmic patterns and musical form. The instrumentation of *bɛwaa* performance is relatively simple: one or two *gyile*, a *kuɔr*,

and a *kpaw-kpawrɛ*. The dancers wear body extensions. They strap their ankles with *sɛsɛguɛ* (jingle metals) and *nupra* (iron castanets) for rhythmic embellishment and marking of the beat. *Bɛwaa* takes place in an open arena where the dancers form a dancing ring (counter clockwise) around the instrumentalists. The traditional setting for the performance is almost the same everywhere. The main *gyil* player accompanied by the timelinekeeper (*kpaw-pawrɛ*) and the drummer (*kɔ-mwiɛrɛ*) constitute the usual ensemble for *bɛwaa* performance. All of them sit in the middle of the performance ground and surrounded by the dancers moving in a circle. The audience usually stands at a place where they can watch the performers. The reaction of the audience may vary depending on the quality of the performance by the musicians and dancers. Some of them may express their joy and appreciations through cheers, praise shouts, adulations; comfort the performers by wiping the sweat from their faces. Some may join the dancers at the dance floor or at their respective places. During the performance there is always a permanent interaction between the main *gyil* player, and the dancers.

4.2.2 Musical interaction

The main gyil player (*gyil-mwiɛrɛ*) accompanied by the timeline keeper and the drummer constitute the usual *trio* for *bɛwaa* performance**.** During the performance there is always a permanent interaction between the main gyil player, and the dancers. The *gyil* player and the lead dancer employ some cues such as the use of the whistle to cue the different changes of movements.

There are two main sections for an entire piece of *bɛwaa*: the song section (*zo-kpar* or *zo-kpa-bir*) and the dance section (*karo*). The song section coincides with walking pace motion while the dance occurs at the end of the song. The song itself also comprises of two parts: the lyrics part (*zo-kpar*) and the instrumental part called *liɛbo* which literally means turning.

Each of these sections *zo-kpar* and *karo* has a specific choreography, rhythm and tempo. In the first phase, the dancers move in counter-clockwise at walking pace, singing along the song (*zo-kpar*) played by the *gyil*, sometimes in call-and-response with the instrumentalists. The second phase is characterised by the dance section (*karo*) accompanied by a faster pure instrumental melody. The overall rhythm of *bɛwaa* piece, indeed, is similar except this acceleration of tempo at the dance section. The lead dancer uses the whistle to tell his or her fellow dancers when to start and to end the *karo*. At this particular moment the dancers do not sing in order to concentrate and also have enough breath for the fast repeated vigorous swinging of the waist and torso and contraction-and-release movements of the back that are characteristic of this dance. When the group of dancers is formed by both sexes, and this is often the case, they pair in opposite sex from time to time to dance face-to-face or perform other movements. This mating can be seen as another expression of the dualistic cosmology of the Dagara. This choreographic cycle is repeated over and over with the performance of each individual song. At times a particular song may be repeated. The dancers also make use of appendices such as castanets attached to their feet or wrists and iron castanets held in their hands in order to beautify the music and reinforce the rhythmic vitality by sounding them in many ways. The modern performance of *bɛwaa,* mostly for competition or commercial purposes, may incorporate some innovative elements. For instance, a second *gyil* may be added. Dancers may dramatise their performance by expressing the meaning of a song through some expressive gestures or movements. There is always a processional dance which introduces the dancers to the dance arena. At the end of the performance, a recessional dance sends them out of the arena.

4.2.3 The organisation of music: Textual meaning

Bɛwaa as a musical event is an important factor of social interaction as it may be a potential marriage market for the youth who are mainly concerned with the music. Above all, the performance of *bɛwaa* also serves not only as an avenue for artistic expression, but as a vehicle as well for communicating to individual and group, sentiments through *bɛwaa* songs texts. The song text below is a vivid example of the instructive nature of *bɛwaa* songs.

Table 4.1: A *bɛwaa* song text and its translation by the author.

Kanw bɛ mi tone nuru tome: Ref/ *ɛ bɛ bobr kɛ yan-gan tolu ɛ*	Someone does not do any job: Ref/ meanwhile he or she does not want to suffer
Kanw bɛ mi tone sɛbɛ tome: Ref/ *ɛ bɛ bobr koo mwɛ montonw ɛ*	Someone is not a public servant: Ref/ meanwhile he or she does not want to endure the heat of the sun
Kanw bɛ mi tone nuru tome: Ref/ *ɛ bɛ bobr kɛ yan tolu ɛ*	Someone does not do any job: Ref/ meanwhile he or she does not want to suffer
Fo na bɛ tɛr nuru tome: Ref/ *fo na i-mwin bɛ zure dian*	He who does not have a job Ref/ There is no way you cannot be a thief
Kanw bɛ mi tone nuru tome: Ref/ *ɛ bɛ bobr kɛ yan-gan tolu ɛ*	Someone does not do any job: Ref/ meanwhile he or she does not want to suffer
Fo na bɛ tɛr nuru tome: Ref/ *fo no bɛ buolɛ a nyan-nyugue*	He who does not have a job Ref/ You will be called thief

The song above admonishes laziness in general as this laziness can consequently lead someone to become a thief. But while discouraging stealing and robbery the song also teaches that the way one can honestly gain the means of his or her living is by all means through hard work.

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In that regard, *bɛwaa* songs can therefore be either songs of protest, insult, ridicule or gossip meant for admonishing or discouraging individual's bad behaviour in society. Many of the song composers are women but men who compose are generally better known. Composers have a very severe or painful ways to participate in the social control. It is a big shame, indeed, to someone's bad behaviour to be revealed to the masses through *bɛwaa* or *bawr-binɛ:* songs. While the focus of *bɛwaa* is vigorous display of dance movements, the song text covers a wide range of themes, communicating issues on current affairs in the community, criticising social deviance, sexual promiscuity, and youth delinquency among others.

4.2.4 Inter-relationship between Bɛwaa structure and social structure

The correlation between *bɛwaa* structure and social structure is more based on the dance structure. The lead dancer through his leadership can be assimilated to the *Tegan-sob* when the latter performs his duty as far as land attribution is concerned. It should be recalled that when the *Tegan-sob* agrees to grant the piece of the land to a new postulant, he takes the lead in direction to the new land to be offered followed by his assessors and the postulants end the queue. While walking he demarcates the boundaries of the new land by means of natural elements such as trees, rivers, hills, roads and also by the boundaries of already occupied lands. Likewise, by giving some specific clues to his fellow dancers the lead dancer always takes the lead for the performance. By means of the whistle as shown below he indicates the 'boundaries' of the dance performance as the *Tegan-sob* does in his performance context.

Figure 4.1: The lead dancer with the whistle in his mouth cuing his fellow dancers during the *karo* time
Source: Photo by the author at Bevouganwn, 2018.

Moreover, dancers occasionally pair in opposite sexes to perform certain dance movements. This is a clear indication of that dualistic mentality attached to *bɛwaa* performance. This also indicates the ontological disposition of the Dagara as far as heterosexuality is concerned. Based on the sharp dualistic mentality symbolised by the abiding antithesis between man and woman that characterises the Dagara mind, I would conclude that homosexual marriage reality as promoted in some cultures may appear difficult to be espoused and integrated into the Dagara socio-cultural practices.

In conclusion, *bɛwaa* music appears as an avenue where performers and audience instruct themselves while entertaining themselves as well. The songs purposely composed to admonish and criticise deviant behaviours are potential whiplashes to bring misconducting people back to the right way. *Bɛwaa* appears beyond music, an important factor of social

control, recreation, entertainment and social interaction for establishment of various relationships. Nowadays, modernity also affects *bɛwaa* in so many ways.

4.3 The structure and performance of *Bawr-binɛ*

Bawr or *bawr-nyowfu* is the Dagara term for traditional initiation. It refers to the religious institution. Its origin is mythical in nature as it has been narrated by my informants and documented by scholars. According to Dabire (1983, p. 9), *bawr* is said to have been inherited from the dwarfs (*konton-bili)* through a kid who got lost in the bush and finally came back home with the secret of *bawr*. According to these knowledgeable *bawr* masters: Antiɛrɛ, Yaago and Mwab, *bawr* originated from a situation where a child got sick. Through consultation with the diviner (*bawr-buurɛ*), the parents found out that their child was possessed by the *bawr mwin* (spirit of initiation) and needed to be initiated for recovery. From this original situation, *bawr* has become the effective solution for all kinds of misfortunes such as frequent death in the family, bad harvest and diseases etc., Beyond its spiritual aspect, *bawr-nyowfu* is also a rite of passage for social mobility. The initiate moves from a given social position to another that is from childhood or adolescence to adulthood or from the non-initiate (*dekume*) status to the initiate status. Initiation is a whole process of training that involves trial, sacrifices, abnegations, teaching and learning about life and the world. In that regard Dabire (1983, p. 10) and C. Dabire (1983, p. 58) all share the definition of *bawr* as the celebration of the realm unity since the celebration integrates candidates into the community of the livings. The *bawr-nyowfu* process is a time-consuming ceremony. It spans more than half a year and can be segmented into three main phases: training stage, liminal stage and the passage stage.

The training stage encompasses so many rites. The pre-selection and the final selection rites are performed at the *Puore-ni-wuor*, *Bɛw-kone*, *Nyiee-mwab* and *Bawr-bɛwr* rites. This first

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stage is mainly characterised by a number of interdictions, namely food related interdictions. The span of this stage alone covers more than six months (from May to December). Once the selected candidates successfully observe these interdictions they are admitted to be considered as *ba-kyan-kpeli* (singl. *ba-kyan-kpele*) meaning official candidates of the initiation. They are externally recognisable through their bodily accoutrements. The whole body of the official candidate is painted or coated with kaolin. His head is wrapped around with some feathered cords. This body painting signifies that the mouth of the candidate symbolically is shut up; hence he or she must never utter bad words for any reason. Among all his or her possessions, there is a shoulder bad made of goat skin and a gourd containing drink or *bawr-tiin* (*bawr* medicine). The stealing of poultry in the context of *bawr* is legalised. Thus, this shoulder bag was meant to store the stolen fowls needed for the various sacrifices as an integrated part of the *bawr* process. But today, the legalised stealing is disappearing. This final or liminal stage comprises a number of rites such as *Ka-mwiɛr, bawr-mwɛb*, *baw-li-kub, Bawr-sɛb*, *Bara-de-nyuor, Bawr-gbelnyɛ, Ti-puor, and Bawr-pele* which occur usually in-between December and February. It is at this final stage that the *bawr* music is performed.

4.3.1 The organisation of music: Structural distinction

There are two types of *bawr-music*: the *bawr-mwɛb* (*Bawr* chant) and *bawr-sɛb* (*bawr* music and dance). The instrumentation of *bawr-mwɛb* involves only a few instruments: the voice and the manger (*balɛw*) and sticks used as beaters. The rhythm pattern produced on the *balɛw* is meant to accompany the recitative delivery of the *bawr* oral text. That text according to Goody (1972) is "the only extensive text of the kind to emerge from Africa". The text is really long and is displayed in chant-like tracing the origin of human being, the different stages of Dagara people migration from Ghana to Burkina, and challenges of social life, etc. *Bwar-mwɛb* is performed during the *bawr-nyowfu* (simple initiation) and

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during the *bawr-kyur* which is the fullness or plenitude of *bawr* initiation because there is hierarchy involved in *bawr* initiation. He who has gone through the *bawr-kyur* ceremony becomes master of the *bawr*. It is some of *bawr* seniors who perform the *bawr-mwɛb* chant. The melodies of the chant are very short, repeated and fast. The candidates seated in circle repeat exactly what is said by the leading master. The focus of the performance is not on the melody, but on the lyrics that convey a particular message in relation to God, the world, Dagara history and social life. The shortness of the musical sentences favours the memorisation of the whole message inherent in ritual text in general. The *bawr* chant is performed in the *bawr-diow* to the exclusion of the non-initiates (*dekume*). But the *bawr-sɛb* is very open. Music clearly appears in the context of the *bawr-mwɛb* as a didactic tool or means for easy memorisation of the *bawr* message by the candidates.

The most complex music of *bawr* is the *bawr-sɛb* which refers to the danceable music of *bawr*. *Bawr-binɛ* literally means "dance of initiations". The instrumentation includes the *lo-gyil* (14 keys xylophone), the *kuɔr* (gourd-drum) and the *sɛsɛguɛ* (gourd castanets). *Bawr-sɛb* occurs in the night (*bawr-tiinsow*) after the symbolic death rite of the candidates and continues to the following day (*bawr-motonw*) when the *bawr-mwɛb* with rhythmic accompanied on the *balɛw* takes place in the night. While *bawr-sɛb* is the context or stage, *bawr-binɛ:* is the music and dance performed at that particular stage.

Bawr-binɛ as already defined does not have a particular setting or organisation. Those who are attracted by the music will dance around the instrumentalists or close to them in order to hear the music and dance to it. Everyone dances as he or she can. But, dancers and observers spontaneously may form a circle around the performers performing muscled dance. In the context of initiations, *bawr-binɛ* or *bawr-sɛbru* plays an important role as ceremonial music. It consists of a bodily expression of joy for a successful initiation

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ceremony. Though women may dance outside the male group, *bawr-binɛ* is predominantly a male dance. It is a body-against-body dance which sometimes ends up with wrestling among dancers as it can also occasionally engender fights, disputes or quarrels. This might be the reason why women are not involved in that 'muscled dance', because sociologically women are believed to be physically the weak gender who normally does not wrestle. Aside that, a lot of young men and women select their partners in life during *bawr-binɛ* gathering. Because a very good performance by an individual may be attractive to the opposite sex who may fall in love with the performer as this may be the case in the context of *bɛwaa.*

Like *bɛwaa*, the song texts of *bawr-binɛ* constitute a means of social control. They teach, encourage, compliment, and praise the good people while the bad ones are admonished, discouraged, gossiped, ridiculed, and even insulted for their shameless behaviours. The melody of the *bawr-binɛ* is standard while the lyrics change according to the contexts of action. *Bawr-binɛ* is joyful music played in the same *lo-gyil* which is commonly believed to produce melancholic, sorrowful or sad music. But, I strongly believe that it is rather the lyrics of the songs played on the *lo-gyil* that brings out either sadness or joy, according to the contexts of performance. Thus, *lo-gyil* music*,* contextually and thematically, produces melancholic sentiments in funeral ceremony and rather joyful feelings in the context of *bawr-binɛ.*

The *bawr-binɛ* music has been borrowed and introduced into the Christian worship as far as its rhythmic features and the name are concerned. This borrowing process, in the context of ethnodoxology and for that purpose, can be explained by the fact that *bawr* from which the music stemmed and the Christian worship share the same religious purpose of addressing spiritual needs. However, the content of song texts meant for Christian worship are different from those used in the traditional ceremony as those texts are fundamentally inspired by

Christian doctrine. Thus, most of the praises and thanksgiving songs during the holy mass and other church services have been inspired by *bawr-binε* music. Therefore, the *bawr-binε* music in the church rhythmically still links to the Dagara traditional *bawr* but thematically separates them from it. The main musical instrument of the *bawr-binε* performance is the *lo-gyil*. While the *dεgaar* is the instrument used for *bεwaa* performance, and the *lo-gyil* for the *bawr-binε* both xylophones are used for the performance of the funeral music or *ko-gyil*.

4.3.2 The organisation of music: Textual meaning and musical interaction

One of the most important rites that occur during the *bawr-tiinsow* is the symbolic death of the candidates (*baw-li kub*). After that symbolic death a song is performed in call-and–response fashion between the lead singer and the gathering that play the role of the chorus. Below are the words that are set to the standard melody of the *bawr-binε* during the *bawr-sεb* section. These words illustrate that symbolic death.

Table 4. 2: A *bawr-binε* song text and its translation by the author

<u>First section</u>	<u>Translation</u>
Var kpara gan dio waan *Var kpara gan dio kε kone ka*	Corpses are laying down in the room Corpses are laying down in the room and there is nobody to mourn over them
Nyi kone a, nyi kone nyi daar yaw *Waa waa waa waaa waa i waa eee*	Wail, wail for the sake of the future *Waa waa waa waaa i waa eee* (phonetic words for crying)
<u>**Second section**</u>	
E bε waar-i kobr a (bis) *E bε waar-i kobr wa ya bague* *I yei i yaa, i yei i yaa i yeo (bis)* *Waa waa waa waa waa i waa eee (bis)*	Bring 500 cfa (bis) Bring 500 cfa to support the candidates *I yei, i yaa, i yei i yaa i yeo* (bis) *Waa waa waa waa waa i waa eee (bis)*

This cash farewell or support is added to the collected money which is shared among the masters at the end of the initiation. Moreover, the following day to the *bawr-tiisow* (night time) is the *bawr-montonw* (day time). As previously stated, the *bawr-mwεb* is performed during the night of the *bawr-montonw*. This chant performance is solely meant for the

people who are members of the cult, that is, the candidates or initiates and their masters. The text of the *bawr-mwɛb* is about knowledge on cosmos, Dagara history, life and the world in general. The text is narrated through a fast chant by some masters alternatively. The *bara-de-nyuor* (festive day) follows the *bawr-montonw*. The musical performance is associated with this *bara-de-nyuor* features the *bawr-tiinsow* in terms of melodic characteristics and performance structure. In other words, the same melody is set in different words as follows:

Table 4. 3: A variation of the *bawr-binɛ* song text.

Bara de nyuora (bis) yo mwaa mwaa (bis)
Waa waa waa waa waa i waa eee
I yei i yaa i yei i yaa i yeo

The same melodic set to the above words is also set to different themes which, in most cases, ridicule any *bawr-saa* who misbehaved. There is no *bawr* initiation without any song purposely composed to ridicule the *bawr-saa*.

4.3.3 Inter-relationship between *bawr-binɛ* structure and social structure

Throughout the *bawr* process, the *bawr-mwɛb* section appears as the educational framework of the Dagara formal education. Through their performative interactions with the candidates the *bawr-saabɛ* (*bawr* masters) teach the candidates about issues related to social life, Dagara history, the cosmos and the world in which they live. A lot of secrets are passed down to the candidates who are supposed to keep them unknown to the non-initiated candidates. The hardship in training is mainly based on food interdictions this formal education as it equips the candidates with human values and virtues such as self-control and perseverance in life. In sum, through *bawr* musical performances some religious goals, social control and interactions are achieved as it is in funeral musical performances.

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The music of *bɛwaa* and *bawr-binɛ* may appear to some extent as less complex. However, a close analysis of some aspects of the musical performances regarding them may reveal a certain degree of complexity involved in them as well. But the most obvious complex music among the three genres under investigation is the *ko-gyil* or funeral music. Its complexity can be observed at different levels, but the levels of complexity I want to focus on in the following section are the structural constraints of the musical performance imposed by the society and the poetic language of the *gyil*.

4.4 The structure and performance of *ko-gyil*

In the olden days, funeral ceremonies were regarded as sad occasions where solidarity was shown: *zo 'maa taa faa taar* (to gather for solidarity and support). Since then funeral ceremony and the music associated with it constitute the most complex and important aspect of Dagara cultural system. Several factors account for that significance and complexity of the ceremony. Among them the main factors are the perception of death by the Dagara, the relationship between the deceased and the survivors and the mode of death. An exploration of Dagara understanding of death and its implications is an imperative prerequisite of the understanding of the musical performance in the context of funeral.

4.4.1 Dagara understanding of death

From their worldview in general and through their nomenclature the Dagara perceive *kuu* (death) as an inevitable phenomenon as every human being is bound to experience it sooner or later. Some indigenous names such as Kuubèterzie (death has no fixed place), Kuusom (I belong to death) and Kuu-laarɛ (death hovers around), to mention these few examples reflect that belief of Dagara regarding the inescapable death. Some other names also express the Dagara belief in the might of death and the consequences of its occurrence in human life: Kuu-tuon (death overcomes everything) Kuu-faalo (misery due to death) Kuusang-yele

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(death spoils or destroy everything), Kuu-fam (death has impoverished me) and Kuubɛ-tɛr suur-ib (It is in vain to get annoyed with death) to cite only these, are samples of numerous names that reflect the Dagara incapability before death whose 'cousin' is sickness.

However, the Dagara are soothed with the belief that death is a liminal passage from earthly life to life hereafter. This belief about life beyond death is as strong as that about death itself. It also soothes their fear of death to the extent that they use euphemism to describe death sometimes: *Na kule yee, yee, yee* is the most common expression of *lanw-kon-bɛ* (dirge singers). It is commonly believed that funeral ceremony and its correlatives such as wailing, animal sacrifices, music and dance, serve the purpose of accompanying the deceased to the land of his or her ancestors. If the funeral or mortuary rituals are not duly performed the soul (*siɛ*) which leaves the body at death to become a ghost wanders or hung around until he or she gets satisfaction from the living. At that state, the deceased who now becomes *nyan-kpiin* (ghost) is said to be a stubborn disturber who may begin killing off members of the family until the appropriate funeral rites are completed. Furthermore, their belief in the ancestorhood can also be linked to their distinction of types of death: The bad death (*kuu-faa*) and the good death (*kuu-vla*). Death is classified as bad death if it is caused by an accident, snake bites, thunder (*saa*) and drowning. However, it should be noted that the ultimate causes of these said to be bad deaths are identified with witchcraft and nature spirits which might be offended by the deceased. On the other hand, a good death is death out of normal or natural sickness. The distinction of death also brings about distinction with regards to the funeral celebration. For instance, the corpse of a person who died of a snake bite or lightening is not normally exposed in the traditional dress.

Funerals therefore constitute an important ceremony in Dagara cultural system as it provides the community in general and the family in particular with an opportunity to

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sympathise, socialise and interact around the dead body of a beloved member. With regard to the Dagara in Burkina Faso, funerals immediately start after the person dies and may span from two (2) to four (4) days according to the age of the deceased and to the region as well. Unlike their kinsmen in Ghana they do not observe a relatively long period of preparation before the celebration of funeral. Within this period of time, so many activities are undertaken inherently to the two following stages as major components of the ceremony, that is, the first and the second expositions of the corpse. The importance of musical performance in the context of funeral derives from that of the ceremony itself.

4.4.2 The organisation of music: Structural distinction

The Dagara funeral music comprises the two aspects of music: vocal and instrumental. The vocal music is essentially about *pɔwbɛ kpa-kon* (female dirge singing) and the *lanwni* (male dirge singing) of the *lanw-kone* (dirge singer) already discussed. However, it should be noted that the *pɔwbɛ kpa-kon* occurs very rarely. The instrumental music is basically the *gyil* music. *Kuor* and *bawr*, indeed, are treated as the most serious ceremonies which deserve most respect and attention. However, the *gyil* role is much more important in *kuor* rituals than in *bawr* ceremony. The *gyil* is omnipresent throughout the funeral ceremony from the beginning to the end. It opens and closes the funerals. The two *gyile* are involved: The music of *lo-gyil* and the music of the *dɛgaar*.

a) During the first exposition of the corpse

When someone dies, the male members of the family quickly organise a short meeting to deal with some important issues such as the funeral organisation and the sending of emissaries to places with the aim of spreading the news in terms of invitation, etc. Some of these emissaries are primarily and by precaution sent to villages and areas where the most concerned close relatives of the deceased reside such as the maternal family (male

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deceased) and the paternal family (married female deceased). Funeral begins during the first exposition of the corpse after the washing of the dead body. This exposition occurs just at the entrance of the compound. The corpse is set on a chair and adorned with meaningful items as shown in the picture below. Anthony Naaeke (2005) confirmed the meaningfulness of these items in these terms: "The ceremony of the dead affirms the values of society and as such; the displays of things around the *paala* (pyre) are rhetorical displays that symbolically convey meanings on Dagara cultural values" (p. 68).

Figure 4.2:The funeral stand (pyre) sheltering the corpse adorned with old pictures of the deceased and family, bow and arrows, maize and other items during the second exposition.
Source: Photo by the author at Dissin-Toyaga in Burkina Faso (2019).

Generally, these items are of three types. The common items are those found around all the corpses irrespective of the sex or the age of the deceased. The *ka-gyin* or the millet cob is the most common item together with other crops such as corncob, groundnuts, beans, etc., constitute the meaningful symbols of the farming or agricultural activities. Among these items are found some materials that noticeably reveal the sex of the deceased. For instance,

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a jar and/or calabash are placed beneath the funeral stand with some clothes hanging upon it, tells any sympathiser that the deceased is a female. These items refer to and symbolise her female activities (See photo below). The calabash in the picture below tells that the deceased is a woman and was a renowned *pito* preparer.

Figure 4.3: The posture of the deceased during the first exposition.
Source: Photo by author in Nandom (2016).

Likewise, the male deceased is adorned with a bow and arrows placed at the hands of the deceased to symbolise the exclusive male activity of hunting (See picture above). The third type of items refers to those that indicate the specific occupation and properties such as bicycle or motorbike of the deceased. A tailor deceased for instance will have his or her

sowing machine under the pyre while a mechanic deceased is adorned with his kit of tools. All these items are set during the first exposition characterised by the emotional mourning mood and later on carried along with the corpse to the second exposition ground.

i. The music of *Lo-gyil*

During that heated moment of the first exposition, all the family members are wailing over the deceased accompanied by the polyphonic sound and melancholic mood of the *lo-gyile* (plural of *lo-gyil*) and other accompaniments such as *kuɔr* and *kpawro*. It is in the funeral ceremonies that the *gyil* is most important as a communicative tool. The *gyil* player uses the *gyil* surrogate to communicate his or her sorrow, anxiety, hope, compassion and condolences to the group of mourners. Like the *lanw-kone,* he criticises, admonishes, advises, satirises, encourages his listeners. The beginning as well as the interment rites are marked out by the music played on the *lo-gyil* or 14 keys *gyil*. The *lo-gyil* music does not have any specific structure. But the only musical constraint is about the "genderisation" of the melodic themes developed through instrumental performances. These melodic themes are performed based on the sex of the deceased. It is inadmissible for a *gyil* player to be performing a female song or theme at the funeral of a man and vice versa because the message of the song will not be relevant to the deceased. It can be concluded that those performers who make these confusions in the selection of their performance repertoires are automatically considered as being ignorant about the content of the songs. This instrumental music accompanies the wailing inaugurated by the head of the family who calls in a wailing tone of his dead father (*I saa wo-i*).

The music of the *lo-gyil* is very touching and melancholic. And it is at this very crucial moment that the music also plays an important role of a "messenger". The *lo-gyile,* sometimes associated with the gun shots, are used to alert and announce the news of death

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to the entire settlement. This instrumental announcement is later confirmed by some emissaries sent by the family of the deceased. The *gangaar* rhythmic pattern and the *gyil* melodic themes particularly inform from far about the sex of the deceased. **Dabire (1983, p. 13) specified that the triple time signature is masculine (*dɛblu*) while the quadruple time signature is feminine (*pɔwlu*).** The gender-based figure symbolism is also rhythmic. The instrumentalists, in number of three usually, are set not too far from the exposed body. The *lo-gyil* performance is always polyphonic: one player plays the main melody while the second player harmonises and reinforces the rhythm by an accompaniment. The melancholic mood through the *lo-gyil* performance is brought back at the very hot moment of the interment. According to Dabire Anaclet, the *lo-gyil* music was danced by both men and women. But, nowadays particularly in Dissin and Zambo areas it is danced only by women. The *lo-gyil* starts the funeral, but, the *dɛgaar* ends it. Below is a sample of *lo-gyil* texts (*zo-kpai* plural) transcribed from interviews with Somda Pierre Claver and Dabire Joseph from Saala and Dabire Anaclet from Guora. These texts are short repeated refrains played on the *gyil* over and over.

Table 4.4: *Lo-gil* song texts and translations by the author.

Man	Translation by the author
Gaada tan miwr ka kpele, a pɔw banw gu mo tanɛ	The bow rope of the powerful man has broken away; and his wife, hopelessly, prepared the food with soil (instead of meat).
Ni daa yel kanw na wana	Something may happen one day
Kow gbebir a baa do mwɛr	The dog has bitten the toe of a leper
Woman	
Daa mii siw puo	The *pito* has become sour in the jar
Naamwin-i Naamwin-i Tew sanw nɛ na	God, God, the world is spoiling
Tegan-i Tew sanw nɛ na	Earth, the world is spoiling
Naamwin-i, Tew sanw nɛ na	God, God, the world is spoiling
Naamwin-i nibɛ baarɛ (bis)	God, the world is ending (bis)
Ti na i-n mwin nibɛ ta barɛ.	What can we do to prevent people from dying?

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The above melodic themes are so emotional. These emotions are further deepened by the heightened and emotional moment of the first exposition of the corpse. They highlight the destructive activities of death in human life (*Naamwin-i, Tew sanw nɛ na*). Moreover, they also praise the deceased in his or her deeds when alive. For instance, the melodic theme *Gaada tan miwr ka kpele...* informs the listener that the male deceased was either a great warrior and a great hunter, and the corpse of the deceased adorned with a bow expresses that meaning. On the other hand, *Daa mii siw puo* refers to this important female activity in Dagara society which is *pito* or local beer preparation or processing. The *lo-gyil* uplifts the mourning mood whereas the *dɛgaar* relaxes that mood. The repertoire of the *lo-gyil* texts is developed especially in areas where the *lo-gyil* music outweighs that of the *dɛgaar* and vice versa. The duration of this first exposition varies from area to area. It may take a full day in some places such as Dissin area while in other places like Nyigbo it is about some hours before the official opening of the funeral ceremony *(kuor-wuofu)* with the *dɛgaar* performance. During the second exposition, the positioning of the funeral pyre symbolically informs about the gender of the deceased. A female deceased faces West direction, while male deceased faces East. This symbolic positioning is said to be time-related. A man is much more concerned with the morning time (rising of the sun) because of his male activities such as farming while a woman is more thoughtful about inventing time (sun set) due to her female activities such as cooking**.**

ii.   During the second exposition

During the second exposition, the corpse and all the adorned items are moved to the funeral ground called *ko-guɔ* at the vicinities of the household generally near the biggest three for shade's sake. The musical performance usually occurs under that shaded tree called *gyil-pɛr* which simply means around the *gyil*. Once again, this reference to the *gyil* tells the centrality of *gyil*. It is the *dɛgaar* (17 keys xylophone) that is used for that proper

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inauguration of the funeral. For, the musical performance and the wailing during the first exposition do not really start the funeral ceremony. It is rather the *kuor-wuofo* rite with the *dɛgaar* that officially opens the ceremony. The *kuor-wuofu* or proper inauguration of the funeral serves as a transition between the first and the second expositions, in a sense that it ends the first and starts the second. It may occur before the move to the funeral ground as it may happen there around the funeral stand. The music played on that particular instrument is called *lanwni* as opposite to the *lo-gyil* music.

iii.   The structure of the *Kuor-wuofu*

Kuor-wuofu which means beginning of the funeral has a definite structure which may be slightly modified according to regions. This table below displays the specific structure of the *lanwni* or music of the *dɛgaar* during the *kuor-wuofu* or opening of funeral. As it can be observed the structure is not only gender-based but also reveals the kinship ties.

Table 4.5: Synoptic table showing the similarities and particularities of musical structures according to regions.

AREA	GENDER	
	MAN	**WOMAN**

NYIGBO	**Kpab**
	Dɛgaar
	    Dɛgaar 1 (Yir dem)
	    Dɛgaar 2 (maa-yir dem)
	    Dɛgaar 3 (siman dem)
	
	Buolu
	Laaru
	Bɛlanw-mɛ
		Kpab
		Dɛgaar
		    Dɛgaar 1 (Sir-yir dem)
		    Dɛgaar 2 (Sir-yir dem)
		    Dɛgaar 3 (Saa-yir dem)
		    Dɛgaar 4 (Siman dem)
		
		Buolu
		Laaru
		Bɛlanw-mɛ

KOPER	**MAN**	**WOMAN**
	Kpab **Dɛgaar** Dɛgaar 1 (Yir dem) Dɛgaar 2 (Yir dem) Dɛgaar 3 (Yir dem) **Buolu** **Laaru** **Bɛlanw-mɛ** (Siman dem)	**Kpab** **Dɛgaar** Dɛgaar 1 (Sir-yir dem) Dɛgaar 2 (Sir-yir dem Dɛgaar 3 (Sir-yir-dem) Dɛgaar 4 (Saa-yir dem) **Buolu** **Laaru** **Bɛlanw-mɛ** (Siman dem)
DISSIN	**MAN**	**WOMAN**

	Kpab
	Dɛgaar
	    Dɛgaar 1 (Yir dem)
	    Dɛgaar 2 (Yir dem)
	    Dɛgaar 3(Maa-yir dem)
	
	Buolu
	Laaru
	Bɛlanw-mɛ
		Kpab
		Dɛgaar
		    Dɛgaar 1 (Sir-yir dem)
		    Dɛgaar 2 (Sir-yir dem
		    Dɛgaar 3 (Sir-yir dem)
		    Dɛgaar 4 (Sir-yir dem)
		
		Buolu
		Laaru
		Bɛlanw-mɛ

ZAMBO	**MAN**	**WOMAN**

	Kpab
	Dɛgaar
	    Dɛgaar 1 (Yir dem)
	    Dɛgaar 2 (maa-yir dem)
	    Dɛgaar 3(siman dem)
	
	Buolu
	Laaru
	Bɛlanw-mɛ
		Kpab
		Dɛgaar
		    Dɛgaar 1 (Sir-yir dem)
		    Dɛgaar 2 (sir-yir dem
		    Dɛgaar 3 (Saa-yir dem)
		    Dɛgaar 4 (Siman dem)
		
		3- **Buolu**
		4- **Laaru**
		5-**Bɛlanw-mɛ**

DANO	**MAN**	**WOMAN**

	Kpab
	Dɛgaar
	    Dɛgaar 1 (Mwɛ bɛr)
	    Dɛgaar 2 (Mwɛ bɛr)
	    Dɛgaar 3 (Saa-yir dem)
	
	Buolu
	Laaru
	Bɛlanw-mɛ
	(Not played immediately)
		Kpab
		Dɛgaar
		    Dɛgaar 1 (Mwɛ bɛr)
		    Dɛgaar 2 (Mwɛ bɛr)
		    Dɛgaar 3 (Mwɛ bɛr)
		    Dɛgaar 4 (Saa-yir dem)
		
		Buolu
		Laaru
		Bɛlanw-mɛ
		(Not played immediately)

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From the above table the gender-based factor is structurally symbolised by the figure three (3) for male and the figure four (4) for female. This figure symbolism is derived from the Dagara's worldview according to which a man is associated with the figure three (3) which means 3 times and a woman with the figure four (4) which also means 4 times: *Dɛb-niw gbaa a-ta, pɔw niw gbaar a-naar*. This symbolism is one of the principles or criteria for gender differentiation and for dealing with related issues in the society. In *kuor-wuofo* context for instance male deceased deserves three (3) *dɛgaar* and one (1) *bɛlanw-mɛ* while a female deceased deserves four (4) *dɛgaar* and one (1) *bɛlanw-mɛ*. In other words, for the *kuor-wuofu* of a male deceased, the complete *dɛgaar-bɛlanw-mɛ* cycle is made up of four (3+1) pieces while that of a female comprises of five (4+1) pieces.

Moreover, from the same chart, it can be deduced that *kuor-wuofo* structure is very meaningful and revealing of Dagara kinship system. Before the *kuor-wuofu* rite there are imperative interactions among at least two families as prerequisites of the funeral organisation. Within these organisational interactions, the paternal family (*saa-yir dem*) of a male deceased outweighs his maternal family (*maa-yir dem*) while the husband's family (*sir-yir dem*) of a female deceased outweighs her paternal family. But despite that difference of responsibilities the collaboration in this particular context is crucial and imperative either between paternal and maternal families or between husband's family and paternal family. A failure of doing so may be detrimental to the relationship of both families. The neighbourhood called *si-man dem* also play an important role within the funeral ceremony as the deceased is considered as a member, a brother or a sister. To summarise, the main components involved in a male funeral organisation and inauguration are the paternal and maternal families and to some extent the neighbourhood. On the other hand, in the female funeral context, the husband's family where the deceased normally resides take the lead of the organisation in collaboration with the paternal family of the deceased lady and the

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neighbourhood. It should be noted that in the last case the maternal family does not play any specific role. They come just as other sympathisers.

While the wailing cries are going on and after the families agree to inaugurate the funeral, the *lanw-kone* from the family suddenly starts the *lanwni* by calling his father but this time in *lanwni* tone which is different from the wailing tone. These are the common words used to start the inaugural *lanwni*:

Table 4.6: Beginning of the opening *lanwni* and translation by the author.

I saa wooo wooo a baara yeee	My father wooo wooo, all is finished yee
Yir kpee, yir zaw yee	Big family which is dying off
I saa a yir zo na yee	My father, the family has disappeared
I saa mine nyi tuori nyow bon na waar a yeee	My fathers, may you welcome (name of the deceased) who is on his way.

People then start gathering around him and respond to his *lanwni* calls. In fact, the call for inauguration by the *yir-lanw-kone* in *lanwni* way constitutes the first *kpab* for the *dɛgaar* section. His *kpab* is followed by those of the *lanw-kon-bɛ* from the mother's family and *si-man-dem* (man) or from the paternal family and *si-man-dem* (female). This order of *kpab* is scrupulously the same observed for the performance of the core pieces. This *dɛgaar* music section is followed with the *bɛlanw-mɛ* music section. But in-between the two sections, is the *buolu* which serves as introduction to the *Bɛlanw-mɛ* which happens once at the opening stage. After the performance of the three (3) or four (4) *dɛgaar* followed by one (1), *bɛlanw-mɛ* and their respective introductions, the floor is now open for different groups of sympathisers for the performance of the cycle *dɛgaar-bɛlanw-mɛ*. That exclusively gives way to the music of the *dɛgaar*.

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At that stage, the cycle *dɛgaar-bɛlanw-mɛ* is observed in respect of the different arrivals of the sympathisers. When it is possible men and women come in groups. At the funeral ground, they go straight to the pyre or funeral stand for the rituals (*'uori lob*) around the exposed corpse before the men join the male gathering around the *gyil* (*gyil pɛr*). Women only come into this gathering just to donate money to the bereaved members who reward the performers by a well-organised distribution of that money.

Figure 4.4: Musical performance ground called *gyil per* where the instrumentalists are surrounded by the audience members.
Source: Photo by the author at Bon in Burkina Faso (2019).

From the picture above, one can see ladies who are joining the gathering in order to contribute to the rewards of the performers at the *gyil per*. One bereaved member is looking for change for the lady in yellow waiting. Usually the *gyil* ensemble for the *dɛgaar* performance has three instrumentalists for two *gyile* and one *kuɔr*. Another important performer is the l*anw-kone* also described as lamentation vocalist. But, the main *gyil* player is the more authoritative leader of the performance. He and the *lanw-kone* interact a lot especially during the testing of the *gyil* (*piiru*), as already mentioned, in order to get the

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right tonic of the song. The *lanw-kone* may ask the *gyil* player to lower or to raise the pitch in order to suit his vocal range.

iv.   The music of *dɛgaar*

According to some of my informants, the main difference between *dɛgaar* music and *bɛlanw-mɛ* music lies on their respective thematic materials. The song texts of the *dɛgaar* are very deep and emotional. They deal with the most serious issues in relation to the death event. The themes are basically praise and complaints. Based on its seriousness, *dɛgaar* is normally played in funeral context. According some *gyil* players such as Kom, the *dɛgaar* melodies are difficult to perform compared to those of the *bɛlanw-mɛ* which are easier apart from the *lanw-wogo* or *lanw-kpɛɛn* (*Kaa-daa*), type of *bɛlanw-mɛ*. *Bɛlanw-mɛ* song texts combine serious issues and non-serious ones. They deal with praises and compliments towards the deceased and his or her family for their good deeds. They also develop some sorts of insult, gossip with the aim of sanctioning bad people. *Dɛgaar* and *bɛlanw-mɛ* as musical types refer both to what is played on the *gyil* (*dɛgaar*) and also to the *lanw-kone*'s lamentations.

Bɛlanw-mɛ can also be played out of funeral contexts in order to entertain people at public gatherings such as festivals. Such occasions give opportunities to some people to learn how to dance *ko-binɛ*. Though it is not formally instituted, the mastering of *ko-binɛ* has become a social criterion used to measure one's level of integration into the Dagara society and to appreciate the indigenous peoples' knowledge about their own culture. Therefore, if an indigenous person does not know how to dance to *ko-gyil,* he or she is seen as not really rooted in the culture. It can be observed that only women dance to the music of *lo-gyil*; while to the music of *dɛgaar* both sexes dance respectively with different dancing paces. Men and women always dance in line always led by a bereaved member towards the pyre.

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Men have two types of dance: *Bin-vaara* which involves jumps and *Bin-maala* which is more artistic. Women artistic dance is also of two types: the *bin-maala* and the *dɛgabɛ loba*. The *pɔwbɛ dɛgabɛ loba* is termed as such because it is characterised by an aesthetically stamping of feet. This second dance could be seen as the female counterpart of *bin-vaara*. This scenario of music and dance goes on until the end of the funeral ceremony.

Table 4.7: Synoptic table showing the similarities and particularities of musical structures based on gender.

Cycle of *dɛgaar-bɛlanw-mɛ* in Nyigbo area

__A male deceased__	__A female deceased__
Kpab (by 3 lanw-konbe)	**Kpab** (by 3 lanw-konbe)
Dɛgaar 1 (group 1)	***Dɛgaar 1*** (group 1)
Dɛgaar 2 (group 2)	***Dɛgaar 2*** (group 2)
Dɛgaar 3 (Group 3)	***Dɛgaar 3*** (Group 3)
	Dɛgaar 4 (Group 4)
Buolu	**Buolu**
(Larru)	**(Laaru)**
Bɛlanw-mɛ (Group 1)	*Bɛlanw-mɛ* (Group 1)
Bɛlanw-mɛ (Group 2)	*Bɛlanw-mɛ* (Group 2)
Bɛlanw-mɛ (Group 3)	*Bɛlanw-mɛ* (Group 3)
	Bɛlanw-mɛ (Group 4)

This table outlines the structure followed during the period in-between the opening and the funeral dismissal rites. This structure has to be distinguished from the structure used for the opening and the closing of the funeral rites. It can be termed as the core structure or on-going structure being employed in the core of the entire ceremony. Thus, the chart reveals that music performed on the *dɛgaar* is not only gender-based but also has a definite structure. Thus, the *lanwni* performance usually has two main parts: the *dɛgaar* as musical type and the *bɛlanw-mɛ*. The latter structurally follows the former in performance context. The larger division of the structure is in two parts or sections described as *Dɛgaar* and

bɛlanw-mɛ. Each of these sections has essentially the same substructure consisting of an introduction followed by the development. The word *Kpab* in *dɛgaar* and as I have already mentioned earlier on is used to translate the concept of 'warm up' in instrumental *gyil* music. The concept may also be understood as an 'introduction' to the musical piece. Three (3) *lanw-kon-bɛ* in male funeral and four (4) *lanw-kon-bɛ* in female funeral one after the other perform the *kpab* rite. The same order is observed for the performance of the three (3) or four (4) *dɛgaar* or pieces that immediately follow those *kpab*. The same process is scrupulously observed in the second section of *bɛlanw-mɛ* where the introduction is called *buolu* which means calling. In terms of time, *buolu* also called *soro* (recitation) is longer than *kpab*. It may take averagely from10 to 30 minutes according to the area. The *buolu* (*soro)* ends this section of praises with the *laaru.* The *laaru* consists of proverbial or philosophical statements in short sentences. It may be a meaningful story which appeals for subsequent and further reflection on life. Some *laaru* are immoral or funny as they may make people laugh. The *kap* and the *buolu* are particularly speech like. It is more about speech delivery than singing although they are in chanting forms. The *laaru* is more interactive between the *lanw-kone* and the crowd. In some families or in some circumstances such as during young or child funeral *laaru* is not allowed. This may be so due to its relaxed nature. Mostly *laaru* occurs during elderly persons' funerals. These introductory sections *kpab* and *buolu* are the very moments when the *lanw-kon-bɛ* chants their praises in honour of the deceased and his or her families. Sometimes they continue those praises in the core of their performance. However, these praise singers tend to be insult singers as some *lanw-kon-bɛ* are sometimes complaisant insulting people. These insult singers are described by Mathias Somba, a *virtuoso lanw-kone* as bad *lanw-kon-bɛ*.

The cycle of *dɛgaar-bɛlanw-mɛ* or the on-going structure may be slightly modified regarding the importance of the gathering or to acknowledge the presence of great

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personalities who do not have much time to spend on the funeral ground. At the end of each cycle, there is change of instrumentalists. The distribution of the *gyil* in terms of *dɛgaar-bɛlanw-mɛ* to the different arriving groups is done on 'first come, first served' basis. During the burial, the *lo-gyil* is shortly played followed by the cycle of *dɛgaar-bɛlanw-mɛ* until somebody lifts and shakes the *gyil* declaring *ipso facto* the end of the funeral. However, the end of a funeral does not always follow the burial rite immediately.

v.   Stylistic distinctions between *dɛgaar* and *bɛlanw-mɛ*

Rhythmically the *dɛgaar* and the *bɛlanw-mɛ* share the same rhythmic foundation provided by the supportive *gyil* player and the gourd-drummer. Dankwa (2018, p. 164) suggested a compound quadruple (12/8) as the time signature pertaining to the rhythmic pattern. To perform that pattern both players perform a relatively repetitive rhythmic pattern with different complexities. The *gyil* player uses the wooden end of the *gyil* beaters to play, on the last slats in the bass register of the instrument, a more fixed pattern that serves as timeline. Sometimes he or she may play that pattern with both hands in an articulated way. But a good supportive *gyil* player articulates the timeline with one hand while the other hand performs counter melodies to enrich the main melody played by the main *gyil* player. The gourd-drummer plays more intricate patterns to enrich the overall rhythmic complexity. A possible time signature that can be used in transcribing the rhythmic pattern of the overall rhythmic complexity serves as the rhythmic frame work for improvisatory performance of the main *gyil* player.

Although *dɛgaar* and *bɛlanw-mɛ* are similar in terms of instrumental accompaniment and resources for improvisation in the *gyil* playing, there are substantial differences between the two. These differences are discussed in terms of tonal centres, introductory concepts, tempo, melodic themes, chorus structures and emotional impact etc. Indeed, from the *piiru* section,

the *dɛgaar* tonal centre is provided from the highest pitch of the *gyil* called *tigbe* while that of the *bɛlanw-mɛ* begins on the subsequent low key called *kyen-kyenw*. The introductory section of the *dɛgaar* is termed as *kpab* whereas that of the *bɛlanw-mɛ* is called *buolu* which is much longer in terms of time consumption. The *laaru* (proverbial statements in singing like) that immediately precedes the *bɛlanw-mɛ* is another distinctive feature of the *bɛlanw-mɛ*. The overall tempo of *dɛgaar* is slower compared to that of the *bɛlanw-mɛ* which is faster and incites the dance in mourners and sympathisers. Dankwa (2018, p. 164) rightly observes that while the *dɛgaar* "regulative rhythms may incite the dance tendencies in mourners and sympathisers the *dɛgaar* is usually performed without dancing because of the themes espoused in the songs and the intense grief they are intended to generate". In that sense although the melodies of both musical types are text based, the *dɛgaar* develops themes that deal with serious matters or issues such as death and praises that arouse intense emotions in mourners. On the other hand, the texts associated with *bɛlanw-mɛ* tunes are more consolatory, playful and uplifting as they deal with less important issues with the purpose of releasing the mourning tension. From this observation it can be concluded that *dɛgaar* arouses more emotions in terms of mourning than the relaxed *bɛlanw-mɛ*. It is at the *bɛlanw-mɛ* performance section that people are more excited to dance into the music. However, *bɛlanw-mɛ* sometimes is also mournful as it is in *dɛgaar*. All depends on how the listeners interpret theses unvoiced texts which are rarely sung along the *gyil* surrogate. Based on its characteristic features, *dɛgaar* is seen as a very complex and difficult type of *gyil* music among the vocal and instrumental performers. But the most fundamental aural distinction between *dɛgaar* and *bɛlanw-mɛ* concerns the structure distinction related to the answers given by the audience members. These answers are given through these phonetic words for wailing: *yeeee* or *woooo*. The answer for the *dɛgaar* is made of three short phrases while that of the *bɛlanw-mɛ* comprises two short phrases: *dɛgaar sowfu i-n gbaa ata ɛ bɛlaŋw-mɛ sowfu i gbaa ayi* meaning the chorus answer to the *dɛgaar* is three (3) times

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while that of the *bɛlanw-mɛ* is two (2) times. This is the common answer given by most of the informants to the question requiring the difference between *dɛgaar* and *bɛlanw-mɛ.* Below is the structural distinction regarding the answers to the respective calls in the performance of these two types of music:

Table 4.8: Responses of the chorus to the dirge singers' calls.

Dɛgaar	*Bɛlanw-mɛ*
Yeeee (Re Do)	*Yeeeee* (Re do)
Yeeeeee (Mi Re)	*Yeeee yeeeeee* (Re do/Sol Mi Re Do)
Yeeeeee (Re Do/ Sol Mi Re Do)	

This chart displays in tonic sol-fa notes the phonetic words 'cried' by the chorus as their answers to the various calls of the *lanw-kone*. They do not bear any semantic meaning outset the intention of wailing to mourn. These very short phrases (3 against 2) show the structural distinction between the two styles of music.

To conclude this section on structural distinction, I can state that there is tension-and-release structure throughout the Dagara funeral ceremony. The music of *lo-gyil* for instance sustains and intensifies the mourning mood, whereas the music of *dɛgaar* is more relax. The music of *dɛgaar* as opposed to the music of *lo-gyil* encompasses types of music: the *dɛgaar* music and the *bɛlanw-mɛ* music. It should be noted that there is difference between the music of *dɛgaar* and the *dɛgaar* music: the latter is a subset of the former. A kind of tension-and-release relationship is also depicted by the structural relationship between the *dɛgaar* music and that of *bɛlanw-mɛ.* In other words, the *dɛgaar* music is more mourning-oriented than the *bɛlanw-mɛ* which is light and relaxing. Furthermore, in the *kuor-wuofo* and *yaaru* contexts, the *dɛgaar-bɛlanw-mɛ* cycle emphasises more on the *dɛgaar* music than on the *bɛlanw-mɛ* music. These observations have therefore led me to the conclusion that areas where the music of *lo-gyil* is dominant, the funeral ceremony is more "mournful" than places where the music of *dɛgaar* dominates. This "mournfulness" of the *lo-gyil* music

accounts for its very long performance span over the music of the *dɛgaar*. Dabire Anaclet also pointed out another reason that justifies the predominance of the *lo-gyil* music over the music of the *dɛgaar*. According to him, the *lo-gyil* music is well rewarded based on its emotional messages. In that regard, funeral ceremonies in Dissin and Zambo are tightly mourning-oriented; while in Nyigbo, Koper and Dano funerals are more relaxed. However, Dano area which does not use *lo-gyil* at all insists on the mourning mood of the *dɛgaar* music by delaying as much as possible the relaxing *bɛlanw-mɛ* music. In other words, Dissin and Zambo stress on the mourning aspect of funeral; while Nyigbo, Koper and Dano emphasise on the feast or celebration aspect of it, as funeral is defined as celebration of death and new life at the same time.

4.4.3 Musical interaction

Another level of complexity regarding the performance of funeral music is about the musical interactions among the vocal and instrumental performers. The music of *dɛgaar*, indeed, refers to the music played on the 17 keys *gyil*. It can also be described as the *lanwni* in the sense of vocal music. Usually the *gyil* ensemble or *trio* has three (3) instrumentalists for two *gyile* and one *kuɔr*. Another important performer is the l*anw-kone*, a dirge singer or eulogist. Contrary to the purely *lo-gyil* instrumental music, the *dɛgaar* music accompanies the vocal music of the *lanw-kone*. Thus, the word '*dɛgaar*' refers to three realities at the same time: *lanw-kone* lamentations, the instrumental music of *dɛgaar gyil* and *dɛgaar gyil* itself or the 17 keys xylophone as musical instrument. The performance of the music of *dɛgaar* requires a chronological order of entrances by the performers: The lead *gyil* player first enters followed by the *kpaw-kpawrɛ* also followed by the gourd-drummer or *kɔ-mwiɛrɛ.* The *lanw-kone* can enter at any time after the leading *gyil* player starts his or her part. He and the *lanw-kone* interact a lot especially during the testing of the *gyil* (*piiru*) before the performance in order to get the right tonal centre of the song. By playing several times the

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kyen-kyenw which is the core of the *piiru,* the main *gyil* player provides the tonal centre for the dirge singer. The *lanw-kone* or dirge singer may ask the *gyil* player to lower or to raise the pitch in order to suit his vocal range. However, it happens that one of them may be off key during performance. Kuutiero (2006) describes the interaction between the performers as follows:

> While the lead xylophonist plays the text or causes the xylophone to express his thoughts the assistant (xylophonist) concerns himself with providing the background melody to the text. The assistant xylophonist who is also the percussionist during play is supported by a gourd–drummer. The three must perform in harmony otherwise it becomes impossible for any to play his part well. This is particularly very important during a funeral when the eulogist must sing in concord with the two xylophonists and the drummer. For instance, if the pitch of the xylophone note is either too high or too low the dirge singers may not be able to sing until the appropriate key is struck. If that is not done, a temporality hold-up of the mourning process occurs (p. 109).

The main *gyil* player is the more authoritative leader of the performance. His supremacy over the *lanw-kone* is confirmed by most of my informants. Moreover, the music of *dɛgaar* is of two types: The *Dɛgaar* and the *Bɛlanw-mɛ*. *Dɛgaar* music to be distinguished with the music of *dɛgaar* refers at the same time to the vocal music of *lanw-kone* and the instrumental music of the *gyil mwiɛrɛ*. *Bɛlanw-mɛ* music also refers to the vocal and the instrumental music of both performers.

It is the rule of "first comes first served" that guides the whole performance around the *dɛgaar*. Indeed, each group, after observing the rituals around the pyre (*'uori lob*) joins the gathering and waits until its turn comes before they are allowed to perform one (1) *dɛgaar* and one (1) *bɛlanw-mɛ* within the cycle of *Dɛgaar-bɛlanw-mɛ*. The number of *dɛgaar* and *bɛlanw-mɛ* to be played varies according to regions (See Figure 4.4) and to sex (See Figure 4.6). The *gyil* player plays a song with the same thematic material enunciated by the *lanw-kone*. When satisfied, he may start praising the virtuosity of the player before developing his

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philosophical ideas. The *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* and the *lanw-kone* are moralists, social commentators and critics as they endeavour, through their performances, to make their voices heard on moral issues. The section examines a sample of *gyil* texts in relation to Dagara dirges.

4.4.4 The organisation of music: Textual meaning

On the funeral ground, the *lanw-kone* and the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* are the key performers whom people listen to as they always have messages to deliver in that particular context. With regard to the *lanw-kon-bɛ*, there is neither formal text nor definite structure that could exemplify the content and format of their message. However, their personalised structure of the message delivery is based on the inspiration of the moment and context. Therefore, in this section focus will be placed on the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* and *gyil* text as it is in the funeral ceremony that the *gyil* surrogate is most important as a communicative tool or medium and poetic instrument. In conscious or unconscious connection, the theoretical perspective of Agawu's (2001) argument according to which African music can be seen as text, Kuutiero (*idem*, p. 115) argued about the poetic nature of the Dagara *gyil* within the funeral ceremony context. By examining the Dagara xylophonist and his poetic texts in relation to the Dagara dirges he demonstrated that the xylophonist by means of the *gyil* surrogate is a poet and an artist. He concluded that as a poet the xylophonist is an entertainer, a social commentator, a critic and a moralist: "The xylophonist successfully plays all those roles using the xylophone as a medium through which he plays out poetic texts that he has composed or learned from xylophone poets" (*ibid*). In line with this argument I have sampled the melodic themes below in order to demonstrate how communicative and textual the instrumental music of *gyil* in the context of funeral is and espouse Agawu's argument about African music as text. But occasionally the xylophonist inserts melodic passages of pure improvisation that do not communicate verbal meaning. These improvisations meant for showing off can be cyclical patterns or lineal melodies. Depending on how skilfully and

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aesthetically they are played, the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* shows that he or she knows the *gyil*. These improvisatory passages are called *baan-ne-bee-kwi* in *baan* performance context by the Sambla in Burkina Faso. Strand (2009, p. 241) assumed that "the development of *baan-ne-bee-kwi* playing in the *baan* tradition was a natural product of musicians desire to add a bit of themselves in their playing". Like the *baan* of Sambla people, *gyil* to the Dagara represents more than just the music that is played on it (*idem*, p. 243).

The speech surrogate of the *gyil* indeed depicts another complexity involved in the performance of funeral music. Therefore, to fully understand the messages of the *gyil* texts, the listener needs to understand the language surrogate or speech surrogate and the lyrics of the songs as well. **There is a saying amongst the Dagara that**, the *lobri* or *lo-gyil* and its music have been prohibited from some Dagara Families especially among the *Wiile* based on its communicative capacity. It is narrated that some emotional messages transmited by the *gyil* surrogate led some bereaved members amongst the *Wiile* to suicides in such a way that *lo-gyil* and its performance have become a taboo to some clans and lineages which only use the *dɛgaar*. In that sense the *lo-gyil* is said to be a division factor among brothers (*lobri or lo-gyil wɛlɛ ni yɛbr*). The songs below are generally owned by the Dagara community as their composers are unknown.

Table 4.9: Melodic themes according to musical styles.

Dɛgaar	Translation by the author
Kukur don don mɛ, kukur laa-laa bie	Enemy of the hoe, son of the hoe
Mimir nyerbe na mal ɔɔnw	The garishes (witchcraft) harm the blind person
Vaa-za kpere, bi kpieb na ter saa ni maa vaa-za kpere	Cry with all your strength, you orphan who does not have neither a father nor a mother, do cry with all your strength
Bi-kpieb bɛ tɛr saa ni ma, mwɛ bɛr ɛ cere	The orphan who does not have neither a father nor a mother, beat him and nothing will happen
Zɛ kpan-kpan duuwrɛ ko dow 'maan vaar	A delicious soup preparer who never prepares bad soup
To vie ni ɔie ir kpe maaro	The one who works until the following day, go to the shade to rest
Fu na ko tuo me ter a	If you cannot take care of me
Ber ki paw 'maaro, Nisaal	Let me be in peace, human being
Fu na ko tuo me ter a	If you cannot take care of me
Ber ki paw 'maaro caa paw caa	Let me be in peace
Kuu yon a wo nuo (bis)	Only death is enjoying (bis)
Kuu woo, kuu woo	Death! Death!
Kuu yo i gandaa	Only death is the strongest
Kuu yo a wo nuo, Nisaal sela	Only death is enjoying, black race
Kuu yo na wo nuo, kuu yo ter fang yooo	Only death is enjoying, only death is stronger
Kuu yo na wo nuo	Only death is enjoying
Nye Tew zu gandaa no	she is the strongest on earth
Kuu yo na wo nuo	only death is enjoying
A ti saa kum mine banw gu ke kpi	our forefathers couldn't do anything and they died
Ti na i-n mwin paa ti tuo kuu'a	How can we overcome death?
Kuu yon a wo nuo	Only death is enjoying
Bɛlanw-mɛ	
Fu na fa tow tow tow a le na bɛ nonɛ	People are happy when you are completely poor
Nir buor so-u be tew zu	Who in this world
Be ter yel,	who does not have any problem?
a fo daa ra bɛ tai fo man-kɛ	It is because it is not yet your turn.

The above melodic themes are transcribed from interviews held with the following great xylophone players: Kambire Samuel and Kambire Aubin from Gorganwn (Koper) and Kom from Nyigbo-Bevouagone. These themes are the main words set to *gyil* melodies that are played repeatedly according to gender and types of music (*dɛgaar* or *bɛlanw-mɛ*). Funeral music is basically gender-oriented and kinship based. Indeed, melodies such as *Kukur don-*

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don-mɛ, kukur laa-laa bie (see translation above) inform the listener that a great farmer whose father might also be a great farmer has just passed away. This particular melody which is specific to male deceased also suggests that enmity is the plausible cause of his death. Other specific songs in terms of praise are performed to praise a male deceased and Kuutiero (*idem*, p. 111) reported on their meaning in these terms: "…the deceased had lived a heroic life and should now be honoured by the living and the dead. The praise names are metaphorical while the 'hoe' in the first line is personified and depicted as one lying down inactive and sorrowful. The last line is couched in euphemism as the man is said to have created a void rather than to have died." On the other hand, the melodic themes such as the followings: *Zɛ kpan-kpan duuwrɛ ko duuw 'maan vaar* and *Tô viɛ ni zie ir kpe maaro* (see translation above) are specific to female deceased. They also inform the listener that the deceased was a hardworking woman very much alive to her responsibilities. She was a very good cook who was also very economical by being a caring mother to her children and a good wife to her husband. Now that she is no more the bereaved members will really miss her. The situation of the bereaved families is lamented by some melodies Themes such as *Mimir nyerbe na mal zonw* referring metaphorically to witchcraft and *Vaa-za kpere, bi-kpieb na tɛr saa ni maa vaa-za kpere* or *Bi-kpieb be tɛr saa ni ma, mwɛ gbɛr ɛ cere* (see translation above) deplores the miserable conditions that await the relatives of the deceased as a result of his or her death. Furthermore, some other melodies aim at either soothing the bereaved members or deepening intense emotions or insulting them straight away. In reference to such texts Kuutiero (*ibid*) wrote:

> A text like that stimulates much more wailing and groaning and an avalanche of tears among the bereaved and others in similar circumstances. The ironies in the text make it particularly interesting. The bereaved normally should deserve sympathy from all but here we find the bereaved being insulted instead of being consoled. It is a typical example of what happens at Dagara funerals (p. 114).

All the themes discussed so far are *dɛgaar* themes. The following themes are specific to *bɛlanw-mɛ: Fu na fa tow tow tow a lɛ na bɛ nonɛ* (referring to jealousy) *Fu na ko tuon mɛ tɛr a…* and *Nir buor so-u be tew zu be tɛr yel, a fo daa ra bɛ tai fo man-kɛ* (refers to human weakness and humility). They are instructive themes about social life for the community of mourners. The first theme warns the listener about jealousy in the society while the second theme underscores the human weaknesses and suggests the virtue of humility.

Moreover, the more developed theme acknowledges the might of death against which human being is powerless. Some *gyil* texts refer to death either directly or indirectly as the first enemy of human being the first source of his misfortune. Referring to those texts Kuutiero (*idem* p. 113) made the following comment:

> … But the enemy in this context has a double meaning. On the one hand the enemy is the normal human adversary and on the other hand so a conclusion may be drawn that the human enemy is synonymous with death. The poet (xylophonist uses the image 'sky', 'cloud' and 'drink' to symbolise desperate measures one may want to adopt to avoid the enemy and also points out the futility in all the attempts to escape death.

In conclusion, through the use of these commonly owned songs or melodies, the *gyil* player by performance communicates his or her joy, sorrow, anxiety and hopes to his community. He or she also criticises, admonishes deviant behaviour, advises, satirises and encourages the listeners. It is in that sense that the *gyil* conveys feelings that words may be unable to express as it evokes powerful emotions in the mourners causing them to wail intensively.

4.4.5 Inter-relationship between ko-gyil structure and social structure

Based on the musical complexity of the *ko-gyil* illustrated by the structural constraints associated with the musical performance on one hand and on the other hand the poetic nature of the *gyil* music, I perfectly agree with Agawu (2001, pp. 8-16) who rightly argued that African music can also be considered as text. According to him, as a text African music

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is not always functional but can also be seen as western art music on its own that is music for art's sake. Therefore, to be properly understood, African music can be approached at the level of musical language with the same semiotic system and some textual features as the language where its various symbols are the embodiments involved in musical performance, the words of the songs, the errors and the violence, syntax, sentences, words and phrase etc.

Based on this argument the *ko-gyil* in general and the *kuor-wuofo* and *the kuor-yaaru* structures can be considered as musical texts where one can efficiently read and understand the Dagara kinship system. In fact, it structurally appears clearly that the Dagara either alive or dead belongs to two families: father's and mother's families. His or her membership in the community is also structurally acknowledged at the beginning and the end of his or her funeral. For instance, during the *ko-yaar gyil*, it is rather the *siman-dem* (neighbourhood) who end the funeral with the *bɛlanw-mɛ* music to sweep the place as the Dagara metaphorically term it: *piiri saguɛ*. But among the *Wiile* it is rather the family that ends the funeral with the *Bɛlanw-mɛ*. Most of my informants acknowledged that the *kuor-wuofu* to some extent appeases the mourners from the intense mood of the music of *lo-gyil*: *A kuor-wuofu maanɛ-ni kuor* which means the inauguration of the funeral cools down its mourning mood. After this opening section, the body is moved to a more open arena for the second exposition.

Moreover, in the same text, we can also read that the funeral music is highly "genderised" through the figure symbolism involved. Indeed, after the opening and before the closure of the funeral the complete performance cycle or structure alternatively observed is made up of six (6) elements (3 *dɛgaar* and 3 *bɛlanw-mɛ*) for the male and eight (8) elements (4 *dɛgaar* and 4 *bɛlanw-mɛ*) for the female. The figures 3 and 4 that respectively stand for man and woman are socially significant: *Deb niw o gbaa a ta, pɔw niw o gbaa a naar* which means three (3) times for a man and four (4) for a woman. This figure symbolism is also used in

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other spheres of the Dagara socio-cultural life for gender differentiation. The gender distinction is also illustrated symbolically and rhythmically through the *lo-gyil* music where 3/4 and 4/4 meters are respectively used in the instrumental performance for male deceased and female deceased.

Finally, the third element that can be read out of the Dagara funeral musical text is about the thematic concerns or developments involved in *gyil* texts. Through textual analysis of songs, indeed, it can be observed that specific melodies are solely meant for male deceased and other for female deceased as they semantically express ideas about gender-based division of labour. Songs texts referring to hunting (man) and to processing of the local beer (woman) have already been mentioned in the textual analysis section.

To conclude, I acknowledge the relevance of the limitations and criticisms towards the correlation between musical structure and social structure. In other words, I have taken note that the fundamental relationship between social structure and musical structure may not be always relevant to all societies for many reasons. I also agree to some extent with those who make this essential association. Based on these important considerations, I strongly believe that, there is always a strong connection of some kind between the music and at least one cultural value as that value is shared and cherished by the people who produce that music. In the case of the Dagara society in Burkina Faso, it is their kinship system that makes that connection between musical structure and social organisation as that kinship permeates and fuels their entire socio-cultural life.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the ethnography of musical performances based on three representative genres of the music of the Dagara in Burkina Faso. It has demonstrated that musical performance in its context plays a crucial, generative role in social construction as a

means of producing and re-producing the social person and society. In that sense, musical production and musical product are harmoniously complementary and effective to the understanding of musical phenomenon within the Dagara society.

With regard to the correlation between the various musical performances and the socio-cultural life, especially the musical performance of funeral music it clearly appears that there is a strong connection and a reciprocal influence between music and the society that produces it. Thus, *bɛwaa*, *bawr-binɛ* and *ko-gyil* derive their meanings and essence from the culture and expose the culture as well. They are musical events that serve as opportunities for social interactions and control beyond their specific performance goals. The thematic materials of these genres are meant to reward good social behaviours and also punish the bad ones. As the *bawr* initiation, funeral ceremony is an important ceremony in Dagara community where interpersonal, inter-social and inter-kinship relationships are formalised. It provides members of the community with an opportunity to mourn to ease the pain of the physical separation and to facilitate the passage of the deceased's soul (*siɛ*) into the world of ancestors. Within the ceremony the *gyil* plays a central role as it helps in managing the bereavement of the deceased's relatives and sympathisers. In sum funeral music provides the community with opportunity to address their welfare to the deceased and express their dancing skills as well. Music-making therefore plays a major role in the leisure times such as the youth recreational activities as well as during the most sacred ceremonies of *bawr* and *kuor*. On the other hand, the musical performance structures depict the Dagara's worldview and their kinship system as a significant cultural value. *Bɛwaa*, *bawr-binɛ* and *ko-gyil* mirror the socio-cultural life of the Dagara in Burkina Faso.

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CHAPTER FIVE

MUSICAL ELEMENTS OF DAGARA MUSIC

5.1 Introduction

Following the ethnographic investigation into the musical performances concerning the three representative genres of the music of the Dagara in the previous chapter, the present chapter analytically focuses on the micro details of that music as far as musical elements are concerned. This musical analysis is framed by Lomax cantometrics perspective as these analytical details may also be revealing of Dagara social identity. In that sense, the main purpose of this musical analysis, at this micro level, consists of bringing out the various musical characteristics pertaining to the Dagara songs with the main perspective of illustrating Nketia's argument about "the juncture of the social and the musical" or the inter-connection between the musical and the socio-cultural. Thus, this formal analysis of the five (5) selected pieces expands and complements the previous textual and social analyses of the music of the Dagara. The question that, therefore, guides the discussion is: How do the musical elements pertaining to the music of the Dagara tell about their social identity? One of the methods that could be used to arrive at relevant conclusions is a thorough analysis of some transcribed traditional songs from the music. By adopting this method, the analytical discussion will focus on the scallic, intervallic, melodic, harmonic and rhythmic features of five selected pieces from Burkina Faso.

5.2 The scale of Dagara music: Human voice as reference point of *gyil* scale

It has been mainly argued that the scales of the two types of Dagara xylophone are pentatonic without any form of specification regarding both *gyile*. Woma (2012) laconically stated that "the Dagara *gyil* is a pentatonic scale instrument constructed on a wooden frame with gourd resonators…" (p. 40). This statement seems laconic to me because it, first of all, suggests that both *gyile* are equally pentatonic. Moreover, it does not give any further detail

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about the nature of that pentatonic scale, since it is a common knowledge that pentatonic scale implies five (5) basic notes. Like Woma, Strand (2009, pp. 157-158) also generalised that "All documented xylophone traditions indigenous to Burkina Faso are tuned to pentatonic scale, the most prevalent type of tuning in Burkina and adjacent regions of Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali". Dankwa (2018) only described in details the tuning system without any precision about the resulting scale. Other scholars such as Dabire (1983) and F. Hien (2016) were also concerned with the pentatonic scale of the Dagara *gyil*, but with the same imprecisions about the distinction of the two pentatonic scales. However, it is well-known that the two *gyile* have different tonalities by the simple way of listening to their respective sounds.

In this section, I investigate the different scales of the music of the Dagara by correlating *gyil* and human voice and by drawing conclusion from that relationship. Indeed, one of the commonly shared legends accounting for the origin of *gyil* (xylophone) suggests that *gyil* is originally tuned to human voice. From the same story, Mukassa (1976, p. 53) similarly concluded that human voice, in different atmospheric contexts, had been referential for the intervallic structure of the *gyil*. From these assumptions, it can be concluded that there is a very close relationship between human voice and *gyil* tonality. In other words, *gyil* can be said to be tuned to the Dagara language in the same as the *baan* is tuned to the *Sambla* language (Strand, 2009, p. 158). The late Bernard Woma, an internationally renowned player of the Dagara *gyil* quoted by Strand (p. 158), was of the same view. The legend accounting for that relationship is summarised as follows:

> According to the first legend, there were two friends: one was gravely sick and the other came to sympathise with him. Seated by his sick friend's side, he regretted his imminent death in these terms: "When you die, whom will I chat with?" His sick friend simply asked him to bring some carved woods from *liga*, (a type of tree). And while the agonizing friend was revealing his last wills, the other friend was carving the woods to imitate the pitches of his

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voice. And when he definitely died, the living friend was playing the *gyil* reproducing his departed friend's voice (Hien, 2016, p. 2-3).

The healthy friend then "tuned" his sick friend's voice to some pieces of carved wood in memory of him. Based on this mythically tuning process and on my personal observation of the socio-cultural usage of *gyil* as an accompaniment instrument, I assume that *gyil* scale and dagara songs share the same scallic characteristics. A number of scholars commonly argue that *gyil* scale is a pentatonic scale (Dabire, 1983) and (Mukassa, 1976). The tables below show some *gyil* scales suggested by scholars as they compare with the tempered major, minor and chromatic scales.

a) *Lobri* **scale**

Table 5.1: Comparative chart of minor scales.

Western Chromatic scale	C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	Gb	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C
Western minor scale	C		D	Eb		F		G	Ab			B	C
Western Minor pentatonic	C			Eb		F		G		A			C
Dabire Jean Marie/pentatonic	C			Eb		F			G# Or Ab	A			C
Dabire Nicolas	C			Eb		F			G# Or Ab	A			C
Hien Nedbebe Pierre	C			D# Or Eb	E			G				B	C

b) *Dɛgaar* scale

Table 5.2: Comparative chart of major scales.

Western chromatics scale	C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	Gb	G	A	A	Bb	B	C
Western major heptatonic scale	C		D		E	F		G		A		B	C
Western minor heptatonic scale	C		D	Eb		F		G	Ab		Bb		C
Western Major pentatonic	C		D		E			G		A			C
Dabire Jean Marie/ pentatonic scale	C			Eb			Gb		Ab		Bb		C
Dabire Nicolas /pentatonic scale	C			Eb			Gb		Ab		Bb		C
Hien Ferdinand/pentatonic scale	C			Eb		F		G			La# or Bb		C
Hien Nedbebe Pierre/Pentatonic scale	C			Eb		F			G# or Ab		La# or Bb		C

From these comparative tables, it appears clearly that the *gyil* scale is pentatonic. Since songs are usually performed on *gyil* and the *gyil* music is instrumental music sung by human voice, this consequently implies that dagara songs in particular and music in general are or should be composed in pentatonic scales, that is, either *dɛgaar* or *lobri* pentatonic scales. The Dagara *gyil*, indeed, is of two types with different tonalities: *Lobri* and *dɛgaar* tonalities. However, there is no standard pitch (fundamental) for tuning the *gyil*, and this accounts of the greater variety of *gyil* tonalities from one *gyil* maker to another, from one region to another, and even from *gyile* of the same type or from the same area. About the *Kora* also known as harp lute, Knight (1971) was concerned about the standard pitch level of the *Kora* in the tuning system: "The question at issue here is not only the choice of a pitch for notation, but our concept of standard pitch level itself." (p.28). about the *kora* in particular, he rightly pointed out that "a search for one specific pitch that is agreed upon as a large number of musicians in a given musical culture in African would be a futile search in most cases" (*ibid*). This observation is also relevant to the *gyil* as it shares the same pitch

discrepancies phenomenon with the *kora*. Thus, if a search for one specific agreed pitch concerning the *gyil* seems to be practically futile, then a search for a standard pitch area through further investigations will be laudable. Some cues to the existence of that standard pitch area for the *gyil* are even given by some *gyil* specialists among my informants who recognised that, this or that *gyil* is tuned very high (*A gyil kɔkɔr do-n saa*) or very low (*A gyil kɔkɔr siw-ni ple*). In fact, several factors contribute to the phenomenon of pitch discrepancies. The *gyile* are tuned to different fundamentals by *gyil* makers who are believed to have their own standard pitches (the *kyɛra*). The effect of the mallet on the bar or slat enormously affects the quality of the sound produced: "A hard-headed mallet produces a bright and penetrating sound, while a softer mallet produces a more mellow sound that is often preferred for lower notes" (Wegst, 2006, p. 1443). Wegst further explained that "the harder mallet has a shorter contact time upon impact and excites a spectrum rich in overtones characteristic for a given material, while the softer excites only the harmonically tuned lower partials and dampens the brighter partials due to its longer contact time" (*ibid*). Additionally, the quality of the sound or pitch can also be explained by the levels of loss coefficient, for "bars with a high loss coefficient will result in a brighter sound because the higher partials are less damped that in a material with a high loss coefficient" (*ibid*). After all, *gyil* practitioners acknowledge and cope with these pitch discrepancies as their main focus is on the performance rather than these tiny sonic distinctions. This phenomenon can positively be interpreted as "greater acceptable norms of pitch" for tuning the *gyil* in Dagara society. *Gyil* is central to the musical performances of the three genres of interest in this study. To that end a clarification of some organological terminologies and concepts concerning the *gyil* is necessary.

Remark 1: Musical terminologies in relation to *gyil*

About the *gyil*, the concepts of *crescendo* and *decrescendo* mean the opposite as far as *gyil* scale is concerned. In reality, scholars and musicians define *crescendo* and *decrescendo* in relation to the pitch sound either low or high; whereas the Dagara musicians link their definitions to the physical form of the *gyil*. Organologically *gyil* can be divided either into two or three parts. From the middle to the highest pitch is called *gyil-pɛr* (the bottom part) and from the middle to the lowest bar is the *gyil-zu* (*gyil* head)". Some scholars such as Hien F. (2016) may divide it into three parts: the bottom part (*gyil-pɛr*), the middle part (*gyil-sow*) and the top part (*gyil-zu*). From right to left, the notes go gradually from the highest to the lowest, which corresponds to a *crescendo* for a Dagara musician. On the other hand, from left to right, they are in *crescendo* from the lowest to the highest, which refers to a *decrescendo* in dagara musical terminology. Thus, when a *gyil* player is asked to play a note below or above the initial tonic note he or she is trying to maintain or to adopt, he knows the direction to which he or she should go to get the right tonic note. The most common terminologies used by the dirge singer or *lanw-kone* to help the *gyil* player find the right tonal centre for him, are mainly two: *taw-siw-mwɛ* meaning play a step below towards the highest keys and *taw-do-mwɛ* which means the opposite. The chart below is just an illustration for better insight of the concepts of *crescendo* and *decrescendo* in Dagara musical practice context.

Table 5. 3: According to table 5.2, the pentatonic scale opted here seems to be shared by two scholars Jean Marie and Nicolas.

Major Scale structure	Western music context	*Gyil* music context
C---Eb---Gb---Ab---Bb---D	Crescendo	Decrescendo
C---Bb---Ab---Gb---Eb---C	Decrescendo	Crescendo

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Remark 2: Based on the mythical narration about the origin of *gyil*, *lobri* stands out as the oldest instrument among the only two types of Dagara *gyil*. The 'cadet' *dɛgaar* (17 keys or pitches) is a modification of the *lobri* by the addition of supplementary keys which make it longer than the *lobri* (14 keys).

Though, the intervallic structure remains always the same, the slight differences in *gyil* tonalities obviously reflect the pitch discrepancies in the tuning system from one region to another; and even from one *gyil* maker to another. From the chart in table 5.2, the last three notes before the repetition of the tonic are the most challenging and erratic pitches among the scholars as a result of their disagreement.

Remark 3: I transposed all the keys to C, either heptatonic or pentatonic, in order to have a panoramic view of the chart for comparative purpose with a focus on their respective intervallic structures. From this chart, it can be clearly observed that, Jean Marie and Nicolas findings are the same. But they are slightly different from those of Ferdinand and Pierre which are also very close to each other. These pitch discrepancies in the *dɛgaar* scale for instance, are mainly located on the 3rd, 4th and 5th degrees. From these pitch discrepancies; I would argue that a detailed and deeper investigation will probably result to the conclusion that the intervallic structure of the *dɛgaar* is regular and equal throughout the scale. The clue of my argument is given in the following remark 4.

Remark 4: Here is a verifiable fact: If, for instance, one plays a song on D pentatonic *gyil* starting from D as the tonic, and subsequently he moves a second up to B being the tonic, that song is still aurally recognisable as the same. In the report of their collaborative work about the music of the Dagara in general and the *gyil* in particular Jean Marie (Mukassa, 1976) hypothesised about the intervallic regularity regarding specifically the *dɛgaar*.

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Furthermore, the interaction between the dirge singer and the *gyil* player in search of the tonal centre as discussed before, also suggests, -and this can also be practically verified or demonstrated-, that a song played in a *dɛgaar* scale remains recognisable when transposed to a key below or above. Wiggins and Kobom (1992, p. 5) also observed that "the relative tuning (of *gyil*) has a tendency towards equalizing the intervals compared with the western pentatonic scale, thus the "whole notes" tend to be larger, while the "minor thirds" are smaller.

To verify Wiggins and Kobom's hypothesis above and Jean Marie's assumption on the intervallic regularity, I have constructed an experimental *gyil* by Tijane, a *gyil* maker at Medie (Accra) in April, 2016, using the cents system invented by Alexander John Ellis. This experimental *gyil* whose intervallic structure is equal and regular, through a conducted survey, confirmed the above hypothesis, in the sense that the *gyil* has been recognised as proper Dagara *gyil* by a number of *virtuoso gyil* players.

Conclusion: From the above discussion I can conclude that the *dɛgaar* scale is rather an equipentatonic scale. The regularity and equality of the *dɛgaar* intervals as far as its scale is concerned is ascertained and this discovery can be considered as one of the distinctive elements between the two *gyile*. For the scale of the *lo-gyil* on the contrary does not feature that regularity and that equality. Therefore, the two scales for the vocal and instrumental music of the Dagara are equipentatonic (*dɛgaar*) and pentatonic (*lo-gyil*) scales. In that regard an octave in pentatonic scale context can rigorously be called as 'sixtave', that is, an interval of sixth between the tonic and its repetition. Below is an illustrative example of an equipentatonic *gyil* scale structure in key D. It is, indeed, these pitches and intervals below that had been used for the construction of the experimental *gyil*.

Table 5.4: Pitches of the experimental xylophone.

Numbers of keys	Pitches of keys
1	D -30
2	B +30
3	A -10
4	F# +50 (G -50)
5	E +10
6	D -30
7	B +30
8	A -10
9	F# +50 (G -50)
10	E +10
11	D -30
12	B +30
13	A -10
14	F# +50 (G -50)
15	E +10
16	D -30
17	B +30
18	pitchless

Intervals	Cents
D -30 and B +30	240 (1.2T)
B +30 and A -10	240 (1.2T)
A -10 and F# +50	240 (1.2T)
F# -20 and E +10	240 (1.2T)
E +10 and D -30	240 (1.2T)
D -30 and B +30	240 (1.2T)
B +30 and A -10	240 (1.2T)
A -10 and F# +50	240 (1.2T)
F# +50 and E +10	240 (1.2T)
E +10 and D -30	240 (1.2T)
D -30 and B +30	240 (1.2T)
B +30 and A -10	240 (1.2T)
A -10 and F# +50	240 (1.2T)
F# +50 and E +10	240 (1.2T)
E +10 and D -30	240 (1.2T)
D -30 and B +30	240 (1.2T)

5.3 Analysis of Dagara musical elements

The analysis in this section mainly consists of determining the musical elements pertaining to the music of the Dagara in Burkina Faso. Some musical excerpts will be brought into the discussion for illustrative purpose as the full scores are found in the appendices. From these excerpts the analytical focus is based on the melodic, harmonic, rhythmic and textual features of the music. The question I am trying to answer is: How do the musical characteristics of the music of the Dagara cantometrically reflect the nature of their society. How do they also fit in the main musical features of African origin known as pentatonic scale, antiphonal, dirty sound, improvisation, polyrhythm, syncopation, off beating, repetition, timeline, audience participation, music associated with dance in counter clock way, descending melodic line? The following analysis will provide the answers to this double question.

5.3.1 Scales of Dagara music

Most of the songs analysed confirm the pentatonic nature of Dagara music in general and Dagara songs in particular. As discussed earlier on the xylophone or *gyil* is the instrument that best depicts the inherent scale of the Dagara songs. This is mythically explained and also testified by the inter-relationship between the human voice and the *gyil* as far as the scale structure is concerned: *Lobri* and *dɛgaar* scales. The tonal centre of the overall tonality of a particular *gyil* is the pitch of the highest key (*tigbe*) of that *gyil* as it is the common reference point of the tuning process. Based on this tonality differentiation, there are different *gyile* with different tonalities as well. However, it should be clearly noted that the five songs that are being analysed here are traditional songs composed in traditional way. But for the sake of this analysis, I have optionally transcribed them into some particular keys that feature best the tonalities of the *dɛgaar gyil*. For that matter, the keys and the time signatures in which they are transcribed are suggestive and do not once again necessarily bear any particular cultural significance.

Figure 5.1: A song in G pentatonic scale.
  Rigorously the song should be in G equipentatonic since it is played only on the *dɛgaar*. The same observation applies to all the following excerpts used in this chapter.

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Figure 5.2: A song in D pentatonic scale.

5.3.2 Intervallic structure and denominations

The overall view of the analysed songs shows that their respective melodies move more by leaps than by steps. The minor third and the perfect fourth are the intervals of greatest frequency of the individual intervals. The extremely rare occurrence of the major third and second intervals is to be noted. Almost all songs contain intervals of a minor third or more. The step of a fourth, whether descending or ascending, is especially favoured. The fifth is frequently found, and is more often a descending motion than an ascending one. Furthermore, all the songs analysed are half-toneless, because the scale in which they are transcribed is half-toneless or semi-toneless scale. The conspicuously frequent employment of repetitions at different levels, that is, note, measure, phrase levels etc. usually make the melodic line relatively longer. These repetitions, at their respective levels, can also be interpreted in Agawu's (2016, p.6) point of view that "to play in music is to invest in repetition, and to embrace repetition is to emphasise sound over meaning, the phonological over the semantic". This can even be testified by the meaningless vocables such as *yeeee* used in funeral musical performance. However, it may occur that these repetitions emphasise both, the phonological and the semantic as well.

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5.3.3 Melodic structure

In general, majority of Dagara songs as illustrated by the analysis, have a descending melodic progression or "terraced" melodic line. This being the case, it is not strange to find, for example, that almost all the songs feature much more frequent downwards motions than the upwards and the horizontal directions. In fact, the relation between the opening and the closing notes of a song helps to characterise its melodic line. In most of the songs, the pitch of the opening note is above the pitch of the final one. In these cases, the fifth above the final tone is especially favoured for the initial tone.

Figure 5.3: The interval between the opening and final notes spans an interval of Sixth.

Figure 5.4: Song with A 5ᵗʰ as an opening note.

Score

Song 4 : Madelina

Figure 5.5: Song with a 5th as an opening note.

Song3 starts and ends on the same pitch (B). As for the song5, the pitch of the opening note is below the pitch of the initial tone.

Score

Song 3 : I n baa bè gnow wala

Figure 5.6: A song which starts and ends on the same note (B).

Score

Song 5 : Saab laa bèru

Figure 5.7: A song with an opening note (B down) below the final note (G up)

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The excerpts above show some similarities. Generally, all the melodies move more by leaps and repeated notes than by steps. Among the melodic leaps it is noteworthy that those of the minor third, the perfect fourth and the perfect fifth occur fairly frequently. The major thirds are very rare compared to the prominent minor thirds. The melodies may start on a particular note or pitch and end on completely different note. The song1, for instance, starts and ends on the tonic (G). The melodies of song2 and 4 start on the dominant (A) and ends on the tonic (D). In song3, the melody starts and ends on the sub-median (B). The melody of song5 starts on the median note (B) below middle C and ends on the tonic note (G) (See appendix C for the full pieces). All the melodies mostly feature repetitions and call-and-response patterns. The repetitions are of two types: exact and modified. The exact repetition may occur concomitantly at the melodic and lyrics levels. The modified repetition may also occur concomitantly at both levels. Thirdly, the exact repetition may occur at the melodic level while the modified repetition occurs at the lyrics level and vice versa. Furthermore, the repetitions may also occur at the note, measure or at the phrase levels as far as the melody and the lyrics are concerned. More specifically, the modified repetition at the melody level is mainly done by sequence.

Figure 5.8: This refrain features repetition at the lyrics with a sequence a third above for the third repetition.

Figure 5.9: What is said about the previous figure also applies here. But here the repetition does not involve sequence but a slight modification in notes and syllables ((*ri*) instead of (*ree*)) at the tied note between m.5 and m.6.

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On the basis of cantometrics analysis and conclusions, these repetitions are symptomatic of the nature of Dagara society as simple society. To Lomax, repetitions and speech lengths are common to simplest societies (Kolata, 1978, p. 288). From his study of the *Kaluli* of the New Guinea, Feld (1984) concluded that the way of singing varies along with the nature and culture of the society. Thus, singing, in its style and content, is a way of communication within the society and a way of depicting the social identity. The phrases of these songs are also relatively short and mostly equal in length. The inequality between any related phrases is a result of the different repetitions that usually extend the first phrase before the closing phrase (See figures 5.6 and 5.7). To Lomax, indeed, the music of an egalitarian society is highly pattern and features regularity, redundancy and interlocking way of singing. This conclusion also applies to the Dagara society which can be described as egalitarian society on the basis of the regularities feature by these melodic and phrase repetitions which can also be seen as redundancies. The interlocking characteristic confirming that egalitarian nature is more instrumental than vocal.

The melodic lines also confirm the assumption that melodies of Dagara songs generally descend in a "terraced" way with relatively wide melodic ranges. The shortest among the five analysed songs is a 6th (song1) and the widest is an interval of 12th apart (song 5). The highest pitch is usually relatively close to the beginning while the lowest pitch is close to the ending of each song. For instance, the song 1 which consists of two melodies features a descending melodic line. The melody No1 starts on G (Do) which is the tonic and ends on B (Mi) which is the median in downwards motion. The two melodies have descending contours. They start relatively high and move in a descending way to the end. The percentage calculation[25] for each melody further illustrates this general descending melodic

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[25] To come out with these percentages, I have systematically counted the appearances of the downwards, upwards and repeated motions for each melodic line and irrespective of their repetitions. The sum of downwards, upwards and repeated motions are multiplied by their individual sum and divided by 100.

aspect inherent to the songs: Melody No1 is featured by 38, 46% of downwards leap and step notes; 30, 77% of repeated notes and 30, 77% of upwards leap and step notes. The melody No2 features 60% of downwards leaps and steps notes; 24% upwards leap and step notes and 16% of repeated notes. The song2 starts on the dominant and ends downwards onto the tonic. In other words, it starts with relatively high pitches and ends downwards onto the low pitches: 33, 33% of downwards leap and step notes, 20% of upwards leap and step notes and 46, 67% of repeated notes. Despite the frequency of the repeated notes, the melodic contour of song3 is also shaped in 'descending stairway': 4, 90% of repeated notes, 36, 64% of downwards leap and step notes and 22, 72% of upwards leap and step notes. The song4 also has a descending melodic line: 43, 75% of downwards leap and step notes, 31, 25% of repeated notes and 25% of upwards leap and step notes. The general melodic contour of song5 is shaped in a descending way: and the following percentages attest to it: 36, 67% of downwards and upwards motions each and 26, 67% of repeated notes.

These analysed songs feature the descending melodic contour which, in turn, depicts the general direction or motion of the *gyil* playing and vice versa. Based on my performance observations and by experience as *gyil* player, I have noticed that generally the *gyil* melodies performatively move from the highest to the lowest notes; and if this correlation is true, then it also confirms the mythical relationship between human voice and the Dagara *gyil*. Furthermore, those descending melodies generally begin somewhere near their highest pitch and then descend gradually to the final notes close to their lowest notes. For instance, in Figure 5.11 below, the highest pitch coincides with the beginning note of the melody and the lowest note is the same as the final note of the same melody.

Moreover, the songs are mostly shaped in binary form and that suggests the antiphonal nature of the Dagara songs. The melody No1of song1 for example is made up of two equal

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phrases in terms of length (4 bars each). The first phrase starts from m. 1 to m. 4; and the second phrase starts from (mm.5-8). They also have call-and-response relationship. The second phrase which constitutes the response is a melodically modified repetition of the first phrase. The two melodies (m.1-8 and mm.17-24) as traditionally performed, constitute a call-and response piece. The melody No1 stands for the call and the response is the melody No2. The song2 likewise is antiphonal. The two equal phrases interact in call-and-response way with the same lyrics apart from the mention of the proper name 'Madelina' in (mm.5-6). The range of the melody is a 5th apart (See also songs3, 4 and 5). But, more importantly, this melodic analysis clearly shows the strong connection between speech tones and melody, that is tone and tune. The melodic lines of the songs, indeed, are flexible and largely controlled by the requirements of semantic tone and meaning. The tonalities or the sequence of tones of the words and expressions of these songs are scrupulously rendered by the melodic pitches. The level tones are depicted by pitch inflections while the terraced tones are featured by the melodic repetitions. For instance, the word "'*loma 'loma*" (m.8 of song1) is a good example of terraced tones (speech tone) and repetitions (melody) as well. On the other hand, the expression *Ko-li-ka sin-gbu-le luw-re* in (mm.18-20) features the levels of tone and pitch inflections at the same time.

Figure 5.10: First melody of song1

Figure 5.11: Second melody of song 5.

5.3.4 Polyphonic structure

As far as harmony or polyphony is concerned the Dagara songs have never been performed traditionally in a polyphonic way. They are always performed in unison or in homophonic way, which means singing with instrumental accompaniment such as *gyil* accompaniment. However, absence of polyphonic singing does not mean impossibility of harmonising those

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songs. Nor does it necessarily mean following strictly the western harmony principles, although these principles may be inspiring. A priori, the harmonic principles of the music of the Dagara should be rooted in equipentatonic harmony principles in particular and in pentatonic principles in general. Another potential source of harmony principles is the harmony that emanates from the instrumental performance of *gyil*, either from the two hands of the *gyil* player or from the *gyil duo*. But, for these harmony principles to bear scientific aspect, a thorough study of these performative harmonies needs to be done beforehand in a scientific manner.

Figure 5.12: Pitch simultaneities

To conclude, I can state that traditionally, the Dagara songs are not performed in polyphonic way but unison way. On the contrary, the instrumental music is highly polyphonic and polyrhythmic as well. Therefore, any attempt to harmonise that music could be an unprecedented genuine innovation in Dagara musical culture. The Dagara usually sing in unison with instrumental accompaniment (See figure 5.12 above). All the songs under analysis have homophonic texture, meaning a solo voice performance or unison singing with instrumental accompaniment. This is the traditional or standard texture of the Dagara musical performance. To Lomax, unison depicts small societies. Therefore, the Dagara

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society in Burkina Faso where singing style is mainly unison can be classified as small society.

The modern chord symbols on top of the staff in all the analysed songs (See appendices) suggest not only a possible harmonisation of each piece, but also their respective harmonic progressions regarding the western harmony principles. However, the chords suggested by the modern chord symbols can only be realised by western instruments such as piano or guitar, but not the anhemitonic *dɛgaar* which does not have any semi-tone in its intervallic structure nor the hemitonic *lo-gyil* with its semitone intervals. Another type of harmony is suggested by the harmonic intervals found in the interaction between the two hands of the xylophone player: secundal, quartal quintal, and sixtave harmonies etc. Secundal, quartal quintal and sixtave harmonies are respectively harmonies built on seconds, fourths, fifths, sixtaves (octaves). For instance, in the song1 as shown below, a look at the transcribed performance hints some basic ideas about harmonic intervals. The interactions between the right and the left hands in the xylophone playing normally result into a polyphonic sound out of the harmonic intervals produced by both hands. In other words, while the right hand plays the melody in the treble clef, the left hand simultaneously plays an ostinato in the bass clef, and this creates harmonic intervals such as octave (sixtave), second, third, fourth, and fifth etc. (See song 2 mm. 10, 12, 13 and 21 and Song3 mm. 20-24 etc.).

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Figure 5.13: Interlocking performance by both hands of the *gyil* player.

At least, these harmonic intervals can be used in two-parts writing contexts. But a texture which comprises more than two-parts or voices may require superimposed harmonic intervals. This can be described as 'pitch simultaneities'.

5.3.5 The rhythmic organisation

Dagara music is mainly polyrhythmic and syncopated music with a relatively fast tempo appealing to dance. Most of the pieces analysed in this research context start on an anacrusis. Some notes tied either across two consecutive beats or measures constitute a clear indication of syncopation in the rhythmic patterns (See song1 mm. 2, 4, 6 and 8 and song3 mm. 2, 4, 6, 8 and across two consecutive measures (mm. 8 and 9) and song song4 mm. 1 to 2, 2 to 3 and 7 to 8 song5 mm. 4 and 5).

The time-line is constantly kept by the rattle. The xylophone, through the interaction between the right and the left hands aurally creates an interlocking rhythm effect or sensation. Scherzinger (2001) observed that interlocking rhythm always "yields durational mirror images of half of itself" (p.53). While the right hand plays the main melody of the

solo voice, the left hand harmonises it by playing an accompaniment in an *ostinato* manner; and this necessarily increases *ipso facto* the polyrhythmic nature of the music (See figures above). However, in terms of note values as important part of rhythmic features, the longest single note among all the notes of the analysed melodies is a crochet. The quavers and dotted quavers are mostly used. The crochets and the semi-quavers are less used. Some tied notes add to the duration of some single notes. The repeated notes seem to replace the long notes such as minim or whole note to the extent that these notes do not nearly exist in Dagara instrument music where the pitches have limited durations (approximately 10 to 30 seconds). This absence of long note in the music can be explained by the reciprocal influence between the xylophone music and the vocal music: The xylophone music as instrumental music, indeed, is meant to be sung as well as the vocal music is meant to be played on the xylophone or *gyil*, especially in the performance context where the xylophone music accompanies the vocal music or the singing. Thus, the very limited xylophone note sound or duration is rendered only by means of repetitions of the same note. And the same phenomenon is also reflected in the vocal music. Moreover, the duration of melodic notes is also affected by the duration of the syllables in language, because as Agawu (2016, p.9) said "the baggage that a tone language brings into a musical setting is not just that of pitch, but also of a more complex temporal dimension". In other word, the rhythm of a word in the context of speech is and must also be observed in the musical compositions. As the pitch inflections, rhythmic features also affect the meaning of the words and expressions and consequently the musical meaning. The duple time signature either simple or compound associated with a relatively faster tempo (MM=132 approximately) suggests that the song or piece features a marching like or danceable rhythm; because Dagara music is highly and inseparably associated with dance.

5.4 Conclusion

From the discussion that run throughout this chapter, I can conclude that the essence of this musical analysis as stated in the introductory section is to bring out the musical characteristics of the music of the Dagara in Burkina Faso. It may be relevant and meaningful to correlate them with the cultural practices, but all these musical elements discussed in detail do not necessarily have any particular meaning within the socio-cultural system; and this may be accounted by the lack of musical education. However, all these findings regarding the musical elements rather confirm the 'Africanness' of the music of the Dagara as they inform about what goes into that music as far as musical elements are concerned. Based on my previous investigations, contributions by other scholars and on a detailed analysis of the Dagara musical scales in the section dedicated to musical elements, I can conclude that the music of the Dagara, like most of the African musics, mainly evolves in two tonalities: the equipentatonic scale of the *dɛgaar* and the pentatonic *scale* of the *lo-gyil*. It also features the descending melodic contour, antiphonal form in call-and-response way, syncopations through the tied notes and the off beatings, polyphony and the polyrhythm. As discussed earlier on the timeline, the audience participation and the improvisations also characterise the music of the Dagara which is associated with dance as well. Moreover, the awareness and knowledge about these musical features can also be helpful to educated composers in their musical compositions. More importantly, these musical elements are 'symptomatic' of the egalitarian and simple nature of the Dagara society in Burkina Faso.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This conclusive chapter summarises the main research findings scattered throughout the previous discussions. It concludes by making general assumptions regarding the music of Dagara in Burkina Faso. It mainly recommends a deeper awareness in regard to the strong relationship between the language and the music of the Dagara as far as musical compositions and song writings are concerned. However, this intended awareness is not meant for indigenous composers, but rather for art music and neo-traditional composers who ingeniously draw on indigenous traditions in their compositional processes.

6.2 Summary

This section sums up my research findings termed as ethnomusicological theories. These theories are established within Nketia's (1990) methodology of cultural analysis framework. This methodology of cultural analysis holds that the study of music must be in regard to three main approaches. The cultural theme approach looks at music with the perspective of establishing statements or providing explanations of the music with particular reference to general cultural themes. This approach enables our understanding of human behaviour, society and culture in general. The causal relations approach assumes that there is one-to-one correspondence and relation of causality between aspects of music and aspects of culture and society. Finally, the contextual approach is an analysis of musical events specifically based on context for the generation of meanings. In that sense the context can be described as occasion or point of focus encompassing the perception, performance or creation of music. As Herndon and McLeod (1980, p. 37) stated, "the more one knows about performance, the better one will understand music". From these approaches the

chapter establishes some ethnomusicological theories that emanate from the inter-connection between the music of the Dagara and their culture. This musical and cultural inter-relationship is mainly about how the music of Dagara derives its meaning from culture on *one hand* and on the other hand how that music exposes the culture to the extent that music confirms what is already present in Dagara society and culture. It is within this inter-relationship context that the findings or ethnomusicological theories are conceptualised in terms of formal, social and semantic theories in connection with the objectives and aims of the thesis stated in its first part.

6.2.1 Formal theories

The formal theories according to Nketia (*ibid*) deal with musical sounds, systems of sounds, structures, textures and densities, compositional processes and procedures and elements of performance practice. In the present context formal theories refer to theories based on musical elements pertaining to the music of the Dagara.

The music of the Dagara contains many of the basic musical features pertaining to the African music in general and to Saharan African music in particular: namely the use of repetition, downwards melodic lines, the use of anti-phonal call-and-response and of syncopations and off-beatings, a high degree of audience participation and the use of pentatonic scale and timeline that lay foundation for the interlocking ployrhythms. In fact, from the musical analysis, it appeared that the scale that accommodates if not all but most of the Dagara songs is a pentatonic scale. That pentatonic scale stemmed from the interconnection and complementarity between the Dagara language and the tonality of gyil ever since the mythical origin of gyil. There are two types of pentatonic scale based on the two types of gyil: the equipentatonic scale of dɛgaar and the pentatonic scale of lo-gyil or lobri. The interval between the tonic and its first repetition could be called 'sixtave' instead

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of octave since this interval encompasses six (6) notes rather than eight (8). Within these scales and depending on the songs, melodies generally move more by leaps than by steps. Among these intervals, the minor third interval and the perfect fourth outweigh the remaining intervals, especially the major and second intervals. Within these intervallic structures, melodies feature repetitions at all levels from the smallest unit such as note to the biggest one such as phrase or period. These repetitions are either exact or modified at the lyrics or/and melodic levels. They can also be seen as a favourite compositional device as they extend the melodies for development purpose. Generally, the phrases are relatively short. Moreover, the general contour of the melodies like most of African songs outlines a descending or 'terraced' melodic line.

The music of the Dagara is principally vocal since musical instruments such as the gyil are seldom played on their own but being mostly used to accompany singing. Most communal singing takes the form of responsorial exchange. The Dagara usually sing in unison since vocal polyphony is not of their musical culture. However, both types of xylophones (lo-gyil and dɛgaar) are usually played polyrhymically by either two xylophones being played together or if by one player, then his hands play in counterpoint; with the left hand providing an ostinato in the bass clef while the right hand plays the melody in the treble clef. The instrumental polyphony and polyrhythm are well developed, the richest being the lo-gyil ensemble. The rhythmic characteristics of vocal and instrumental music feature syncopation with a relatively fast tempo apt to dance. These syncopations are exemplified by the tied notes across the strong and weak beats and by the anacruses as well. In instrumental music, the timeline is more perceived through the kpawru performed by the supporting gyil player. Moreover, the xylophone players sometimes play in strict dance time and other times play the instrument in speech surrogate mode. In this 'talking' mode the xylophone player has to adjust its melodic tones to those of the words they are imitating

otherwise the meaning of the played text may be rendered meaningless. It is in this "talking" mode indeed that the gyil player can demonstrate his virtuosity to the fullest.

6.2.2 Semantic theories

The semantic theories refer to the semantic implications of the formal and the social in the understanding of music as communicative tool and social experience (*ibid*). Here semantic theories concern the Dagara philosophy of music and their aesthetic principles.

Music, among the Dagara, is mainly associated with dance to the extent that they bear the same name as they also convey meaning in the context of performance. In that regard music is used as a significant communicative tool for social interaction and social control through song texts. The Dagara music is percussive due to the centrality of gyil and is divine in origin. Though the Dagara do not have any single concept to capture the notion of their music, there is philosophy about their music. In that sense the music of the Dagara is not a unitary art, but an art with several facets considered as musical genres. This finding about the music of the Dagara echoes Agawu's statement that "most indigenous African languages have no single word covering the same semantic field as the English word music" (Solomon, 2107, p. 126). This situation can be explained by the fact that "verbal talk about music has not been cultivated extensively in African communities" and "music is something to be made, first and foremost, not something to be talked about" (idem, p. 127). Thus, like many African music, the music of the Dagara does not have exclusively its own terms but borrows them from the ordinary language. Musical concepts are mainly found in instrumental music such as the gyil performance. Music is woven into the fabric of social life. It ranges from the music of the herdsmen to the highly structured music of funeral. Music and dance are so close and interchangeable to the extent that the same vernacular

concept is used to designate both. The music of the Dagara is, therefore, embedded in their worldview and expressed through their ordinary language and musical performances.

In Dagara society, music-making is not seen as a profession that can enable the musician to make his or her good living. A professional musician is normally paid and makes his or her living from music. The Dagara musical specialists including the contemporary musicians rather make their living from other activities such as farming and rearing. In that sense Dagara musicians are more social specialists than professional specialists. They are socially acknowledged but not rewarded enough in such a way that they can make their living out of it. They are social specialists, in a sense that they are recognised as the proper persons to perform certain types of music, receiving some kind of gift for the performance. The money minded *lanw-kon-bɛ* tend to have a commercial attitude towards their craft. They tend to urge generous giving on the part of those for whom they sing and if not satisfied may shame the giver in song; because music is so frequently accompanied by linguistic texts, statements can be made in public in a highly formalised way, thus giving public validity to certain sentiments which are privately not espoused. Ames (1973, p. 250-278) pointed out that, when asked what they did for a living, musicians among the Igbo of Obimo usually identified themselves as farmers. In contrast, Hausa musicians from Zaria regarded music as an occupation and a source of livelihood, yet both receive some payment for their musical activity. Dagara musicians like the Igbo musicians perform other activities such as farming for their survival. Since Dagara society is not a caste based society, anyone can be a musician or can learn to play the *gyil.* It is, however, expected of a good singer not only that he or she possesses a "fine voice" but also be able to speak well. In general, musicians are valued based on the socio-cultural roles and functions they play through their aesthetic performances.

The common definition in western terms regards aesthetics as the study of the good or the beautiful. Apel (1969, p.14) for instance suggests that musical aesthetics is the study of the relationship of music to human senses and intellect. From Kaeppler's (1971) point of view, aesthetics can be viewed as value judgments and value field. Those value judgments about the nature of music are those general limitations shaped by the cultural heritage of the society. This is all about the cultural factors in relation to the aesthetics principles. In that sense, to the Dagara, music is said to be aesthetically good or beautiful based on its emotional impact or effect on the individual soul. All the other aesthetic principles such as the tempo, volume, intensity of sound, the musical message etc. participate in this fundamental principle according to which the emotional touching, appealing and uplifting musical performance is the best to the Dagara listener.

6.2.3 Social theories

The social theory of music explains the role and functions of music and music-making in the context of social relations. It helps the understanding of the communicative potential of music as social experience. Social theories in the present context encompass a number of findings concerning the Dagara social organisation, the uses and functions of the music of the Dagara and the correlation or juncture between the musical structure and social structure.

First of all, the kinship system of the Dagara permeates and cements their social organisation to the extent that it ties all the social institutions together including their musical culture. The music of the Dagara plays as a medium of producing and re-producing the social person and society. Through the funeral music for insatance, Dagara acknowledge both sides of a deceased person's family. Indeed, funeral songs praise both the father and mother's side of the deceased.

The music of the Dagara is also used for educational and socialisation purposes. For instance, both funeral music and the light-hearted *bɛwaa* music and the recreational music of women and youth can employ satire and ridicule to admonish people who misbehave, are lazy or dishonest. In that regard, each of the three genres extensively explored in chapter five serves as a communicative tool, social control and interaction factor. *Bɛwaa* music in its performance context appears as an avenue where performers and audience instruct themselves while entertaining themselves as well. The songs purposely composed to admonish and criticise deviant behaviours are 'social whiplashes' to bring misconducting people back to the right way. *Bɛwaa* appears beyond music as an important factor of social control, recreation, entertainment and social interaction in establishing various relationships.

Like the *bɛwaa* in some extent, the *bawr-mwɛb* in particular appears as the educational framework or tool of the Dagara formal education. This takes place after about six months of training and fasting, after which the candidates attend close sessions where they sit at the feet of senior initiates who chant religious, mythic and moral advice to them. Indeed, through their performative interactions with the novices in responsorial exchange way, the *bawr-saabɛ* (*bawr* masters) teach these novices about issues related to social life, Dagara history, the cosmos and the world in which they live. A lot of secrets are passed down to the candidates who are supposed to keep them unknown by the non-initiated candidates called *dekume*. The hardship training mainly based on food interdictions adds to this formal education as to equip them with human values and virtues such as self-control and perseverance in life. This educational aspect of the *bawr* is extended by a more open ceremony with fast gyil and drum playing and rough "muscled" dancing with the inititates being jostled by older men to the accompaniment of songs concerning the initiates death, that is, the metaphorical death of them as children as they are ceremically reborn as men. In

sum, through *bawr* musical performances, some religious goals, social control and interactions are achieved as it is in funeral musical performances.

Moreover, it can be said that Dagara funeral ceremony for commemorating death can be distinguished by its public dimension, its length and the presence of sympathisers and many people outside the lineage who find themselves in an obligation to attend and perform certain roles during the ceremony. As the *bawr* initiation, funeral ceremony is an important ceremony in Dagara community where interpersonal, inter-social and inter-kinship relationships are formalised and experienced. It provides members of the community with an opportunity to mourn to ease the pain of the physical separation and to facilitate the passage of the deceased's soul (*siɛ*) into the world of ancestors. Within the ceremony, the *gyil* plays a central role as it helps in managing the bereavement of the deceased's relatives and sympathisers. Funeral music provides the community with opportunity to pay their last farewell to the deceased and express their dancing skills. *Bɛwaa, bawr-binɛ and ko-gyil* are a powerful factor of social control. These three genres are musical events that serve as opportunities for social interactions and control beyond their specific performance goals. The thematic materials of these genres are meant to reward good social behaviours and also punish the bad ones. Music-making plays a major role in the leisure times such as the youth recreational activities as well as during the most sacred ceremonies of *bawr* and *kuor*. With that regard, musical production and musical product are harmoniously complementary and effective to the understanding of musical phenomenon within the Dagara society to the extent that there is a reciprocal influence between music, society and culture. In that reciprocal influence, music can also be described as social fact as it may instinctively attract and bring people together in the context of social interactions.

However, if a musical performance is done out of its formal context, then there is function reversal. Function reversal, indeed, occurs with *bɛwaa* and *ko-gyil* performances. Funeral instrumental music, when located in its own performance context, is music for mourning. But, it becomes music for recreation or entertainment when performed out of the funeral context. Therefore, to avoid these equivocal situations some omissions are purposely acted. In the recreational context for instance, the performance structure is not scrupulously observed. This is so in order to avoid the recreation activity being changed into funeral ceremony. To avoid function reversal for instance, the *lanwni* is not sung along the instrumental performance of the *ko-gil*; although some learners sometimes inconspicuously try their hands. For the same reason also the real *kuor* (drum) performance is excluded. Likewise, the *bɛwaa* performance in funeral context is not meant for its original role and function, it is commemoration and farewell celebration in honour of the deceased who was a member of the performing group. The practice of commemoration is highly rooted in Dagara mentality as their last charitable act to someone who has gone for ever.

Moreover, another trend of Dagara mentality concerns their dualistic perception which permeates their worldview and their musical performances. This dualistic perception of things frames the Dagara mind and accounts of the dualistic structure of their musical performances. Between two xylophones of the same tuning for instance, the Dagara people distinguish a male xylophone from the female one. The *bɛwaa* dualistic structure also conveys this dualistic mentality. The *bɛwaa* performance, indeed, encompasses two main sections: walking pace section and dance (*karo*) section. To these two sections respectively correspond the two sections of an entire instrumental melody: the melodic theme (song) and the faster instrumental melody called *liɛbo*. At the dance section where this faster instrumental melody is performed, the singing is omitted for more breathe in performing the vigorous movement of *karo*. Moreover, this dualistic perception is also found in the funeral

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music. The music of the *dɛgaar* has two main types: the *dɛgaar* music and the *bɛlanw-mɛ* music. Throughout the funeral ceremony this dualistic relationship is also featured by the tension-and-release mood established by the contrasting mood between first exposition and second exposition of the corpse.

In Dagara land, a funeral lasts two (2) to four (4) days and the dagara believe it is vital to complete it otherwise the deceased becomes a ghost who can disturb or even kill off family members. Xylophones are used throughout the ceremony and the *ko-gyil* music of the 14 slats *gyil* plays complex and mournful songs during the first part of funeral when the body is laid in state at the family house. The 17 keys *dɛgaar* xylophone features for the second part of the funeral when the body is placed under a family tree, and so it becomes more of a public occasion with music being more and more celebratory and danceable. This funeral music manages bereavement and also lightens up the funeral mood. With regard to these dualistic considerations regarding musical performances in funeral ceremony, I would conclude that regions where the *lo-gyil* performance takes precedence over that of the *dɛgaar* can be described as the most mournful regions as they emphasise much more on the mourning aspect of funeral. In contrast to these regions are those relaxed where the *dɛgaar* performance outweighs that of the *lo-gyil*. They rather emphasise the festive aspect of the funeral.

The dualistic mentality from the socio-cultural system exemplified by the dualistic relationship attached to man and women is musically depicted through some musical performances such as the bi-partite nature of *bɛwaa* music and dance. In other words, this dualistic mentality of the Dagara stemmed from their social perception of man and woman seen as two opposite but complementary elements in the cosmos. In Dagara society the

"genderisation" of music-making like the division of labour is, in reality, a result of social construction. This social construction which stems from the Dagara worldview has made the Dagara women to be more vocalists and the men more instrumentalists. Women, indeed, are banned from the practice of some musical instruments such as the *gyil* due to some mythical beliefs related to their fecundity. It is believed that their menstrual blood must not be in contact with the instrument. Nowadays, this interdiction tends to be overcome by some outstanding women such as Naamwin-ira, a daughter of Yel-ku-naa, who now plays the *gyil* even on the funeral ground. But generally, most of the musical genres and their respective musical instruments are gender-based.

The significance of a particular genre derives from that of the socio-cultural event with which the musical genre is associated. This is so true that certain musical genres such as hunting music are gradually disappearing along with their respective musical instruments. However, among all the musical genres, funeral music is the most highly gender-based as its structure is embedded in the distinction between man and woman. In fact, Dagara kinship system permeates, fuels and cements their social organisation and their musical culture as well: For instance, the authority of the *Te-gan sob* (village political authority) is ascribed; candidates are initiated (*bawr*/religion) by biological parents. Families work together to make their living (economic institution) etc. Based on that kinship system the Dagara as an individual essentially belongs to two families: the father's family and the mother's family. These two families are well acknowledged during funeral ceremony where they collegially organise and celebrate the departure of their beloved one.

Another important gender-based distinction is the thematic development of the melodies played on the *lo-gyil* and on the *dɛgaar* as well. They inform the listener about the sex of the deceased. Thus, the type of music played by the funeral ensembles differs if it is the

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burial of a man or of a woman. For example, when the body is displayed at the family house, the *lo-gyil* players and drummers play in a triple time signature for a dead man and a quadruple one for a dead woman. Then in the second more public part of the funeral held under a family tree, the *dɛgaar* xylophone plays a suite of dance that contains three (3) sections in the case of a deceased man and four (4) for a deceased woman. Indeed, the cycle *dɛgaar-bɛlanw-mɛ* of a female deceased is four (4) *dɛgaar* and four (4) *bɛlanw-mɛ* while the cycle of three (3) *dɛgaar* and (3) *bɛlanw-mɛ* features the performance structure for a male deceased. These notions of female "fourness" and male "threeness" which fundamentally result from Dagara's worldview, operates when also dealing with gender issues in the context of Dagara cultural life such as warning: a misbehaving male is warned three times whereas a misbehaving female is warned four times. Beyond this figure symbolism, the culprit may be punished in one way or the other. Moreover, although women cannot play or even touch the gyil due to menstrual taboos, both female *kpa-kone* and male *lanwni* are sometimes involved in the event. Above these gender distinctions, Dagara use music as social glue to cement their kinship and social ties. They also employ music as a communication tool in the broad perspective of music as universal language (Cihodariu, 2011, p. 185). Within this particular context of communication, the Dagara society, like the Igbo, the Hausa and other African societies, have satirical and derisive songs which serve as an important mechanism of social control although the social contexts and the styles of delivery vary. Since musical events do not bear the same social significance, so are the musical genres associated with them. The *bawr* ceremony is much more word-and-instruction-oriented in such a way that musical performance is restricted to some few specific moments in the initiation process. In that sense the *bawr-mwɛb* chant marked by redundancy is an instruction retention device. The *bawr-binɛ* however, features some thematic characteristics developed in *bɛwaa* and *ko-gyil* musics in terms of musical

functions and one of the latent functions of music within its cultural context is to reveal that culture.

From his case study of the *Kaluli* of Papua in New Guinea, Feld (1984, p. 383-409) concluded that a structured sound is fundamentally a social structure. To him features of the *Kaluli* society are depicted by their musical sounds, the ideologies of sound-makers and sound-making. He described the *Kaluli* as an egalitarian and classless society because there is no social stratification, differentiation and specialisation. Economically they are egalitarian and politically acephalous since there is no reward based on wealth and social statuses. Steve Feld concluded that the *kaluli* society is an egalitarian, classless and acephalous society. As discussed in details in the previous chapters, the Dagara are a decentralised political society composed of independent villages that are each led by chiefs or *Tegan-sob* who are the priest of the Dagara earth cult. Therefore, the Dagara have no paramount chiefs or kings as do the Dagbon of Ghana from whom the Dagara migrated away from between the 14- 17th century. Indeed, because the Dagara split from the Dagbon kingdom, they rejected kingship and as such called themselves "Dagara" which means "insurrectionist". This egalitarian ethos is reflected in their music-making in that they have no caste of professional court musicians as do the people of the Dagbon, or for that matter the Hausa of Zaria. The Dagara also believe that music has a divine origin and that it was passed to them from the high god "Naamwin" via an intermediary mystical dwarf who in turn gave this knowledge to the Dagara ancestor. Since music is a divine gift for all Dagara, no one can pretend or claim the ownership of music–making. Their ontological and historical freedom is also depicted by their freedom in musical performances and improvisations. Even the role of the lead dancer in *bɛwaa* performance context is only limited to the cuing of the performance. Muiscal transcriptions provided for musical analysis also feature repetitions, unison, interlocking rhythmic patterns etc. Thus, most of

what is said about the *Kaluli* also can apply to some extent to the society and music of the Dagara. The Dagara, indeed, sing in unison, their melodies also feature redundancy through repetitions as melodic development device. The funeral music is highly structured and the interlocking performance makes the music dense and compacted filling all the gaps. Based on the ethnographic information concerning the social organisation and the musical culture of the Dagara, I can therefore conclude that the Dagara society is an egalitarian and classless society in which individuals are treated equally without any differences among people. It could be described as acephalous in opposition to the highly centralised society where there is a paramount chief on top of the hierarchical traditional leadership as it is in the Akan society. However, the leadership of the *Tegan-sob* and some chiefs of each independent village should be well noted.

6.3 Conclusion

This conclusive chapter has established a number of ethnomusicological theories as a result of the musical ethnography of the Dagara people in Burkina Faso. The music of the Dagara exhibits many of the same hallmarks of most other African musical traditions as far as musical elements are concerned: Pentatonic scale, descending melodic line, polyphonic texture, interlocking rhythms that create inherent rhythms, improvisations, syncopations, speech surrogate of *gyil*, music intended to accompany dance, and a correlation between music and language etc. All these elements come together to create what the Dagara simply consider to be their music. Although there is no single concept to capture the notion of the music of the Dagara, the Dagara philosophy about their music and musical aesthetics through terminologies borrowed from the ordinary language of the society. The music is a multiple art mainly for life's sake. The melodies embedded in pentatonic scales feature the descending melodic line. Most of the performances are shaped in antiphonal form where performers and audience communally partake in the performance. Music is mainly

associated with dance to the extent that they bear the same name as they also convey meaning in the context of performance. In that regard music is used as a significant communicative tool for social interaction and social control through song texts. Moreover, the musical structure depicts the Dagara's dualistic perception of things and their kinship system as social glue. Finally, the music of the Dagara describes the Dagara society as an egalitarian and classless society.

6.4 Recommendations

Areas where I would like to make suggestions are numerous, but I limit myself to a few suggestions: the standardisation of the *dɛgaar*, the harmonisation principles of the music of the Dagara and the call for greater awareness concerning the strong inter-relationship between the tonal language of the Dagara and their music and so on.

a) **Standardisation of the *dɛgaar* equipentatonic scale**

The experimental xylophone constructed out of the previous investigations and evoked in this study (see Chapter Four) corroborates the consistency and equality of the intervallic structure of the *dɛgaar* xylophone to the extent that a song can be played a step below or above the initial tonic note, but still recognisable in terms of melodic sound. In regard to that, I would like to suggest that the *dɛgaar* xylophone scale and its musical implications should be regarded and treated as an equipentatonic instrument. Furthermore, the location of the standard pitch areas for the two *gyile* (*lobri* and *dɛgaar*) towards the plausible location of the standard pitches (fundamentals) should lead the process of the *gyil* standardisation. I believe that from the standard pitch areas, an attempt to locate and agree upon as standard pitches or fundamentals for the two *gyile* is possible. Moreover, the Western staff notation seems to be paradoxically suited to the music of the *dɛgaar,* because the equally spaced

interval structure -with one additional space to accommodate the five (5) notes- would be accurately reflected by the equally spacing of notes of the staff.

b) Harmonising the music of the Dagara

Mythically it is acknowledged that the tonality of the *gyil* and the language of the Dagara (human voice) are strongly and musically related as far as the origin of *gyil* is concerned. If this musical relationship is founded, I would rather suggest that the harmony principles and rules which should guide the harmonisation process of Dagara songs and melodies be rooted from the interlocking harmony of the *gyil* performance, especially between both hands of the *gyil* player. However, the efficiency of this inspiration essentially requires a thorough musical analysis of a more accurate transcription of the performance.

c) The interconnection between music and tonal language

My recommendation here consists of drawing attention to the interconnection between music and language as they all share a common objective which is communication. Indeed, music in general and song in particular constitute an efficient communicative tool. Agawu (2001) argues that African music can be described as language and as text with regard to its function and meaning. To him language is a semiotic system and since music is a language then music is also a semiotic system where its various symbols are the embodiments involved in musical performance, the words of the songs, and the errors etc. As text, African music also bears some textual features such as motives for words in speech, phrases, and periods for sentences in speech etc. In music, the dot is expressed by a perfect cadence while the comma or semi-colon is expressed by an imperfect cadence.

There is also a strong and complementary relation between music and speech as they share the same purpose of communication. This relationship music-speech is stronger with tonal

languages such as the dagara language. In fact, music as subject of musicology and speech as subject of linguistics are two different but interrelated realities. Despite their belongings to two different disciplines, they mostly share some common characteristics such as intonation, rhythm, structure, dynamics, gestures, emphasis and psychological emotion etc. in their contextual interaction (*ibid*). Music and speech interact when one of them appropriates the properties of the other to enhance its own quality within its own context. In fact, music and speech all imply intonation or pitch inflection. Music, indeed, is all about sequence of pitches especially in the melodic context where melody is basically a series of different pitches in a horizontal way. But, who speaks about pitches, also speaks of different levels of sound which is also called "intonation" or pitch inflection. On the other hand, in the context of tonal language especially, some words are really ambiguous when their intonations are not well observed. These words, sometimes, change to a completely different one in terms of lexical meaning. For instance, *baa* with high intonation (HI)) which means dog has to be distinguished from *baa* with low intonation (LI)) meaning a river. In other words, a word whose tonality is not scrupulously observed by the performer is meaningless to the listener, because according to Agawu (2016, p. 8) "languages in which differences in relatives pitch trigger differences in lexical meaning". These fundamental linguistic constraints are relevant to musical understanding offered by musical tones as "tone is said to be phonemic, that is generative of meaning" (*ibid*). In that sense, "tones may be leveled or terraced; some may be glide or be rendered as upwards or downwards glissandi" (*ibid*). The sequence of tones varies from words, expressions or phrases in such a way that these tonal inflections can be word-based and/or expressions-based as well.

Thus, the respective tonalities of the lyrics in the process of new composition may even provide the basic melodic contour of the composer as he or she may simply transform speech tones into musical tones. In that sense, Agawu (*ibid*) rightly pointed out that "to live

within the linguistic world (of tone) is to live within a *musical* or *port-musical* world; to inhabit a tone language as sense and sound is to be acutely aware of relational pitch…From this vantage point, the gap between speaking and singing may sometimes be narrow or even non-existent." Similarly, what is said about pitch inflections is also applicable to rhythms, dynamics, gestures, psychological emotions etc.

Unfortunately, a number of Dagara song writers seem not to be aware of these important realities. I would suggest that art music, religious music and neo-traditional music composers should pay more attention to these significant nuances for more expressive and insightful compositions and performances. For, sometimes communication or message delivery is threatened when speech tone and melody tone of the same word or phrase go their separate ways, though, according to Agawu (2016), that distortion mostly and semantically affects more the speech than the melody. However, it should be well noted that converting pitch inflections and rhythmic durations into musical compositions is suggestive, but not prescriptive as musical compositions require more inputs than simply adopting what is dictated by the spoken words. As Agawu (2016, p. 9) rightly said "whatever is prescribed within a given language for speech-borne melody has to be domesticated within the economy of music" and in relation to the pitch system (scale) available in the particular culture.

This particular appeal to musical composers, concerns, in a special way, the religious or sacred music composers who have the great honour and delicate responsibility or vocation to convey, through music, the Words of God or the Gospel. This spiritual concern about spreading the Good News and making it accessible to people is also the main objective of the Bible translation into mother tongues undertaken by Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT). Thus, in addition to the scholarly purpose of this

study, my secondary purpose, as stated earlier on, is ethnodoxological, as ethnodoxology mainly applies ethnomusicological research to create and develop adapted musical forms for worship. In that sense, this research work abides with my pastoral conviction, as a priest of Dagara origin, that the music of the Dagara can become an efficient method or instrument for the New Evangelisation task which constitutes, nowadays, the main concern of the Catholic Church across the world. That same conviction had already been expressed by the indigenous priests committee established between 1967-1975 by the emeritus Bishop of Diébougou, Jean Baptiste Some in these terms: "Convinced that Christianity does really permeate people's cultures, as far as they are capable of expressing their faith within their own cultures, we have decided to embark on this section of the Dagara culture called music" (See *Equipe diocésaine de la sous-commission musique sacrée, (*1976), p.1). Likewise, most Rev. Der Raphael Dabire, current Bishop of Diébougou reinforced this shared conviction of that committee by stressing on the necessity of deeper and holistic investigations on our African cultural values including music for a better and efficient inculturation of the Gospel. I mean by inculturation or contextual theology the process of adapting the Gospel into a particular culture. In that context, Most Rev. Der observed that our local hymns employed for the liturgical celebrations are very limited and really need to be improved on by music scholars for better input and within the New Evangelisation context.

Based on this pastoral and Evangelism concerns as far as Diébougou diocese is concerned and to also enable efficient musical forms of worship, I would like to make a couple of suggestions: (1) the collaboration between the liturgical committee, its subcommittee known as "sacred music" committee and the "Faith and culture" committee must be formally established and/or enhanced with a well elaborate agenda of planed activities and meetings; (2) A clear and elaborate standard for assessing musical compositions or hymns

should take into consideration the theological (doctrinal) and the musical aspects of any new song. In that sense and to be in the safer side, composers should be rather encouraged to pick faithfully their song texts from the Holy Bible and/or from other authoritative spiritual materials. In addition to that, the qualified adjudicators committee for the assessments of hymns must be knowledgeable enough in music and in theology as well. Thus, if these experiences based on the suggestions made above are successful, they can become, I hope, a genuine source of inspiration to other religious institutions and churches.

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Missa yielu album, Compact Disc Digital Audio.

Gyil binε Album, Compact Disc Digital Audio.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Personal Interviews

1- Ko-kyaal/Kom, a gyil, player

28/12/ 2018; Nyigbo-Bevouganwn, Burkina Faso

2- Kpowda Yurokpɛ, a gyil player

28/12/ 2018; Nyigbo-Bevouganwn, Burkina Faso

3- Somda De-tobr/ Domezule, a dirge singer

28/12/ 2018; Nyigbo-Bevouganwn, Burkina Faso

4- Somda Mathias, a dirge singer

07/01/ 2019; Nyigbo-Bevouganwn, Burkina Faso

5- Some Naasom, a dirge singer

08/01/ 2018; Nyigbo-Wiɛkanalɛ, Burkina Faso

6- Antiɛrɛ/ Biin, a *bawr* master from Nyigbo-Bevouganwn (February 2019)

08/01/ 2019; Nyigbo-Bevouganwn, Burkina Faso

7- Ignaar/Yaago, a bawr master

08/01/ 2019; Nyigbo-Bevouganwn, Burkina Faso

8- Mwab, a *bawr* master from Kɛlbɛlɛ,

08/01/ 2019; Kɛlbɛlɛ, Burkina Faso

9- Kpowda Emile, a gyil player

08/02/ 2019; Forotew, Burkina Faso

10- Somda Pierre Claver, a custodian of Dagara culture

09/02/ 2019; Dissin-Saala, Burkina Faso

11- Dabire Joseph, a custodian of Dagara culture

09/02/ 2019; Dissin-Saala, Burkina Faso

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12- Dabire Anaclet, a gyil player and dirge singer

09/02/ 2019; Dissin-Guora, Burkina Faso

13- Meda Jacques, a popular musician

09/02/ 2019; Dissin-Saala, Burkina Faso

14- Dabire Zephirin, a custodian of culture

 10/02/ 2019; Babora, Burkina Faso

15- Kambire Samuel, a gyil player

10/02/ 2019; Gorganwn, Burkina Faso

16- Kambire Aubin, a gyil player and popular musician

10/02/ 2019; Gorganwn, Burkina Faso

17- Somda Yeb-Mwaa Pascal, a custodian of Dagara culture

11/02/ 2019; Dano-Orpon, Burkina Faso

18- Zaw Some Ziebaar Jeremy, a custodian of Dagara culture and dirge singer

12/02/ 2019; Dano-Bolinbaa, Burkina Faso

19- Somda Josaphate, a custodian of Dagara culture

12/02/ 2019; Dano-Bolinbaa, Burkina Faso

20- Hien T. Gilbert a dirge singer from Nyigbo-Bevouganwn

13/02/ 2019; Nyigbo-Bevouganwn, Burkina Faso

21- Rev. Nestor Dabire, a diocesan priest of Dagara origin

12/02/ 2019; Dissin, Burkina Faso

22- Rev. Thadée Meda, a diocesan priest of Dagara origin

O8/02/ 2019; Dano, Burkina Faso

Appendix B: Pictures

Appendix C: Transcribed Dagara songs.

Song 1 : Zonw bè gnèrè

Song 1 : Zonw b

Song 1 : Zonw b

Score

Song 2 : Uu Kule

Song 2 : Uu Kule

Uu ku le uu___ ku le e uu ku le daa___daa

daa   uu   ku   le   do___ ba   li   man   uu   ku   le   daa___ daa

daa

Song 3 : I n baa bè gnow wala

In baa   bè nyow wa-la   i   in baa   bè

nyow wa-la   i   in baa bè nyow wa-la   i dè pè   lè rè ba zu mwan nu nyow wa la   a

229

Score

Song 4 : Madelina

2   Song 4 : Madelina

pow ko le kanw ben be   këul - sir 'maan në na

kuu   dug   bu   le   kĕ   wa   pow   ko   le   kanw   ben   be   kĕul   sir   'maan   nĕ   na___

Score

Song 5 : Saab laa bèru

Song 5 : Saab laa bèru

Song 5 : Saab laa bèru

Appendix D: Guide for interviews

1- **Ethno-semantics of music: Dagara music perception and understanding**

1. How do you call "music" in Dagara language and why?

2. What is music in Dagara?

2- Features of Dagara musical elements

1. How do you call:
   - ❖ pitch,
   - ❖ interval,
   - ❖ melody,
   - ❖ harmony or polyphony,
   - ❖ rhythm,
   - ❖ Time-line in Dagara language and why?

2. How these concepts are used in the ordinary musical language?

3. What are their musical contexts?

3- Use and functions of Dagara music

- ➢ Who is a good *lanw-kone* and why?

4- Methods of teaching and learning

- ➢ How do you learn to play the gyil?
- ➢ How do you learn to play the *kuɔr*?
- ➢ What are purely instrumental musics?
- ➢ What are purely vocal musics?
- ➢ What are the vocal musics which may be accompanied?
- ➢ For how long does last the lo-gyil before the proper inauguration of the funeral and why?
- ➢ Is there any difference between *ko-gyil*, *ko-binɛ* and *Binɛ*?
- ➢ What are the differences between *Mwaafu*, *buɔlo*, *kpab, tchɔmb*?

5- Methods of musical compositions

- ➢ How do you compose your songs?
- ➢ For how long does a single song composition take you?

6- A bout musical Competence

- • Who can make xylophone and why?
- • Can anybody compose songs and why?

- Can anybody learn how to play the gyil and How?

- Is the gyil heritage a prerogative of any clan of family and why?

- Who can be called Gɔba in xylophone playing?

- How do we know that somebody is in-born xylophone player? What are the symptoms?

- How do we know the difference in gyil playing between a gifted xylophone and someone who is not an in-born xylophone player?

- What are the criteria of a good xylophone player or singer?

7- About musical Form or structure

➢ What are the differences between dɛgaar and belangni? How do we recognise them?

➢ How are musical means distributed across settings and participants?

➢ What are the preferred aesthetic orderings of bɛwaa, gyil *gub*?

➢ How flexible, arbitrary, elastic, adaptable, open is musical form? How resistant to changes, internal or external pressures, or other historical forces?

➢ Why does the performance of song (music) present certain structures?

➢ Does a specific socio-cultural condition necessarily generate a specific set of musical structures?

8- About musical Performance

➢ What is the relationship between individual and collective expressive forms and performance settings (*Bɛwaa, ko-gyil* and *bawr-binɛ*)?

➢ How do cooperative and competitive social relations emerge in performance? What meanings do these have for performers and audience?

➢ How do performances achieve pragmatic (evocative, persuasive, manipulative) ends, if at all?

➢ Between the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* and *lanw-kone* who is the most important in term of leadership? Or who has the leading role? And who else has the supporting role within the funeral context?

➢ Is there evidence of a relationship between musical sounds and musical contexts and, how do we discover it?

➢ Why do certain members of the Dagara community specifically sing such things in such ways to such audience in such a specific place and time?

9- About the Environment

➢ What resources does the environment provide? How are they exploited'? What relationships exist between resources, exploitation, and the material means and social occasions for performance?

➢ Are there co-evolutionary patterns, ecological and aesthetic, linking the environment and sound patterns, materials, situations'?

➢ What are the visual-auditory-sensate relationships between people and environment, and how is this pattern related to expressive means and ends'?

➢ What myths or models scaffold the perception of the environment? Are these related or complimentary to conceptions of person, society, expressive resources?

➢ What mystical or cosmological associations with the environment support, contradict, or otherwise relate to the socioeconomic context of musical beliefs and occasions?

10- About musical Theory

➢ Is musical knowledge public, private, ritual, esoteric?

➢ What dimensions of musical thoughts are verbalised? Taught verbally? Non-verbally?

➢ Is theory necessary? How detached can theory be from practice? What varieties of knowledge and activity count as musical or aesthetic theory'? How is music rationalised?

➢ In funeral situation, between the *gyil-mwiɛrɛ* and the *lanw-kone* whom do you listen to and why?

11- About Value and Equality

➢ Who values and evaluates sounds'? Who can be valued and evaluated as a maker of sounds?

➢ How are expressive resources distributed, specifically among men and women, young and old? How do stratifications emerge?

➢ How do balances and imbalances manifest themselves in expressive ideology and performance?

➢ Do sounds deceive? Mystify? Who? Why?

➢ Are sounds secret? Powerful? For whom? Why?