

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

THE STRUCTURE AND STYLE OF THE DAGBAMBA DIRGE

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DECLARATION

“I ISSAHAKU JOMO SADIA, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere”

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my mother, Hajia Zinatu Alhassan and my late father, Alhaji Abubakari Issahaku Jomo. May Almighty Allah bless your soul and grant you Jannatul Firdaus.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the structure and style of Dagbamba dirges, (a Gur-language spoken in the northern part of Ghana). It examines the significance of these songs to the Dagbamba as part of their social events which seek to usher the dead into eternal life. The study outlines sample Dagbamba dirges (9 dirges in all), examines the logical divisions as well as some literary devices used in these dirges. The study shows that these devices play a vital role in the appreciation of these dirges, and that the most commonly used devices in these dirges include; repetition, proverbs, personifications, rhetorical questions, exaggeration /hyperboles among others. The study again tries to examine each dirge by the number of lines or stanzas in which it is written or sung. It discovers that the lines in these dirges range from ten (10) to twenty five (25) usually in one stanza with about five (5) to seven (7) words making up a line.

Keywords: dirge, stanza, line

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the study

This research investigated the style and structure of Dagbamba dirges. It examined critically an aspect of Dagbani oral literature which specifically has to do with the style and structure of these dirges. It also showed sample dirges and the importance of these dirges to Dagbamba.

Funerals are important and memorable events among Dagbamba. Death is a universal phenomenon, a fate every soul must embrace. When death occurs, mourners show their sorrows in many ways, they cry, wail, and sing. The singing of funeral dirges is one of the activities during funerals. They are sad songs sung to mourn, honor, praise and remember the dead.

Nketia (1955) opined that the celebration of a funeral is an important social event carrying with it certain expectations into the behavior of individuals. A dirge can also be defined as a sober song or lament expressing mourning or grief, such as will be appropriate for performance at a funeral.

Agyekum (2013) noted that dirges are wailing songs, sung at a funeral or in commemoration of death. According to Stephen et.al (2013), dirges are seen as expressing and communicating, sharing and representing grief and sorrow with organized

sound. These songs by nature are sorrowful and try to bring out the mood or feeling of the grieved person at the time the song is being sung.

The Akan call a dirge “osu” the Ewe call it “avihawu” the Frafra call it “ku- baa” the Gonjas call it “awoba” Bulsas call it “kum-yiila and Dagbamba call it “kuyila”. Among the Dagbamba, the dirge is usually sung by close relatives of the deceased especially the children or grandchildren (kubihi). Also, it is not a taboo for men to sing dirges among Dagbamba, however, it is mostly sung by women. This is because most Ghanaians believe that it is not proper for men to show their grief in public, a man must be able to control himself in sorrowful situations. In view of this, Finnegan (1976) opines that the fact that these songs often involve wailing, sobbing and weeping makes them particularly suitable for women.

The singing of dirges among Dagbamba is not done at all times. The death of children does not call for the performance of dirges. It is mostly performed during the death of chiefs, warriors, the aged and people who lived remarkable lives in the Dagbamba society.

Salifu (2009) observed that at burial ceremonies of chiefs among Dagbamba, drumming the praises of the departed will make the deceased rest in peace. It is believed that the soul of the departed will not leave this upper world if it is not given the required drum dirge accompanied by its praises. According to him, he/she is then told *donimi baalim katiŋ maai*. “Lie perfectly still (rest in peace) for calm to prevail”.

Okpewho (1992) stated that because of the crucial position that death occupies in the cycle of human life, the idea or experience of death of a relative or friend inspires a variety of reactions ranging from despair to resignation and even courage.

He adds that in many African traditional societies, there are elaborate ceremonies surrounding the occasion of death, and these, a variety of funeral songs and chants or dirges as they are commonly called are performed that convey these different sentiments. He maintained that, in many African communities, funeral ceremonies are all the more elaborate if the deceased is an aged man or woman, a titled person, a member of a guild or cult.

(Egudu and Nwoga, 1992: 128-135) cited in Egudu (1992) explains how the funeral poetry is performed at the death of a titled female leader. According to them, the late woman is praised as the “savior of those in difficulty”, “an engine head that shakes the earth”, “a beautiful house where wealth is preserved”, and “a woman made queen by all”.

The performance of funerals among Dagbamba is considered as a celebration of life, especially when it has to do with the death of an elderly person. This is usually characterized by what is known as “buni wuhibu” literally the displaying of wealth. During the “buni wuhibu” as part of the funeral celebration, the beauty of the Dagban traditional dance is exhibited. Mourners and family members dressed in beautiful smocks and exhibit their talents and skills in the various Dagban traditional dances like *the*

nayibieyu, (the ugly cow's dance)nakoha waa, (the buchere dance) machele waa(the blacksmiths dance) etc, which is usually accompanied by gunshots.

On this day, mourners and family members of the deceased may look or seem happy and joyous as they are in a celebration mood, but this is not to say that they have soon forgotten their loss. Sometimes the performance of Dagbani dirges is accompanied by musical instruments and the clapping of hands. The lead singer is mostly one who belongs to the family or very close to the family and happens to know the family tree.

Usually, they sing with passion conveying messages of life experiences and the need to live a life worthy of emulation. A lot of good things are said about the deceased in the song, his achievements in life, who he was what he did and his legacies are all pointed out in these songs. The reason behind this is that, the Dagbamba believe that when someone dies, his bad or evil deeds should be concealed and only the good should be talked about. This explains one of the reasons why Dagbani dirges are mostly praise songs. These songs are intended to praise the deceased and not to mock or criticize him/her even if he/she (the deceased) was the worst human ever lived.

In these songs, references are made to the past. Historical events as well as adventurous life lived by the deceased's parents, grandparents and great grandparents are sometimes referred to. Great lessons are usually learnt from these songs as mourners' attention is drawn to certain facts of life.

In the past, the Dagbamba used funeral dirges as a way of announcing a funeral. In those days, the singing of these songs could tell neighbors and nearby villages that someone was dead. Through these songs some people could tell the caliber of person who has joined the ancestors or even who the deceased was, through the mention of names or family appellations.

1.1 Brief history about the Dagbamba

Dagbamba descended from Mole- Dagbaŋ. According to Inusah (2016), Mole- Dagbani is a central Gur language that was adopted in Pusiga during the reign of Naa Gbewaa by the people called Daŋgomba. The word „Daŋgomba“ was deduced from two lexical items through morphological process of compounding-“daŋ” clan or family and “gomba” name of a place. The lexeme “daŋ” is the morpheme that was added to the root “gomba” to create the new lexeme “daŋ-gomba”. The” Daŋgomba” was however changed to Dagbamba with time.

It is again confirmed that the Mole was formally known as More and that Mampurili Dagbani are some of the languages that originated from the Mole-Dagbani sub-family. Naden (1988) cited in Inusah (2016).

The origin of Dagbaŋ can be traced to Tohazee, the red hunter. He hailed from Zamfara (somewhere in present day Northern Nigeria) and traveled to the Mali Empire. Tohazee was a brave hunter who mastered archery (the art of hunting with bow and arrow).

The present day Dagbaŋ kingdom which is some 8082 square miles in area dates back to the fifteenth century, with its early warrior equestrian ancestors coming into the present north-eastern location in modern day Ghana, from the Chadic region, Salifu (2009). He added that history of the Dagbaŋ nation is invariably tied to the political history of the kingship. Every village and town has a chief who also has a team of elders to assist in his administration.

He maintained that king Nyayisi, grandson of Naa Gbewaa is the common ancestor of the Mole-Dagbanli, Mɔhili, (Moore) ŋmampruli (Mampurili), Nanunli and Kusahili (Kusaal). Nyayisi is regarded as the founder of modern Dagbaŋ and he moved the capital from to Yendi in the east.

Siiba (2015) noted that Kpating lun naa, in a conversation noted that the original capital town of Dagbaŋ was called Yanidabari, near the present day Diali, in the Savelugu-Naton municipality and was later moved to the present day Yendi where the king resides.

1.1.2 Funerals and the influence of Islam

Over the years, the performance of funeral dirges by Dagbamba has been greatly influenced by the religion of these people. According to Sulemana (1970), the Islamic religion and civilization was brought into Dagbon by Arabic traders and merchants during the reign of Naa Zanjina. He ruled for 29 years, from 1648-1677. Naa Zanjina was a great king who was not only famous, but also very religious. He accepted and made Islam popular in Dagbaŋ through the practice of various religious activities. It is equally

important to note that it was during the time of Naa Zanjina that widows and widowers were permitted to remarry after the death of their spouses. Islam, Christianity and African traditional religion are the main religions practiced by these people, with majority practicing Islam.

As a result of this, crying, wailing and singing of funeral dirges during funerals to a very large extent have been discouraged by leaders of Islam. Crying, wailing and singing of funeral dirges are however frowned upon and discouraged among the Dagbamba because it brings nothing but punishment to the dead body. Some Muslims believe that each tear-drop on the floor for the dead becomes fire that burns the body of the deceased. This however is contrary to the traditional Dagbamba people since they sing dirges to create humor for the bereaved families since they are in a shock after the departure of their loved one.

It is believed that, when death occurs, the best mourners can do for the deceased is to keep calm and continue to offer prayers and supplications before and after a befitted burial for the deceased to have a peaceful rest.

1.1.3 Dagbani and its speakers

According to the Ghana 2010 Housing and population census, Dagban covers an area of about eight thousand square miles of the northern region with a total population of about 1,254,476. They speak the Dagbani language which belongs to the Mole- Dagbani sub- group of the Gur-languages. Adam and Imam(2015).

Dagbani is a Gur-language spoken in the north-eastern part of Ghana, Hudu(2012). It is spoken mainly in the northern region of Ghana by the Dagbamba people. Speakers of Dagbani are commonly known as Dagombas (plural) and Dagomba (singular) and in Dagbani are known as Dagbamba and Dagbana respectively. This language is predominantly spoken within Tamale and its environs such as Savelugu, Kumbungu, Tolon etc, Yendi and the communities around it as well as Bimbila and its environs. This makes it possible for the existence of dialects among these people. For instance we have “Tomosili” spoken among Dagbamba within and around the Tamale metropolis, “Nayahili” by the people of Yendi and its surroundings and „Nanunli” by the natives of Bimbila and its environs, Naden (1988).

One common practice among Dagbamba during the performance of a funeral is the contribution made by both family and non-family members of the deceased. Usually the family head in consultation with members of the family decide on the funeral arrangement. During this period, family members are entreated to contribute some amounts of money towards the expenditure that will be incurred during the funeral. Sometimes a fixed amount is agreed on for all members to contribute. At other times, members contribute any amount depending on one’s financial capability.

There is also what is known as *Pɔŋ*, which is usually either a calabash, container or a bowl placed in the middle of the compound where the funeral is being performed. This is what gives mourners and non-relatives the opportunity to contribute towards the performance of the funeral rites.

They drop monies no matter how little it is in this bowl on entering the compound. This is normally used in buying foodstuffs for the funeral celebration.

Grandchildren and great grandchildren of the deceased also place bowls in the middle of the compound for people to put monies in. This, unlike the other one placed by other members of the family, is not used in buying foodstuffs but is meant for the grandchildren and great grandchildren who place the bowls there. What most grandchildren and great grandchildren do with this money is that, they buy something durables with it , so they could use it to remember the deceased for as long as that thing lasts.

Again, as part of their social responsibility, friends and sympathizers usually make donations. This may take the form of money or items such as rice, maize, oil, tubers of yam, cattle, sheep, firewood, guinea fowls etc, needed for the performance of the funeral. Also, others work tirelessly (labour) throughout as their way of contributing to the success of the funeral.

1.2 Some myths about death

There are number of stories or myths surrounding death within the Dagbamba society. Like the saying goes “death is inevitable”, it is unavoidable. Everybody must taste death; it does not matter one’s status in life, the rich, and poor, young, old, black or white. As noted by Agyekum (2013), African cultures have myths that explain that in the beginning there was no death. According to him, it was believed that God, the Supreme Being made

people young again when they grew old. When people died, they were reborn or went to the ancestral world. He however maintains that to these myths what we call death was man's own making through various dubious and unaccepted manners. Man lost eternal life through some flaws of his own such as greed, curiosity, stubbornness or arrogance. In other cases it is a punishment for disobedience towards God.

Another myth is told about how death came into being in Kono. According to the story, at the beginning there was nothing. In the darkness of the world lived death, with his wife and only daughter. In order to be able to live somewhere, death created an immense sea of mud, by means of magic. One day Alatangana, a God, appeared, and visited death in his dirty abode. Shocked by this state of affairs, Alatangana reproached death fiercely, saying that he has created uninhabitable place without plants, without living beings, without lights. To remedy these faults, Alatangana set out first of all to solidify the dirt. He thus created the earth, but this earth seems to him too sterile and too sad, and so he created vegetation and animals of all kinds.

Death who was satisfied with this improvements of his dwelling place, entertained great friendship with Alatangana and offered him much hospitality. After some time Alatangana, who was a bachelor, asked his host for the hand of his only daughter. But the father found many excuse and in the end flatly refused to satisfy his demand. However, Alatangana came in to a secret agreement with the young girl. He married her, and in order to escape the wrath of death, they fled to a remote corner of the earth. There they lived happily and bore many children: seven boys and seven girls-four white boys and

girls and three black boys and girls. To the great surprise of their parents, these children spoke strange languages among themselves which their parents did not understand. Alatangana was annoyed and finally decided to go and consult death, and without delay, he set out on his way.

His father-in-law addressed him coldly and said: “Yes, it was I who punished you, because you have offended me. You shall never understand what your children say. But I shall give your white children intelligence and paper and ink so that they may write down their thoughts. To your black children, so that they may feed themselves and procure everything they need, I shall give the hoe, the machet, and the axe.”

Death also recommended to Alatangana that the white children should marry themselves and the black children should do the same. Eager to be reconciled to his father-in-law, Alatangana accepted all his conditions. When he returned he had the marriages of all his children celebrated. They dispersed to all parts of the world and engendered the white and black races. From these ancestors were born innumerable children whom we know today under the names of French, English, Italians, Germans, etc, on the one hand, and Kono, Guerze, Manon Malinke, and Toma Yakouba on the other.

But the world that had thus been peopled was still living in darkness. Once more Alatangana was forced to ask the advice of Death. He commanded the “tou-tou” (an early-rising little red bird) and the cock to go and ask death’s advice. When he had the two messengers, death told them: “Enter the house. I shall give you the song by which

you shall call the light of the day so that men can go about their work". When the messengers returned, Alatangana became angry and scolded them: "I gave you money and I gave you food for your journey, and you neglected your duty. You deserve death." But in the end Alatangana mercifully forgave the two unhappy messengers. A little later, the tou-tou gave its first cry and the cock too uttered his first song. And behold a miracle: hardly had the two birds finish their songs when the first day dawned. The sun appeared in the horizon and to the directions of Death started on its celestial course. When his journey was completed the sun went to sleep somewhere on the side of the earth. At this moment, there appeared the stars in order to give to mankind some of their lights during the night. And since that day the two birds must sing in order to call the light. First the tou-tou and the cock.

Having thus given the sun, the moon, and the stars to mankind, Death called Alatangana. He said to him: "You took my only child away and in return I have done good to you. It is your turn now to render me a service: as I have been deprived of my child, you must give me one of yours any time I choose to call for one. He shall hear a calabash rattle in his dreams when I choose him. This shall be my call which must always be obeyed." Conscious of guilt, Alatangana could not but consent. Thus it is because Alatangana disobeyed the custom requiring the payment of the bride-price that a human being must die". Bier (1966:36).

The message of immortality was sent by one of the animals (usually a dog or hare) who delayed and another animal (lizard or tortoise or chameleon) arrived first and told men

that they would die and be buried. The message of immortality arrived late and God refused to change His mind and so death came into the world. Quarcoopome (1987:27) cited in Agyekum (2013).

The Dagbamba consider death as a will of God even though in some cases some deaths may be seen as the handy work of the enemy. Notwithstanding this, the Dagbamba take consolation in the fact that, once the Supreme Being is considered as the giver of life and He alone has the power to take back the life of anyone He pleases, as it is believed then, no matter the story behind the beginning of death, God is always the decider as is the believe in almost all African cultures.

1.3 Stages of funeral performance

Funeral arrangements among the Dagbamba is usually done by the *Dɔyirikpema* (family head) in consultation with other elders of the family. It is usually done immediately after burial. Due to the influence of religion in the Dagbamba cultural practices, particularly Islam, the Dagbamba do not waste any time in burying the dead. Burial is usually done few hours after death, by which time family members might have gotten the information. However, it is not uncommon among the Dagbamba to postpone the funeral rites of the deceased. This practice is however reserved for the aged and people who hold chieftaincy titles in the society. It may take months or even years for the final funeral rites of such people to be performed. Most often, these rites are usually set to be performed after harvest time when food is expected to be in abundance.

Arrangements of funeral rites among Dagbamba are done customarily with series of rites. The first rite after burial is the three days rite (daba ata) performed exactly three days after burial. This is followed by the seven days rites (daba ayopɔin) performed seven days after burial. The seven days rite is usually the main rites where prayers and the pouring of libation are carried out. As part of Dagbamba culture, this day will not fall on Wednesday or Saturday as these two days are special to them and they do not perform funerals on them, Adam and Imam (2015).

The next rites performed after the seven days rites is done exactly forty days after burial (bieɣu pihinahi). This is usually not as grand as the seven days rites. It is mostly observed by close family members and relatives. The Dagbamba believe that, it is after the performance of these rites that the spirit of the deceased rests, for it is believed that before the forty days rites the deceased still dwells among the family spiritually. Therefore, among these people, a funeral is not over until the forty days rites are performed.

Another stage is where the funeral rites are performed exactly one year (yuun^ɔpali) after death. Prayers are offered and sacrifices made for the deceased. It is very common among most families in the Dagbamba societies these days to visit the grave of the deceased to either wall it with inscription or put it in shape or even decorate it so it could easily be identified.

Most often, it is after the one year funeral rites that the property of the deceased is shared among his children and relatives. It is very rare among Dagbamba to share or distribute the property of the deceased before the one year funeral rites are performed. It is assumed that after one year or within one year period, all his assets might have been gathered or organized and his debts (if any) settled or cleared to enable a peaceful and fair distribution of the property since most Dagbamba die without a will, indicating who is inheriting this item or that.

1.4 About the style and structure

Every oral literary work has style and structure. It is the style that really depicts the creativity of the artist. The structure is the parts of the piece and normally each piece has three major parts: the initial, middle and final parts, Agyekum (2013).

The style is an important feature that distinguishes one piece of art from another. The most beautiful style is one full of figures of speech such as simile, personification, repetition, paradox, parallelism, irony etc, that give mental pictures. Since dirges form part of oral literature and mostly appeal to or have to do with sounds, it is important that a good dirge has all forms of repetition. It is equally important to mention that every skillful art manipulates the style and structure to produce a perfect work, Agyekum (2013).

The style is mostly seen in the choice of words of these songs. These words are carefully selected to depict the mood of the singer. It is also arranged in such a way that the content

is devoid of any form of ambiguity. It is sung using simple meaningful sentences which can easily be visualized by the “mind’s eye”. The sorrowful nature of Dagbani dirges which is usually characterized by the use of phrases like

M ba yee! ,M ma yee! ,Oh my father! Oh my mother!

These can easily move one to tears.

Again, literary devices form an integral part of Dagbani dirges when considering the style. The most commonly used literary devices are repetition, parallelism, exaggeration, personification, metaphor, idioms and proverbs. These are used skillfully to beautify and help send the message across.

The structure of Dagbani dirges makes them simple to understand. The dirge is usually sung or written in lines and stanzas, with each line linking to the other. For example

Woi yoo a kuli chaŋmi maa

Woi yoo a kuli chaŋmi maa

A chaŋmi ka che n-che ti koŋko nandahima

A chaŋmi ka che n-che ti koŋko nandahima...

Meaning

Oh so you are gone

Oh so you are gone

You have left us alone sorrowfully

You have left us alone sorrowfully...

This explains why Dagbani dirges can easily be understood by anyone who understands and speaks the language.

1.5 Statement of the problem

Over the years, Dagbani literature has received little or no attention from researchers. Most researchers have devoted time to their areas of interest such as Dagbani phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. To the best of my knowledge, not much has been done on the area of Dagbani oral literature, especially on dirges. The little research that has been done in Dagbani oral literature is on praise names Salifu (2008). The oral literature of the Dagbamba therefore has been relegated to the back door of academic research making it almost impossible for researchers now to have any form of reference when working on oral literature of the language. The case is even worst when it comes to dirges.

In many of the Dagbanj communities, there is no way they will allow a woman or man to even cry not to talk of singing a dirge when they lose their loved ones. This is because of the influence of the Islamic religion and this is leading to the death of dirges. It is not only influenced by the Islamic religion but also the Christian religion. Even though they allow singing in their funerals, it is always church hymns but not the Dagbamba dirges and this is making it difficult for both students and teachers of Dagbani to get information

on the dirges. It is therefore against this background that I have done this study on the structure and style of Dagbamba dirges to fill this missing gap.

1.6 Purpose of the study

This study aims at examining critically the arrangement of words including imagery, symbolism, diction and language used in Dagbani dirges that distinguish it from other songs. It will again be examining the outline and logical divisions of Dagbani dirges as well as the importance of these dirges to Dagbamba.

1.7 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to:

1. Show the structure of dirges in Dagbani.
2. Outline the style with which Dagbani dirges are sung.
3. State the importance of these dirges to the Dagbamba.

1.8 Research questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. How are Dagbani dirges structured?
2. What is the style with which Dagbani dirges are sung?
3. What are the importance of these dirges to the Dagbamba?

1.9 Significance of the study

One major significance of this study is that, it will provide a greater understanding of the Dagbamba dirge especially its structure and style. Again, this study would be of great help to policy makers, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), curriculum designers and other stakeholders in education, when implementing policies on the study of oral literature to equip students with the knowledge of their tradition and culture.

Finally, the findings of this study will serve as a guide and reference to other researchers who are interested in researching into related topics which will go a long way to enhance the development of Dagbani literature.

1.10 Delimitations of the study

This study is limited only to the structure and style of dirges in Dagbani. It is also limited to the logical divisions in these dirges as well as the importance of these dirges to Dagbamba and not other aspects of Dagbani literature. It is again limited to one particular community (Malshegu) within Tamale with about 7 people.

1.11 Organization of the study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one dealt with the general introduction to the study. This chapter also discussed issues such as the background to study, the problem statement, research questions and objectives, purpose of the study as well as the significance and limitation of the study. Chapter two is the review of related literature, while chapter three presents the research methodology.

Chapter four is on data analysis and also presenting the results of the findings. The final chapter, chapter five summarizes the major findings of the study, draws conclusions and recommendations and suggests areas for future/ further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews some relevant literature relating to dirges, how they are styled and structured including some literary devices as discussed by different scholars.

2.1 Definition of dirges

Dirges have been defined and explained by different scholars in various ways, among them include; Dirges are wailing songs, sung at a funeral or in commemoration of death. Agyekum (2013).

According to Stephen et al (2013), a dirge is seen as expressing and communicating, sharing and representing grief and sorrow with organized sound. These songs by nature are sorrowful and try to bring out the mood and feeling of the grieved person at the time the song is being sung.

Salisu (2011) opines that dirges are sorrowful songs that we sing or say when somebody is dead. A dirge is not sung for pleasure, it is a situational song in case of death, however, it can be done in a learning process. In my own view, a dirge can be said to be a sad and sorrowful song sung during funerals, these songs usually carry lots of emotions that move mourners to tears.

Dirges are said to be one of the most widespread forms of oral literature as noted by Nketia (1955), that several of its aspect as a verbal piece in the context of the funeral are not merely as utterances or language events but quite rightly as literary pieces. This explains why most Ghanaian dirges employ the use of figurative and literary expressions as a tool in enhancing the quality and beauty of funeral songs of which Dagbani dirges are not an exception.

Babila (2003), in examining the form and structure of Africa dirges, stated that the structure refers to the alternative stanzas created by the constant vocal interaction between the lead singer and the chorus. According to him, the language employed by the performers of dirges constitutes a useful element in the discussion and appreciation of the stylistic features of these funeral songs. He maintains that, it includes unique phonological and grammatical forms, lyrical repetition and an elaborate utilization of appropriate imagery, metaphors, illusions and figurative language. The use of figurative language in Dagbani dirges is skillfully done, in these dirges; the most commonly literary devices used include repetition exaggeration, parallelism, metaphors, personification, idioms and proverbs. This adds aesthetic value to these dirges.

According to Nketia (1955), funeral dirges of the Akan people are traditional pieces and as pieces created or recreated in context of the funeral celebration. He adds that the dirge makes use of a number of verbal confections containing a dispersal of meaning at the prosodic word and syntactical levels. Again, great use is made of repetition ranging from repetition of single phonological terms to the terms in complete utterances. He maintains

that the language of the dirge is set out in literary form of the poem. Coherence, unity of subject and verbal economy is achieved through the use of illusions and figurative language and duplication of words as its features. Just like Akan dirges, repetition is also a key literary device used in Dagbani dirges. Apart from repetition of words, repetition of whole lines is a common thing in Dagbani dirges. Mostly, it is done to either lay emphasis or make it sound appealing to the ear and most importantly making the whole dirge interesting.

Apart from specialized syntactical forms and certain obscure names and figurative expressions, the language of dirges is relatively straight forward. The main units within the dirge (stanzas) tend to be short, Finnegan (1976). This assertion is however similar to Dagbani dirges, the lines are usually short, simple meaningful sentences are used in expressing them which can easily be understood by speakers. Also, names and historical events are referred to briefly rather than described or narrated in full.

Okpewho (1992) notes that, among the Akan of Ghana, the chanting of dirges is such an established art form that, there is a recognized body of conventional usages. This feature is equally used in Dagbani dirges to express quite a few ideas within a particular dirge in a more dramatic way by adding beauty and value to its performance.

Finnegan (2012) notes that, the occasions for these laments differ from people to people. According to her, dirges are sung round the corpse (or around the house in which the corpse lies) while it is being prepared for burial. She adds that, sometimes, as among the

Akan, this is followed by a period of public mourning, during which the corpse lies in state and dirges are sung unlike the Akans, Dagbamba do not lay their corpse in state. Usually, apart from the children and sometimes grandchildren of the deceased, as well as those who prepare the corpse for burial or give the corpse its “last bath”, no other person is allowed to go anywhere near the corpse or even see it. Even where dirges are being sung, it is done within or outside the compound and not around the corpse. While the singing of the dirge is going on, the corpse is laid in the room usually known as *Kuymani duu*. This is usually the room of the deceased which is cleared of everything and left empty (except the corpse).

Furthermore, as noted earlier in the previous chapter, Islam has a great influence on some of the cultural practices among the Dagbamba. For, it is against the doctrines of Islam to display the corps for people to file past to pay their last respect before burial. Going against this doctrine calls for a three days fasting and prayers as a way of asking for forgiveness from God. This to a very large extent may account for the reason why Dagbamba do not lay their corpse in state since majority of the Dagbamba population practice Islam.

According to Ghanatta (1992), in the Balsa society, the mood of the dirges are solemn desolate and melancholic and the laments often raise questions of the aim and purpose of life.

He adds that it also often use highly allusive figurative language. This is used in Dagbani dirges as well, as it carries a lot of emotions which can easily move one to tears and as well employ the use of figurative languages as part of the style and structure.

Abdul-Rasheed and Bayo (2005) state that, generally, the aesthetics of the funeral poetry or dirges recast the usual tragic atmosphere. The diction used reflects the mood, tone and appearance of the mourners. They maintain that dirges explain the characteristics of tragedy as a literary phenomenon. It has elements of remorse, pathos and catharsis. Like other dirges of other people in Ghana, the tragic and celebratory nature of Dagbani dirges shows its communal relevance.

Saanchi (2002) states that there is the use of recurrent devices of repetition and parallelism in Dagaaba dirge. He suggests that these devices are not empty repetitive devices that the dirger (dirge singer) uses because of inadequate repertoire; rather they serve to give unity of structure to the performance and also make it memorable. These recurrent devices are effectively used in Dagbani dirges as well since they are suited to most oral poetic genres. Repetition of words, lines and whole stanzas within a particular dirge among Dagbamba dirges is skillfully done to lay emphasis, show its importance as well as make the song interesting. This happens to be the most commonly used device among Dagbani dirges.

Reginald (2013) argues that, Kasena dirges are emotive; they are also impressive and evoke common sentiments especially in the African context. He maintains that dirges

revolve around messages of life and death, boasts about ancestral lineages and references to the role the deceased played and the commitment made in other rites of passage while on earth. Dirges among Dagbamba play a similar role in the messages they carry concerning life and death. They trace the descendants of the deceased by sometimes linking one ancestor to the other. Also great achievements made by the deceased in his lifetime are equally spelt out in these songs. He/she is praised using the deeds as some legacies worthy of emulation.

Okpewho (1992) maintains that part of the elaborateness and formalities of funeral rites in many African countries come from the fact that the dirges are often performed by skilled and more or less professional performers; Sometimes they attend uninvited but in many cases they are actually invited by the bereaved family to lend a certain grandeur of fullness to the occasion. He cites an example of the Nyatiti performers among the Luo of Kenya, who are frequently invited to funeral ceremonies and, for a fee, tune their harp (nyatiti) to songs in which they celebrate or lament the dead.

In the light of this, Okpewho (1992) also observes that, occasionally too, one hears of professional or semi-professional singers. Thus, the Yoruba sometimes invite professional mourners to their funerals to add an extra embellishment to the usual laments of the bereaved women.

This assertion is true to a very large extent as there exists „funeral contractors“ in most Ghanaian ethnic groups who are hired to cry, wail and sing these songs at a fee.

However, among Dagbamba, contracting people to cry or perform funeral dirges is not a common thing. It does not really exist, though sometimes some mourners attend uninvited to sympathies with the bereaved family and may be seen crying wailing or even taking part in the singing of the dirge, they do not do so at a fee. This they believe forms part of their communal or social responsibility. These people are seen crying because they try to put themselves in the shoes of the bereaved family, as the saying goes, „the memory of the dead is a warning to the living“.

From among the confused noises will be heard the voice of many a woman mourner singing a dirge in pulsating tone in honor of the dead or his ancestors or some other person whose loss she is reminded of the present death, for „one mourns one“s relation during the funeral of another person“... The dirge is made the culminating point of the preparation for the funeral as well as the beginning of public mourning. Grief and sorrow may be personal and private, nevertheless Akan society expects that on the occasion of a funeral, they should be expressed publicly through the singing of the dirge, (Nketia 1955:8).

As stated earlier, the funeral arrangements among the Dagbamba takes a couple of days. It is done step by step until the final rite (usually the one year rites) is performed, by which time the spirit of the deceased is believed to rest in peace. The same belief is held among the Kasena of the Upper East region of Ghana. According to them, until after the final funeral rites of the deceased are performed, the spirit of the person will continue to linger around on earth. For the Kasena therefore, the final funeral rites are purposefully

meant to usher the wondering spirit of the deceased into the ancestral world properly, Reginald (2013).

Finnegan (1967) opined that, many of these songs are typical and ephemeral, that is, they are composed for use at the funeral of one individual and relate to him/her only, though they naturally use the accepted idioms and forms. She added that other funeral songs, perhaps particularly the choral ones, seem to have a set form repeated more or less exactly at all funerals, or all funerals at a certain category. Again, there are also instances of songs or poems said to have been composed initially for some other occasion but taken over for regular ones at funerals. Okpewho (1992) also explains that, repetition is no doubt one of the fundamental characteristic features of oral literature. It has both an aesthetic and utilitarian value, in other words, it is the device that only has a touch of beauty or attractiveness to a piece or expression (whether song or narrative or other kind of statement) but also serves certain practical purposes in the overall organization of the oral performance.

He maintains that the relevance of repetition to oral literature was not sufficiently appreciated by earlier scholars. Most early collectors and editors of folk songs and folktales had the unfortunate habit of cutting what they considered the “wearisome repetition” of phrases and whole passages. Repetition is also used in almost all Dagbani dirges

2.2 Literary devices

Agyekum (2007) observes that a figure of speech may be said to occur whenever a speaker or a writer for the sake of freshness or emphasis of some point of interest departs from the usual denotations or normal use of words. He maintains that it is a form of expression used to convey meaning or touch the feelings and emotions of readers often by comparing or identifying one thing with another that has a naming or connotation familiar to the reader or listener.

The literary medium of the dirge is that of the poem. Its utterances are arranged in a certain order, coherence being its guiding principle. Allusions and figurative expressions are used on occasion, though the language is straightforward on the whole, and the style is in many instances simple, Nketia (1955). As noted earlier, literary devices form an integral part of every piece of art. Skillful manipulation of these devices makes an art of work extraordinarily beautiful.

Egudu (1992:28) adds that, among the Igbo, funeral poetry is verbalized in the form of chanting, not singing, and it generally praises the dead and comments on the wickedness of death and the futility of life in general. He maintained that funeral poetry is a very serious affair both in content and in artistry, and it is performed by adults and addressed to adults. The artist thus uses a lot of figurative language like allusions and idiomatic expressions. Again, Egudu, (1977:4) cited in Egudu (1992) opines that poetry is essentially an art of words which pays special attention to the sounds and structural placements of those words as well as their figurative or deviational usage. He added that,

it is this special use of words which makes poetic language extraordinary and conditions it to communication, usually by suggestion rather than direct statements.

A critical examination of Dagbani dirges proves that these dirges exploits rhetorical devices of the Dagbani language, as proverbs, analogies as well as images, similes, personifications, symbols among others.

2.3 Repetition

Repetition is the most commonly used literary device in Dagbani dirges. It is known as *labiboli* which literary means to mention repeatedly. It involves the repetition of words, lines, phrases or stanzas within a particular dirge. The importance of this particular device as well as the role it plays in these dirges cannot be over emphasized. As Okpewho (1992:71) puts it, repetition is no doubt the most fundamental characteristic of oral literature. It has both an aesthetic and utilitarian value; in other words, it is a device that does not only give a touch of beauty or attractiveness to a piece of oral expression (whether song or narrative or other kind of statement) but also serves certain practical purpose in the overall organization of the oral performance". It has this significant role of laying emphasis or stress as well as how important a word, line, phrase or a whole stanza is, in relation to what is being talked about within a particular dirge. The effect of this device could also be seen as making the whole song interesting and beautiful.

2.4 Metaphor

Metaphor is the direct comparison of two unlike or unsimilar things without the use of words such as: like, as, such as. It is known as *zanmahim* in Dagbani. According to Agyekum (2013), metaphor is a figure of speech which concisely compares two things by saying that one is the other. Again, it is a statement that one thing is something else which in literal terms is not. Most often, among the Dagbamba, the use of this particular device may sound somehow harsh due to its direct nature of comparison; for example, in an instance where man is compared to an inanimate object. However, this might not be same in other instances especially where the comparison is positive. Agyekum (2013:185) states that metaphors usually use the verb **to be (am, is, and are)**. Metaphors in Dagbani usually also use the verb *nyɛla* which is **(is, are)**.

2.5 Personification

This device is known in Dagbani as *zanzalizaani*, which literary means “to put in place of”. This is a situation where an inanimate object is given human quality so that it acts and behaves as though it were human. Agyekum (2013) sees it as a figure of speech which endows animals, ideas abstractions and inanimate objects with human attributes, forms, characters, sensibilities and emotions. Death is personified in a number of ways in Dagbani dirges. It is given human attributes and even mocked at especially when the dirge is lamenting on the wickedness of death.

2.6 Allusion

An Allusion is known as *yohiy* in Dagbani. Allusion is when an author refers to the events or characters from another story in his/her own story with the hopes that those events will add context or depth to the story he/she is trying to tell. Also while allusions are common, they are also risky because the author has no certain way of knowing his/her readers are familiar with the other story. To limit that risk, allusions are often referred to very famous works such as the Bible or Shakespearean plays. So for example, one of the most alluded to texts in literature is the Bible and specifically the New Testament. Most Dagbani dirges make reference to historical events. Since majority of Dagbani speakers are Muslims, and the performance of funeral dirges is discouraged to a large extent due to the religious affiliation of these people, allusions in these songs are not related to the Quran but most historical narratives which may have a bearing to the ancestral lineage of the deceased during the performance of a dirge. Salisu (2011).

2.7 Diction

Diction is known as *bachi gahimbu*. It refers to an author's choice of words. When describing the events of a story, an author never has just one word at his/her disposal. Rather, he must choose from many words that have similar denotative meanings (the definition you'd find in a dictionary), but different connotative meanings (the association, positive or negative with a given word). The decision one makes with those words are what we call his/her diction. Simple sentences are used in Dagbani dirges. Salisu (2011). The choice of words in these dirges are carefully selected to ensure that listeners understand what is being said. Usually, the way and manner in which the dirgers express

themselves by way of language use shows their emotion during the singing of a particular dirge.

2.8 Proverbs

Proverbs are call *ɲaha* in Dagbani. This particular device plays an important role in all aspects of the lives of the Dagbamba. Proverbs are considered wise sayings and usually have deeper meanings. Proverbs reflect the thought and insight of Ghanaians into problems of life and also a technique of verbal expression which is greatly appreciated by the Ghanaian. It is no wonder, therefore that the use of proverbs has continued to be a living tradition, Nketia (1952:21) cited in Finnegan (2012). Most dirges in Dagbani employ the use of proverbs. This contributes in beautifying and making the dirge “rich” and interesting.

Parallelism is another device used in Dagbani dirges. In this device, the oral artist brings together in a balanced relationship ideas and images that may seem independent of one another. In view of this, Okpewho (1992) explains that these parallelisms are common in songs and chants than in stories. This and many other literary devices are used in most Dagbamba dirges as part of their style which brings out their aesthetic value.

2.9 Summary of literature review

It can be observed from the above review of literature that, the Dagbamba dirges exhibit certain similarities with other dirges in other parts of Ghana, especially the tactful manipulation of the structure and style of these dirges with regards to the figurative and

literary devices used in these dirges. However, it is equally important to note that, there exist some differences of these dirges during funerals among the Dagbamba as compared to other ethnic groups in Ghana, as seen from the literature above. This may be as a result of the unique cultural practices peculiar to these various groups and their way of doing things among others.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses how the research was conducted. Issues discussed include: the research design, the population, sample and sampling technique, instrumentation, data collection procedure, and analysis of data.

3.1 The research design

The design for this research was the qualitative type. It was selected because the research has to do with the collection of information from individuals who will have to answer research questions that can be discussed descriptively.

3.2 The population

This consists of 2 women, 2 colleague teachers, 2 students of Tamale College of Education and a course mate of the researcher. These people are noted for their knowledge in the study area and very conversant with the oral tradition of the Dagbamba.

3.3 The sample size and sampling technique

The sample consisted of 2 aged women, 2 colleague teachers of Tamale College of Education as well as 3 other people including a student. The Purposive sampling technique was used. This was as a result of the fact that, death is something many people do not want to talk about while most people become emotional and sentimental talking about it, let alone singing the dirge. Also, the influence of religion makes it uncommon

and somehow difficult to learn, therefore, not many people know how to sing these songs. Thus, these people were carefully selected due to their knowledge and competence in these songs.

3.4 Sources of data

Data was collected from creative writings and assignments of Dagbani students in UEW and handouts. The researcher also made use of the internet and library for some of the data collection. In addition, the native speaker's intuition of the researcher was of an immense help since she understands and speaks the language fluently and can sing one or two of these songs. Furthermore, some of the data was drawn from text and few of the songs have been documented for study. The researcher was able to gather some through this medium which assisted her in examining the pattern and forms of these songs. Finally, data was again collected from the selected respondents who were made to sing or recite these songs which was recorded and later translated for analysis.

3.5 Instrumentation

The researcher used unstructured interviews to obtain information from the respondents. The researcher also used her mobile phone to record the songs from these women which were later transcribed, translated and analyzed

3.6 Data collection technique

Interviews and face to face interactions were the methods used for the collection of data for this study. This was carefully done using few and selected number of people. In all, 7

people were interviewed. These people exhibit some level of knowledge in these songs. These women were appealed to, to sing at least one dirge each at the time of the collection of the data, there were some funerals at which some of the subjects had to perform and the researcher took advantage to record some of the dirges used for this study.

The researcher wanting to get accurate information from respondents had to use appropriate and friendly measures coupled with humility and respect in administering the interview. It was explained to them that the reason for asking them to perform was solely for academic purpose and that their privacy and choice of anonymity would be respected. They were mostly women who were friendly and somehow willing to assist due to the fact that the researcher is also a Dagomba and relates very well with them. Also, the fact that the colleague of the researcher who was assisting in the data collection was a native of this community and was related to some of these people that made the interaction more accessible.

3.7 Data analysis

The data collected was analysed descriptively. In all 9 dirges were collected, 2 were drawn from text-based sources and 7 from the seven selected people.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents analysis of the data gathered from the respondents as well as other sources for the study. It presents sample dirges, their translations as well as their style and structure. In all, 9 dirges were collected and analyzed for this study.

4.1 The structure

The structure and style of the Dagbamba dirge make them simple to understand, it is mostly sung or written in lines and stanzas. Simple sentences and phrases are used, making it easy to understand. The lines are usually short, linking all parts of the dirge to ensure conformity. What is again observed in the structure of these dirges is the manner in which the dirger presents his/ her message. He/she is mostly seen or heard lamenting, praising and sending his/ her message across. This makes the entire song interesting and appealing to the listener.

4.2 The style

Dirges in Dagbani are styled and in a way that makes them “sweet” to the listener. The choice of words is done carefully to avoid ambiguity. They are styled with a number of figures of speech/literary devices to bring out its aesthetic value. Some of the literary devices used in the dirges (found in the appendix) collected include:

Repetition

Repetition seems to be the commonly used literary device in almost all the dirges collected for this study. There is repetition of words, phrases, sentences and stanzas.

Repetition of the phrase **m bayee** is seen in lines 2,3,4,5 and 18 appendix 1 as seen below:

Puuni zabili m ba yee

Stomach pains oh father

Narili toya m ba yee

Growth of a boil oh my father

zuyu yaaya m ba yee

Headache oh my father

fiyufiyu mini o balibu m ba yee

Catarrh/cold and his/her kinds oh my father

Also the word **woi** is repeated in lines 6 and 19

Woi, woi woi

Oh, oh, oh

Woi woi woi

Oh, oh, oh

Repetition of the word **bala** is seen lines 8, 9 and 10 as seen below;

Schila ti mini a n-sa bala

Yesterday we were with you

Dalila ti mini a n-daa bala

The day before yesterday we were with you

Yuŋ la ti mini a n-sa bala

Last night we were with you

Ka zuŋo ka a kpuyi napoŋ

And today you have left us

In appendix 2, **Ooi!** is repeated in line 20. In line 21, **M ba yee!** is also repeated. **Tayiya zu ma** is repeated in lines 37.

Ka tayi zu ma

And am stolen by thief

I have been stolen! I have been stolen

There is also repetition in lines 21 and 37.

N ku be! N ku be!

I can't live! I can't live!

I can't live! I can't live!

Repetition is seen in appendix 3 from the following:

Woi is repeated in line 38,

woi, woi m ba yee!

Oh oh my father

Yee is also repeated at the end of lines 38, 39, 40 and 41.

Woi, woi m ba yee

Oh oh my father

N zuyu bieyu yee

My bad luck oh

buyum kpuli nyoo ma yee

I have been burnt by fire oh

nɔŋa dim ma ka sɔyi mɔyi ni yee

scorpion bites me and hides in the bush.

Sentences that make up lines 48, 49, 50 and 51 has also been repeated in the dirge.

yɔhin tia ka gbe tiŋa

Deceived the tree and logged on the ground/ floor

Mani dunia naaya zuŋɔ

My world has come to end today.

yɔhin tia ka gbe tiŋa

Deceived the tree and logged on the ground/ floor

Mani dunia naaya zuŋɔ

My world has come to end today.

have you placed me today?

In appendix 4, there exists repetition of whole sentences in the dirge. At least every line

has been repeated three times in the dirge

Monkey's sandal wears to attend funeral

Makes lines 56, 58 and 60, and

A yi je ka lahi bora a ni piri yee ŋmaaga namda

Whether you like it or not you will wear it oh monkey's sandal

Making up lines 57, 59 and 61.

This makes the dirge interesting.

The word **ooi** has been repeated in the same line in lines 69, 70 and 78 in appendix 6.

Ooi, ooi, n ku be

Oh oh I can't live

Also, the above lines is said to have a whole sentence repetition since the sentence is repeated in lines 69, 70 and 78. Whole sentences repetition can be observed throughout the dirge in appendix 5. Lines 62, 63, 65, 66 and 68 have been repeated in the dirge.

Sheli ka ŋmani ni

Nothing is in calabash/bowl implying that the pockets of the grandchildren and great grandchildren are empty. The dirge in appendix 7 is said to have just a sentence or a line which is repeated four times hence, making the song interesting and as well, using it to lay emphasis on the message being carried across.

Repletion of whole lines is seen in lines 83, 84, 86 and 87 in appendix 8.

Woi yoo a kuli chaŋmi maa

Oh so you are gone

Ti duuma Naawuni ni sɔŋ ti

Our God shall take care of us.

Repetition of lines/sentences is observed in the dirge in appendix 9 as seen below;

M ma lebila daantaliga lɛbi biri ma yee

Oh my mother has turned to roof supporter and turned her back on me

These are repeated in lines 93 and 94, also,

M ma zaŋ bihi gbaŋ labisi o nyaanɔa yee

Oh my mother has placed her nipples at her back, is repeated in lines 110 and 112.

M mɔyiri dini ŋɔ yee

Oh which one am I sucking?

This is repeated in lines 111, 113 and 115.

This particular literary device is used effectively to lay emphasis/ stress on the message being carried out and also helps in making the dirge interesting.

Rhetorical Question

Rhetorical question is another literary device used in the dirges collected for this study. A question which does not require a direct or immediate answer is used in line 17 in appendix 1.

A lee yeli ni kpe ya?

From where do you want us to find refuge?

Here, the dirger in lamenting and losing all hopes is asking/questioning the deceased where he (the deceased) has placed them or in which situation he/she expects them to find refuge in, after such a sudden demise.

In appendix 2, as the dirger laments, he/she tries to find out from the dead why he/she (the dead) chooses to leave without informing them, and again, asking a question as to what to say or tell, probably their ancestors when he / she finally gets there. These questions are asked in lines 32, 34 and 35 respectively as seen below;

Bo n-che ka daa bi yeli?

Why didn't you tell/inform me?

Ka bo n-sa mɔŋ a ni a yeli ma sɔhila?

And what prevented you from telling me yesterday

A ni baŋ yeligu?

Will you know what to say?

These questions do not require immediate or direct answers but to add to the overall beauty of the dirge. In lines 42 and 46 in appendix 3, the dirger asks questions without requiring immediate answers as seen below;

Ya ka n yen kpe?

Where do I go?

Ya ka a zali ma zuŋɔ ŋɔ?

Where have you placed me today?

He/she is trying to find out from the dead where he/she (the dead) expects him/her (the dirger) to find refuge in after placing him/her in such awkward situation. Rhetorical questions are again seen in lines 72, 76 and 78 in appendix 6. In line 73,

Tuuri bɔ ka tuui ka bi mɔ?

What kind of stumbling have I experienced without trying?

The mourner is trying to find out why he/she has been so unfortunate as to lose someone so dear to him/her. In line 76,

A che ma ti la ŋuni ka chana?

In whose hands have you left me?

The dead is asked by the mourner that in whose care has he /she left him/her. The mourner is wondering whether there can be anyone who can be as caring as the deceased in taking proper care of him/her. In line 78,

N kperi ya ni?

Where do I go?

Here, the dirger/mourner tries to find out how he/she can cope with the lose, anticipating that things will no longer be as they used to be. He/she is no longer going to find life easy and smooth. These questions are asked in the dirge though the dirger is not demanding immediate answers from anyone.

Lines 98, 99, 100,101, and 102 in appendix 9 also contain some rhetorical questions.

M ma yee bo ka a niŋ ŋɔ yee

Oh my mother what have you done?

Samara yaantitaa bo ka a niŋŋɔ yee?

Oh great grandchild of Samaru what have you done?

Gariba yaantitaa bo ka a niŋŋo yee?

Oh great grandchild of Gariba what have you done?

M ma niŋla bo yee?

Oh what hasn my mother done?

M ma tuui la bo yee?

Oh what has my mother stumbled on?

The above questions asked in the dirge by the mourner are trying to find out what the deceased has done, as if he/she (the mourner) is not aware that the mother is dead and gone forever, knowing very well that the deceased is not in the position to give answers to those questions.

All questions used in the above lines from the dirges do not require answers from the deceased but sought to make dirges emotional.

Simile

The comparism of two unlike things is used in some of the dirges collected. The use of simile is seen in line 13 in appendix 1.

Ka di ŋmanila zahinli

And it seem like a dream

Here the poet is comparing the transition from life to death to a dream, telling the deceased that it is indeed hard to believe that he/she is gone too soon with no hope of return which seems to be a great lose to the family.

Apostrophe

The deceased has been personified in a number of ways from the dirges collected. The deceased is addressed as though it was alive or human. He/she is spoken to and questioned as if it can hear or speak as seen in lines 7,8,9,10,11, 14 and 17 in appendix 1.

A yohin ti ka bali

You deceived us and left

Sohila ti mini a n-sa bala

Yesterday we were with you

Dalila ti mini a n- daa bala

The day before yesterday we were with you

Yun la ti mini an-sa bala

Last night we were with you

Ka zunjo ka kpuyi napon

And today you have left us

Napon din ka labibu na

You have walk away from us

A lee yeli ni kpe ya?

From where do you want us to seek refuge?

Again, catarrh/ cold is given human qualities in line 5 as it is stated as catarrh/ cold and his / her kind.

Fieyufieyu mini o balibu m ba yee

Catarrh/cold and his/her kind oh my father

The pronoun **o** (he /she) is used for human in Dagbani whether male or female. Thus, using it in place of catarrh/cold implies it has been given human attribute. This particular literary device is used in addressing the dead and asking him questions as though the dead was listening to him/her (the mourner) in appendix 2. This is observed in lines 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36 as seen below;

Dala m mini a n-daa bala

The day before yesterday I was with you

Sohila m mini a n-sa bala

Yesterday I was with you

Bo n-che ka daa bi yeli ma?

Why didn't you tell/inform me?

And what prevented you from telling me yesterday

Ka dayila a yi chaŋ

So if you go

A ni baŋ yeligu?

Will you know what to say?

Line 50 in appendix 3.

yohim tia ka gbe tiŋa

Deceived the tree and lodged on the ground/floor

Tree in the above line has been personified as being deceived as if it is human.

In appendix 6, line 77,

Ka nyini limsi a nina pata ka bi yeli sheli

And you covered your face with thatch without a word. The dead is addressed in a way where the dirger says he/she has chosen to join the ancestral world without prior information. In lines 83, 84 and 85 in appendix 7, the dirger is addressing the dead, asking him whether he is indeed gone as seen below;

Woi yoo a kuli chaŋmi maa

Oh so you are gone?

Woi yoo a kuli chaŋmi maa

Oh so are gone?

A chaŋmi ka che n-che ti kɔŋko nandahima

You have left us alone sorrowfully

Alliteration

The same consonant sound is seen in line 6 in appendix 1, with the /w/ sound appearing in succession likewise the \k\ sound in line 19 as seen below;

6. Woi, woi woi

Oh, oh, oh

19. Ka zuŋɔ ka a kpuyɔ napɔŋ

And today you have left us

This gives it rhyming effect.

In appendix 2, there exists repetition of same consonant sounds at the beginning of lines 23 and 24 as well as lines 26 and 27 as seen below;

23. N ku be!

I can't live! I can't live!

24. N gbihi n-tam m maŋa yela

I slept and forgot myself

26. N zu ma zaa n-chaŋ

Taking away my everything

27. N nudirigu gbali kabi ya

My right leg is broken

The repetition of these sounds in these lines helps in unifying the dirge, hence making the singing of the dirge interesting. There exists a relative close same vowels sound at the end of lines 38, 39, 40 and 41 in appendix 3.

38. Woi, woi m ba yeei!

Oh oh my father

39. N zuyu bieyu yeei!

My bad luck oh

40. Buɣum kpulli nyooi ma yeei!

I have been burnt by fire oh

41. Nɔŋa dima ma ka sɔyi mɔyi ni yeei!

Scorpion stinks me and hides in the bush oh

This can also be called vowel rhyme.

Also lines 38 and 54 of appendix 3 exists the repetition of consonants sounds at the beginning of some words in these lines. In line 38, it is the \w\ sound and the \d\ sound in line 54 as seen below;

Woi, woi m ba ye*e*!

oh oh my father

N kɔŋ dokuyu din...

I can't find fire wood to prevent cold.

The use of this device in some of the dirges makes it very interesting and sounds appealing the ear.

Idiom

Idioms/ idiomatic expressions is one of the literary devices used in most of the dirges collected for this study. They used skillfully to enrich the language used in these dirges.

Napɔŋ din ka labbu na

Not to return anymore

A zaŋ naba ka che ti

You have walked away from us

In the above lines, 12 and 14 in appendix 1, the dirger uses the above statements to polish the transition of the loved one from life to death.

Assonance

In appendix 1, similar vowel sounds close to each other is used in lines 8, 9 and 10. The \a\ sound is heard at the end of the phrases in these lines as seen below;

Sɔhila ti mini a n-sa bala

Yesterday we were with you

Dala ti mini a n-daa bala

The day before yesterday we were with you

Yuj la ti mini a n-sa bala

Last night we were with you

This particular device can again be seen in lines 2, 3, 4, and 5 with the /e/ sound recurring at the end of these lines as seen below;

Puuni zabili m ba ye

Stomach pain oh my father

Narili toya m ba yee

Growth of a boil oh my father

Zuyu yaaya m ba yee

Headaches oh my father

Fieyufieyu mini o balibu m ba yee

The above lines can also be said to have rhymes in them which make the dirge interesting and beautiful. The \u\ sound is felt at the end of the final words in lines 27, 28 and 29 in appendix 2 making it rhyme.

27. Ka n jaangbee gbali faai n-lu

And my walking stick has fallen

28. Doo zaŋ o maŋa n-lebi zapaleyu

Man has turn himself into a bird

29. N yohim ma kpehi moyu

Deceived me to the bush

Again, there exists similar/ same vowel sounds at the end of lines 62 and 63 and lines 65 and 66 in appendix 5 as seen below;

Sheli ka ŋmani n̄i

Nothing is in calabash/ bowl

Sheli ka ŋmani n̄i

Nothing is in calabash/bowl

Euphemism

This particular device is usually used to lessen the pain of the bereaved or mourners by way of consoling them. The dirger in line 11 uses euphemism to depict the demise of the deceased in appendix 1. From the dirge, it is a mild way of saying „and today you are dead“. It is presented as;

Ka zuŋɔ ka a kpūyi naɔŋ.

And today you have left us

Parallelism

This is a form of repetition that is cleverly structured to bring about both the beauty and the utilitarian roles of the language in some of the dirges collected. Phonological parallelism that deals sameness in sound patterning in identical words is used in the end of lines 2, 3, 4 and 5 in appendix 1.

Puuni zabili m ba yee

Stomach pains oh my father

Narili toya m ba yee

Growth of a boil oh my father

zuyu yaaya m ba yee

Headaches oh my father

fiɛyufiɛyu mini o balibu m ba yee

Catarrh/cold and his/ her kind oh my father

Again in the same appendix, lines 8, 9 and 10 contain this type of parallelism.

sohila ti mini a n-sa bala

Yesterday we were with you

Dala ti mini a n- daa bala

The day before yesterday we were with you

Yuj la ti mini a n-sa bala

Last night we were with you

In appendix 2, the vowel sound is heard at the end of the final words in lines 27, 28 and 29.

Ka n jaangbee gbaai faai n-lu

And my walking stick has fallen

Doo zaŋ o maŋa lɛbi zapalɛyu

Man has turn himself into a bird

n- yɔhim ma kpehi mɔyu

Deceived me into the bush

This device is also used for emphasis where a single idea is restated or affirmed in a variety of ways

Exaggeration

In line 23 in appendix 2, the dirger exaggerates when the singer indicates that he/she has slept and forgot himself

I slept and forgot myself

This may imply that he/she has been taken unaware by the death of the relative, or he/she never imagined such misfortune could ever befall him/her so suddenly.

Again in appendix 3, line 49 has been exaggerated as seen below:

Mani dunia naaya zuᵑo

My world has come to an end today

The dirger uses this line to express how hopeless he/she has become after the death and how that is going to affect his/her entire wellbeing in this world.

Exclamation

Some words, phrases and sentences are used by the dirger in the dirges collected with a high intonation to emphasis what is being said. This is observed in lines 20, 21, 22,36 and 37 in appendix 2.

Ooi! M puuni!

Oh! Oh! My stomach

M ba yee!

My father!

N ku be! N ku be!

I can't live! I can't live!

Tayi zu ma! Tayi zu ma!

I have been stolen! I have been stolen!

I can't live! I can't live!

Metonymy

This is a figure of speech where a part is used in presenting a whole.

In appendix 3, it is used in lines 52 and 53.

N konyuriɲmani ŋmaya

My drinking calabash is broken

Ka n sayidirilaa ŋma

And my bowl has broken

Here, the container is used for the contained, hence, calabash for water and bowl for food. These two may refer to his/her only source of livelihood.

The use of metonymy is observed in appendix 5. The dirger uses *ŋmani* (calabash/ bowl) to depict the pocket or the edge of a cloth where women usually tie their monies, by saying it is empty since the children of the deceased do not give them (grandchildren and great grandchildren) monies that are due them by custom. This is used in every line in the dirge.

Proverb

Proverbs are used in most of the dirges collected for this study. It helps in giving the messages in these dirges deeper meanings.

yohiŋ tia ka gbe tiŋa

Deceived the tree and sleep on the floor on the ground/floor

The above is the 48th line in the dirge in appendix 3. It is a proverb used by the dirger, implying that the deceased deceived him/her by leaving this world with no hope of returning. The lines with the sentences;

Ōmaaga namda piri zo kuli yeei

Monkey's sandal wears to attend funeral oh

Can be said to be a proverb implying how fast and quick Dagbamba respond to the call of attending a funeral as part of their social responsibility to family and friends. This is observed in appendix 4 in lines 56, 58 and 60.

In appendix 6, the mourner makes use of proverbs in lines 74 and 75.

Ko" yini layim sura

Bathing together with same water

Bihi yini layim moyira

Suckling of one breast

To express the bond that exists between him and the deceased. These lines tell us they shared certain things as well as did some things together as people who are closely related. Lines 110 and 112 in appendix 9 contain proverb.

M ma zaŋ bihigbaŋ labisi o nyaŋa yee

My mother has placed her nipples behind her.

As we know, babies are fed by their mothers through the breast; the above proverb could therefore mean that the mourner has been denied her only source of food as a result of the death of the mother. That is why the mourner follows it with questions in lines 111, 113, and 115.

M møyiri dini yee?

Oh which one am I sucking?

Symbolism

With this literary device, a concrete or familiar object is used in reference to or as an explanation of an abstract idea or a less familiar object or event. In appendix 1, lines 5 and 15 is said to contain this particular literary device:

fiyufieyu mini o balibu m ba yee

catarrh/cold and his/her kind oh my father

Ka ti kpalim kpaambihi

And we have turn into baby guinea fowls

Also symbolism is used in line 28 of appendix 2.

Doo zaŋ o maŋa n- lebi zapaleyu

Man has turned himself into a bird

Again the use of symbolism is observed in lines 41, 43, 52 and 53 in appendix 3.

nɔŋa dima ma ka sɔyi mɔyi ni yeei!

Oh scorpion bites me and hides in the bush

Sakura luri n zuyu!

Heavy rains are falling on me

N konyuri ŋmani ŋmaya

My drinking calabash is broken

Ka sayidiri laa ŋma

And my bowl has broken

This particular device used in the above lines among others from the dirges collected illustrate certain aspects of the problems and issues that are expected to be faced by the dirger as a result of the demise the loved one.

Appellation

Dagbamba respect and hail the dead, therefore in singing funeral dirges they (the dead) are praised in many ways as seen in some in dirges collected.

The dirger uses appellation in line 45 in appendix 3.

wɔi kambanjyili bia

Oh child of Diari

as seen in line 45 above implying that he/ she is a great and proud son/daughter of Kambanyili, that is where he/she hails from.

In appendix 9, the deceased is praised and honored making reference to her (the deceased) descendants in lines 99,100,107, 108 and 114 as seen below;

Samaru yaantitaa bo ka a niŋ ŋɔ yee?

Oh great grandchild of Samaru what have you done?

Gariba yaantitaa bo ka a niŋ ŋɔ yee?

Oh great grandchild of Gariba what have you done?

Siyili payasara bia m ma

Young woman of Siyili

Kuchirigi payasara bia m ma

Young woman of kuchirigi

Sabali bia

Child of Sabali

This is a very significant practice among Dagbamba. Appellations are not only done for the dead but for the living as well, especially chiefs, members of the royal family, and any one whose descendants and ancestors can be traced.

Antithesis

With this device, there are opposites or contrasting ideas placed within a phrase or sentence. This is observed in the sentences that make up lines 57, 58 and 61 as seen below;

A yi je ka lan bora...

If you like it or not you will wear it oh monkey's sandal

This is done to lay emphasis as well as show the stylistic effects which add „colour“ to the dirge.

Rhyme

The final sounds in lines 74 and 75 in appendix 6 rhyme with the **ra** sound as seen below;

Ko'yini layim sura

Bathing together with same water

Bihi yini layim moyira

Suckling of one breast

In appendix 7, since every line in the dirge is repeated, there appear to be an end rhyme in the final sounds of each line. Each line ends with **na** sound. This makes the dirge beautiful and interesting.

This was the few among other literary devices that were used in beautifying the dirges collected for this study as part its style. These literary devices add aesthetic value to the dirges.

4.3 Importance of the Dagbamba dirge

It announces death. The Dagbamba use dirges to announce the death of a loved one. Also in the olden days dirges were used to tell/inform neighbors about the death of someone. Apart from sending people to inform relatives, the singing of dirges was another means through which they sent the message of death across communities.

It enables us to know the deceased. The Dagbamba praise the deceased during the sing of dirges. Appellations are used, his/ her ancestors are traced, and his /her achievements are pointed out sometimes among others, these give mourners and listeners the opportunity to know more about deceased.

It tells us the relationship between the deceased and the person singing the dirge. As noted earlier, Dagbamba dirges are mostly sung by close relatives of the deceased. In singing these songs, the dirger uses phrases and words that tell how he/she is related to the deceased. This also enables people to know the family members of the deceased. It ushers the death into eternal life. Dagbamba dirges just like other dirges in the various ethnic groups in Ghana ushers the deceased to eternal life. Through the singing of the dirge, the deceased is praised, honored and prayed for in order to for him/ her to have a peaceful rest.

It preserves and strengthens the culture of the Dagbamba people. Dirges form part of our culture, custom and tradition, hence its importance cannot be over emphasized. The performance of dirges during funerals portrays the beauty and rich culture of Dagbamba people making it outstanding among others.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the summary of the study is presented with attention on the findings of the research carried out. Conclusions are drawn based on the findings as well as recommendations made with the way forward for future study into Dagbamba dirges.

5.1 Summary of the study

Some major findings of the study were that, all respondents are aware of the existence of dirges, and that, it forms an integral part of their custom and culture. This, they believe is an oral tradition passed onto them by their great grand fathers as a way of honoring their dead.

It was also revealed among others that, these songs are not sung anyhow and at all funerals, or at any other occasion, due to the emotions they carry along with. As a result of this, the few respondents who were contacted to sing these songs for the purpose of this study were reluctant to do so. However the researcher was able appeal to them to sing or recite a few of these songs for data for this study.

Again the researcher realized that most dirges in Dagbani are not usually very long. Most of these songs are characterized by short lines with repetition playing a major role in the song. It can however be said that it is this literary device (repetition) that makes some of

the songs seem a bit longer, since there is a dominance of repetition of whole sentences/lines in almost the dirges collected.

In addition to the above, the study also revealed that most Dagbamba dirges are written or sung in one stanza. This was observed through the few or limited text-based sources which was collected from handouts, students' long essays, assignments and creative writings. It is important to note that this could however be the author's style of writing it since some authors can choose to write them with a number of stanzas to suit them.

Finally, respondents are of the view that these songs are very relevant hence, satisfying the needs for the purpose for which it is being composed which ushers the deceased into an eternal rest.

5.2 Key findings

It was found out that religion, especially Islam exerts great influence on some cultural practices among the Dagbamba people of which dirges are part. This particular religion discourages or frowns upon the lamentations, messages of despondence and hopelessness contained in these songs. What it encourages when someone dies is constant and persistent prayers and supplications. As a result of this, the singing of dirges during funerals is rapidly fading out to avoid incurring the wrath of God as prescribed by the religion since most of these songs are characterized by crying and wailing

Notwithstanding this, during the performance of a funeral among the Dagbamba, the entire atmosphere is not but a noisy one, crying, wailing and singing of dirges is what is

heard. Sometimes some of the mourners cry and wail not because of the deceased of the moment, but the reason being that the crying and wailing is as a result of reflection or a reminder of past experience which has to do with the dead of a loved one.

Again, the researcher observed that Dagbamba dirges are not easy to come by. This may be due to the fact that these songs are not documented. There has not been any organized material on dirges in Dagbani which researchers as well as students of Dagbani can use as reference for study. Apart from getting people who know the song from specific communities within the Dagbani speaking areas who are not readily available, the only source through which one can gather these songs is through handouts, students project works and creative writings which is woefully inadequate.

Another observation made by the researcher was that, most Dagbamba students studying Dagbani even at the college level where the researcher teaches cannot sing these songs, though they are very familiar with other oral literature genres like riddles, proverbs, lullabies folktales among others, they are not conversant with dirges. The reason is that these songs are not taught in schools. Even though there some that are learnt from our homes like riddles, folktales etc, and these particular songs are relegated to the background due to one reason or the other. Hence making it lose its significance.

The study again revealed that, Dagbamba dirges are sung or written in short lines ranging between five (5) to twenty (20) lines, with a maximum of about seven (7) words making up a line which makes it easy to sing and understand.

Furthermore, there exists no special arrangement when it comes to the arrangement of words, phrases and sentences. The dirger/ mourner only manipulate or chooses his/ her words that best suits the situation at that moment. The most important thing is for the dirge to make sense by praising and honoring the dead as well as consoling the bereaved.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concludes that Dagbamba are very much aware of the existence of dirges, and that the importance of the performance of these dirges cannot be over emphasized since their culture will continue to be a part of them. Most importantly, the study again concludes that, Dagbamba dirges use the style and structure skillfully in its performance. They are written or sung in simple and short lines/sentences. The words are carefully selected to depict the mood of the dirger. Each sentence is straightforward and avoids any form of ambiguity which helps carry its message across. The structure of Dagbamba dirges mostly begin with lamentations, praises and carrying message of despondence which is usually characterized by questions directed to deceased. However, some the dirges present their messages directly without lamenting and praising the dead. They are styled with several figures of speech such as repetition, proverbs, idioms, simile, rhetorical questions and exclamations among others. Each figure of speech is unique in its own way and plays an important role in making the dirge interesting. They are used stylistically to bring out the aesthetic value of these songs. Almost every line within a particular dirge is said to have one or two of these devices making it sound appealing to the listener.

In all, the style and structure of the Dagbamba dirges does not only make it unique and outstanding among other dirges but also, add to the overall beauty of its performance during funerals. This and many other reasons account for the usefulness and significance of these songs to the Dagbamba society.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from the study, it is recommended that, the teaching of dirges should be encouraged both in schools and at homes to ensure that children have adequate knowledge on them. Also emphasis should be made on the teaching and learning of literature to equip people with knowledge of the literary aspect of these songs so that they don't only learn how to sing/write them but to be able to appreciate them as well.

5.5 Suggestion for further research

Further researchers could make a study into the context and situation of Dagbamba dirges, which may include the significance of the actual occasion and detailed content and form of a dirge being performed.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

A TUM TUUNI (You have done a great job)

1. A tum tuuni

2SG do job

You have done a great job

2. Puuni zabili m ba yee

Stomach pain 1SG father oh

Stomach pains oh my father

3. Narili toya m ba yee

Boil hit-PERF 1SG father oh

Growth of a boil oh my father

4. Zuyu yaaya m ba yee

Head pain 1SG father oh

Headaches oh my father

5. Fieyufieyu mini o balibu m ba yee

Cold CONJ 3SG kinds 1SG father oh

Catarrh/cold and his/her kinds oh my father

6. Woi, woi, woi

Ooh, ooh, ooh,

7. A yohin ti zili ka bali

2SG deceived 3PL sit CONJ vanish

You deceived us and left

8. Schila ti mini a n-sa bala

Yesterday 3PL CONJ 2SG TD here

Yesterday we were with you

9. Dalila ti mini a n-daa bala

TD 3PL CONJ 2SG TD here

The day before yesterday we were with you

10. Yuŋ la ti mini a n-sa bala

Night FOC 3PL CONJ 2SG TD here

Last night we were with you

11. Ka zuŋɔ ka a kpuyi napɔŋ

But today CONJ 2SG take foot

And today you have left us

12. Napɔŋ din ka labbu na

Foot that NEG return

Not to return anymore

13. Ka di ŋmanila zahinli

CONJ 3SG like dream

And it seem like a dream

14. A zaŋ naba ka che ti

2SG take feet CONJ leave 3PL

You have walk away from us

15. Ka ti kpalim kpaambihi

CONJ 3PL become guinea fowls

And we have turn into baby guinea fowls.

16. Ban ma yi yi ka che ba
Which mother fly CONJ leave them
Whose mother has abandoned them
17. A lee yeli ni ti kpe ya?
2SG DP say CONJ 3PL enter where
From where do you want us to find refuge?
18. M ba yee
1SG father oh
Oh my father
19. Woi, Woi, Woi
Oh, oh, oh

This is a one stanza dirge with about nineteen (19) lines, written/sung in simple sentences for easy comprehension. Each line is independent of the other and carries a great message with lots of emotions. The structure in this dirge is seen with the poet or the dirger first lamenting the sudden demise of the loved one as well as finding it difficult to come to terms with the fact that he/she decides to leave them at the time they needed and cherished his/ her relationship so much.

The dirger tries to send his/her message across by finding out why he/she left them just when they were even together the previous day. Why he/she decides to embark on a journey of no return rendering them hopeless.

APPENDIX 2

M PUUNI (My stomach)

20. Ooi! Ooi! M Puuni

Oh! Oh! 1SG stomach

Oh! Oh! My stomach

21. M baye! M baye!

1SG father! 1SG father

My father! My father!

22. N ku be! N ku be!

1SG NEG live! 1SG NEG live

I can't live I can't live

23. N gbihi n-tam m maɲa yɛla

1SG sleep FOC-forget 1SG self about

I slept and forgot myself

24. Ka tayiya zu ma.

CONJ thief steals me

And am stolen by a thief

25. N zuma zaa n-chaɲ

1SG steal me QUNT FOC-go

Taking away my everything

26. N nudirigu gbali kabiya

1SG right leg broke PERF

My right leg is broken

27. Ka n jaangbee gbaai faai n-lu
CONJ 1SG walking stick drop down
And my walking stick has fallen
28. Doo zaŋ o maŋa n-lebi zapaleŋu
Man takes 2SG self FOC-turn bird
Man has turn himself into a bird
29. N- yohim ma kpehi moyu.
FOC-deceive me enter bush
Deceived me into the bush
30. Dali la ni m mini a n-daa bala
3 days FOC 1SG CONJ 2SG FOC TD here
The day before yesterday I was with you
31. Sohila m mini a n-sa bala
Yesterday 1SG CONJ 2SG FOC-TD here
Yesterday I was with you
32. Bo n-che ka a daa bi yeli ma?
Q FOC-leave CONJ 2SG TD NEG say me
Why didn't you tell/inform me?
33. Ka bo n-sa moy a ni a yeli ma sohila?
CONJ Q FOC-TD NEG 2SG CONJ 2SG say me yesterday
And what prevented you from telling me yesterday
34. Ka dayila a yi chaŋ
CONJ COND 2SG COND go
So if you go

35. A ni baŋ yeŋigu?

2SG FUT know talk

Will you know what to say?

36. Tayiŋa zu ma! Tayiŋi zu ma

Thief steals me! Thief steals me

I have been stolen! I have been stolen!

37. N ku be! N ku be!

1SG NEG live! 1SG NEG live!

I can't live! I can't live!

This dirge is written in one stanza with nineteen (18) lines. Just like many other Dagbamba dirges, it begins with a lament as part of its structure, followed by the message, with the dirger pouring out his/her heart in grief. The dirger is taken unaware by the sudden demise of the loved one. According to the dirge, the dirger never saw it coming, the death occurred when he/she least expected it. This is why he/she is heard saying in lines 23, 24 and 25 that „he/ she slept or dozed off and has been stolen by a thief who has taken away everything of his/hers“.

I slept and forgot myself,

And am stolen by thief

Taking away my everything

This dirge is also characterized by short lines and simple sentences to make it easy to sing and appreciate. The beauty of this dirge is seen by the use of several literary devices.

APPENDIX 3

N ZUYU BIEYU YEEI (Oh my bad luck)

38 . Woi, woi m ba yeei!

Oh oh 1SG father

Oh, oh, my father

39 . N zuyu bieyu yeei!

1SG head bad oh

My bad luck oh

40. Buyim kpulli nyooi ma yeei!

Fire round burn me oh

I have been burnt by fire oh

41. Nɔŋa dim ma ka sɔyi mɔyi ni yeei!

Scorpion stink me CONJ hide bush LOC oh

Oh scorpion stinks me and hides in the bush

42. Ya ka n yen kpe?

Where CONJ 1SG FUT enter

Where do I go?

43. Sakura luri n zuyu!

Rain fall 1SG body

Heavy rains are falling on me

44. Ka n nii kɔŋ maabu

CON 1SG body NEG cool

And I can't find comfort

45. Wɔi kambanyili bia

Oh Diari child

Oh child of Diare

46. Ya ka a zali ma zuṅo ḡo?

Q CONJ 2SG leave me today DEM

Where have you placed me today?

47. A lɛbila zapaliɛyɛ zuṅo ḡo

2SG turn bird today DEM

You have turned into a bird today

48. Yɔhim tia ka gbe tiṅa

Deceived tree CONJ lodge ground

Deceived the tree and logged on the ground /floor

49. Mani dunia naaya zuṅo

My world finish-PERF today

My world has come to an end today

50. Yɔhim tia ka gbe tiṅa

Deceived tree CONJ lodge ground

Deceived the tree and logged on the ground /floor

51. Mani dunia naaya zuṅo

My world finish-PERF today

My world has come to an end today

52. N konyuri ḡmani ḡmaya

1SG drinking-bowl break-PERF

My drinking calabash is broken

53. Ka n sayidiri laa ḡma

CONJ 1SG bowl break

And my bowl has broken

54. N kɔŋ dokuyu din ni kari wari

1SG NEG log that FUT prevent cold

I can't find firewood to prevent cold

55. M ba yeei! N zuɣu biɛɣu paliya

1SG father oh! 1SG head bad full-PERF

Oh my father! My bad luck is too much.

This dirge is sung by a close relation of the deceased, (son/daughter), who is lamenting his/her only source of hope on earth. In this dirge, the deceased is praised followed by the message. The mood of the dirger is sober and despair, who thinks he can never cope with the situation and that his/ her world has come crushing as seen in lines 42, 46, 49, 51, 52 and 53.

Where do I go?

Where have you placed me today?

My world has come to an end today

My world has come to an end today

My drinking calabash is broken

And my bowl has broken

The dirger again uses the 18 lines in a one stanza dirge to lament how unfortunate dirger is.

APPENDIX 4

DMAAGA NAMDA PIRI ZO KULI (Wearing monkey's sandals to attend funeral)

56. Dmaaga namda piri zo kuli yee

Monkey sandal wear run go funeral yee

Oh wearing monkey's sandal to attend funeral.

57. A yi je ka lan bora a ni piri yee nmaaga namda.

2SG COND NEG CONJ or want 2SG FUT oh monkey sandal

Whether you like it or not you will wear it oh monkey's sandal

58. Dmaaga namda piri zo kuli yee

Monkey sandal wear run go funeral oh

Oh wearing monkey's sandal to attend funeral.

59. A yi je ka lahi bora a ni piri yee nmaaga namda

2SG COND NEG CONJ or want 2SG FUT oh monkey sandal

Whether you like it or not you will wear it oh monkey's sandal

60. Dmaaga namda piri zo kuli yee

Monkey sandal wear run go funeral oh

Oh wearing monkey's sandal to attend funeral.

61. A yi je ka lahi bora a ni piri yee nmaaga namda

2SG COND NEG CONJ or want 2SG FUT oh monkey sandal

Whether you like it or not you will wear it oh monkey's sandal

This is relatively a short dirge with 6 lines; each line repeating three times. This dirge is structured in a way that only carries its message across without praises and lamentations. The whole dirge is expressed idiomatically using the monkey as the reference point. The monkey is one of the animals that runs fast, therefore the dirger stating that to wear the

sandals of a monkey to attend a funeral implies the fast/quick response with which one attends a funeral upon receiving the news of the death of a relative as well as the importance attached to the attendance of a funeral. Again, it informs one of the need and compulsion in attending a funeral, it may not be a matter of choice, but in most cases, one is compelled to attend a funeral of a relation or a neighbor as it forms part of the social responsibility of everyone within a family set-up.

APPENDIX 5

SHĒLI KA ŊMANI NI (Nothing is in the calabash)

62. Sheli ka ŋmani ni
Nothing NEG bowl in
Nothing is in the calabash/bowl
63. Sheli ka ŋmani ni
Nothing NEG bowl in
Nothing is in the calabash/bowl
64. Ti ŋmani nyela ŋmani kuŋ
1PL bowl COP bowl empty
Our calabash/bowl is empty
65. Sheli ka ŋmani ni
Nothing NEG bowl in
Nothing is in the calabash/bowl
66. Sheli ka ŋmani ni
Nothing NEG bowl in
Nothing is in the calabash/bowl
67. Ŋmani nyela ŋmani kuŋ
Bowl COP bowl empty
Calabash /bowl is empty
68. Sheli ka ŋmani ni
Nothing NEG bowl in
Nothing is in the calabash/bowl

The seven lines in a one stanza dirge are sung by grandchildren and great grandchildren of the deceased. This dirge also sends its message across directly without any lament or praise as part of its structure. Per the custom of Dagbamba, during funeral celebration, these children place calabashes/ bowls in the middle of the compound for mourners to place monies in. Also, as custom demands, children and siblings of the deceased are expected to give monies to the grand children and great grandchildren for the dead to have a peaceful rest. Sometimes when these monies are not given them, they express their displeasure in many ways, one of which could be mocking the children and siblings of the deceased as expressed in the above dirge. They sing this dirge to inform them that their pockets are empty and that they have been denied what is due them.

APPENDIX 6

N KU BE (I cant live)

69. N ku be

1SG NEG live

I can't live

70. Ooi, ooi, n ku be

Oh, oh 1SG NEG live

Oh, oh I can't live

71. Ooi, ooi, n ku be

Oh, oh 1SG NEG live

Oh, oh I can't live

72. Tuuri bɔ ka n tuui ka bi mɔ?

Stumble-PERF Q CONJ 1SG stumble CONJ NEG try

What kind of stumbling have I experienced without trying?

73. Ko^o yini layim sura

Water one together bath-PERF

Bathing together with same water

74. Bihi yini layim mɔyira

Breast one together suck-PERF

Suckling of one breast

75. A che ma ti la ŋuni ka chana?

2SG leave me give FOC who CONJ go-PERF

In whose hands have you left me?

76. Ka nyini limsi a nina pata ka bi yeli sheli

CONJ 2SG cover 2SG eyes thatch CONJ NEG say nothing

And you covered your face with thatch without a word

77. Ooi, ooi, n ku be

Oh, oh1SG NEG live

Oh, oh I can't live

78. N kperi yeni?

1SG enter-PERF where

Where do I go?

The 10 lines in a one stanza dirge is written to mourn the dead of a loved one by a dirger beginning with lamentation and then its message. He/she cries his/her heart out not knowing how to cope with the situation. This is observed in the first and final lines where the mourner laments by stating he/ she can't live asking where he/she is going to find refuge in, now that he (the deceased) is gone. Again, the relationship between the deceased and the mourner could be that of a close one as he/she has used some lines within the dirge to express some things they shared or things they did in common which strengthened the bond between them. This explains why he/ she thinks he/she cannot do without him/ her (deceased).

APPENDIX 7

DOO BE DUU (Man is in the room)

79. Doo be duu yeei, doo be duu m- bɔ̀biri ni o yi na

**Man LOC room ooh man LOC room FOC-prepare PERF FUT 2SG come
out**

Man is in the room ooh, man is in the room preparing/dressing to come out

80. Doo be duu yeei, doo be duu m- bɔ̀biri ni o yi na

**Man LOC room ooh man LOC room FOC-prepare PERF FUT 2SG come
out**

Man is in the room ooh, man is in the room preparing/dressing to come out

81. Doo be duu yeei, doo be duu m- bɔ̀biri ni o yi na

**Man LOC room ooh man LOC room FOC-prepare PERF FUT 2SG come
out**

Man is in the room ooh, man is in the room preparing/dressing to come out

82. Doo be duu yeei, doo be duu m- bɔ̀biri ni o yi na

**Man LOC room ooh man LOC room FOC-prepare PERF FUT 2SG come
out**

Man is in the room ooh, man is in the room preparing/dressing to come out

This is one of the shortest Dagbamba dirge analyzed in this study. In this dirge, the dirger did not lament or praise the dead, it carries a clear message as part of its structure. It is made up of 4 lines just like other Dagbamba dirges, it is sung by mourners before burial when the deceased is laid in the room and is being prepared for burial. The mourner is

expressing his/her grief/ sorrow by announcing the dead of the loved one who is yet to be buried and probably taking his last bath and as well, being paid his last homage by his/her children and very close relation before given a befitting burial. This particular dirge is mostly sung at the time the deceased is being prepared for burial or when he/she is about to be buried, this creates the awareness of mourners that the deceased is about to be buried so they can offer prayers and supplications for him to have an eternal rest.

APPENDIX 8

A KULI CHADMI MAA (So you are gone)

83. Woi yooa kuli chaŋmi maa?

Oh oh 2SG go-PERF DET

Oh so you are gone?

84. Woi yoo a kuli chaŋmi maa?

Oh oh 2SG go-PERF DET

Oh so you are gone?

85. A chaŋmi ka che n-che ti koŋko nandahima

2SG go-PERF CONJ leave 1PL alone sorrow

You have left us alone sorrowfully

86. Ti duuma Naawuni ni sɔŋ ti

1PL God FUT help 1PL

Our God shall take care of us

87. Ti duuma Naawuni ni sɔŋ ti

1PL God FUT help 1PL

Our God shall take care of us

88. O ni sɔŋ ti a che n- che ti koŋko nandahima

3SG FUT help 1PL 2SG leave 1PL alone sorrow

He shall take care of us; you have left us alone sorrowfully.

This particular dirge happens to be the most common dirge found among the Dagbamba, which is sometimes used as a farewell song. It is mostly taught in basic schools. It

contains six (6) lines, beginning with a lament and its message without praises. The dirger mourns the dead of a loved one expressing his/her grief but having faith in the mercy of God. The mourner is trying to find out from the deceased if indeed he/she is gone and that he has left them behind sorrowfully but takes consolation in the fact that God will look after them.

APPENDIX 9

M MA YEE (O my mother)

89. Biɛyuneera m ma yee

Day break 1SG mother oh

Day is breaking oh my mother

90. Wulunga lura m ma yee

Sun set 1SG mother oh

Sun setting oh my mother

91. Ka zuŋɔ yee ka biɛyɔ yee

NEG today oh NEG tomorrow oh

Oh not today oh not tomorrow

92. M ma niŋ ma shi ka baa yee

1SG mother do 1SG go CONJ dog oh

Oh my mother has drove me away like a dog

93. M ma lebila daantaliga lebi biri ma yee

1SG mother turn middle stick turns back 1SG oh

Oh my mother has turned to a pillar and turned her back on me

94. M ma lebila daantaliga lebi biri ma yee

1SG mother turn middle stick turns back 1SG oh

Oh my mother has turned to roof supporter and turned her back on me

95. M ma niŋ la jankuno ŋmaligi nyeli ma yee

1SG mother be cat turn lie 1SG oh

Oh my mother has become a cat lying beside me

96. M ma lɛbila daantaliga lɛbi yɔyira yee
1SG mother turn middle stick turn rafters
Oh my mother has turn to roof supporter and rafter
97. Hmm
Hmm
98. M ma yee bo ka a niŋ ŋɔ yee?
1SG mother oh Q CONJ 2SG do DEM oh
Oh my mother oh what have you done?
99. Samaru yaantitaa bo ka a niŋ ŋɔ yee
Name grandchild Q CONJ 2SG do DEM oh
Oh great grandchild of Samaru what have you done?
100. Gariba yaantitaa bo ka a niŋ ŋɔ yee
Name grandchild Q CONJ 2SG do DEM oh
Oh great grandchild of Gariba what have you done?
101. M ma niŋ la bo yee
1SG mother do FOC Q oh
Oh what has my mother done?
102. M ma tuui la bo yee?
1SG mother stumble FOC Q oh
Oh what has my mother stumbled on?
103. O tuui la bo yee jirigi ni
3SG stumble FOC Q oh Kumbungu LOC
Oh what has she stumbled on in Kumbungu?

104. O tuui la bo yee sayindari ni
3SG stumble FOC Q oh Kumbungu LOC
Oh what has she stumbled on in Kumbungu?
105. O tuuya ka bi mo yee
1SG stumbles CONJ NEG try oh
Oh she stumbled without trying
106. M ma yee
1SG mother oh
Oh my mother
107. Siyili payasarabia m ma
Name girls child 1SG mother
Young lady of Siyili
108. Kuchirigi payasarabia m ma
Name girls child 1SG mother
Young lady of Kuchirigi
109. Nadahima yee
Sorrow oh
Oh sorrowful
110. M ma zaŋ bihi gbaŋ labisi o nyaana yee
1SG mother take breast put 2SG back oh
Oh my mother has placed her nipples behind her
111. M moyiri dini yee
1SG suck Q oh

Oh which one am I sucking?

112. M ma zaŋ bihigbaŋ labisi o nyaaŋa yee

1SG mother take breast put 2SG back oh

Oh my mother has placed her nipples behind her

113. M møyiri dini yee

1SG suck Q oh

Oh which one am I sucking?

114. Sabali bia

Town child

Child of Sabali

115. M møyiri dini yee

1SG suck Q oh

Oh which one am I sucking?

This is one of the longest dirges among the Dagbamba dirges collected for this study. It contains twenty seven (27) lines which combine laments, praises and its message as part of its structure. There are short lines with deeper meanings, in this dirge, the mourner/dirger is mourning the death of her mother, whose death has caused her so much pain. She expresses her grief, feeling so dejected. The love for a mother or a mother's love is the greatest love of all and cannot be compared to anything in this world. This explains why the mourner is finding it difficult to cope with the death of the deceased. She laments, indicating that she has been rendered useless by the death of the mother and as well, asking questions as to what she (the deceased) has done.