THE SlSAALA DIRGE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my work towards the PhD and that to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in this text.

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Student's Name & ID Signature Date

Certified by:

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Supervisor's Name Signature Date

Certified by:

....

Head of Department's Name Signature Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents: *Ɔ Naa* Lahadi Sansantuwo and

Ɔ Kuwo Bayɔbɔ Asumah

and

to the memory of my late uncles and aunts:

Sanka, Bayoŋ, Marifa, Hakuli, and Haduwoŋ.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a modest attempt at examining the literary and cultural backgrounds pertaining to the performance of the Sısaala dirge. The principal objective of the study is to pursue the aesthetic, cultural, moral, and socio-political evidence that the Sısaala dirge, like many Ghanaian dirges, does not only provide the appropriate platform for mourning the dead, but that it also poetically reiterates cultural, moral, social, artistic, and historical values. While the Sısaala dirge may be distinct from other local dirges in terms of how it is executed and who participates in its performance; and though its continuous rendition is faced with problems in the form of some negative influences from the Christian and Moslem religions, Western lifestyle, ignorance on the part of the Sısaala youth about the positive values of their dirges, lack of unity among poet-cantors, and the systematic disintegration of extended family values; it nonetheless celebrates national values such as respect for the aged, motherhood, motherliness, industriousness, moral correctness, and verbal creativity. These are values that transcend ethnic cultures and can therefore be used to further promote national unity and identity. Of equal importance is the ability of the dirge to serve as a medium for poet-cantors to pay homage to the "word", and to further prove that "orality" is not the mere absence of writing but it is a system that is *suis generis* through which part of the trajectory of human development can always be traced.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, there has been a renewed interest in the study of African oral traditions. A sizeable quantity of literature has been published on the nature of folklore, thus generating insightful discussions about its role in the future. This researcher has undertaken this study in an effort to offer one more perspective on the significant role of the enduring African oral traditions by focusing on the Sısaala dirge as a compendium of values, beliefs, practices, and aesthetic expression. The Sısaala are one of the Gur language speakers who occupy part of the Upper West Region of Ghana.

The problem at stake in this study is that most Sısaala youth and, by extension, most Ghanaians, tend to regard the performance of oral funeral poetry as a mere routine which is followed in order to bid farewell to the dead. Beyond this function, dirges have nothing to offer the society and the country. As a result of this, some communities are replacing dirge performance with foreign funeral rites; and the youth are also reluctant to go into professional dirge performance. In these circumstances, one is tempted to ask the following question: Is this perception about oral funeral poetry the true reflection of its utilitarian value?

In this introductory part of the thesis, the researcher intends to deliberate on the following question: What is the central concern of this thesis? The question is not intended to address the specifics of the research problem but to show the fundamental supporting structure of the entire study. The main aim is to scan cultural values, beliefs, practices, and artistic expression through the lenses of funeral poetry. In short, this researcher is expatiating on a simple, conceptual, and empirical question: What does oral funeral poetry tell us about the utilitarian aspects of Sısaala

and other Ghanaian dirges? This researcher is outlining and analysing aspects of culture that are embedded in oral funeral poetry which is referred to as dirges in the study. Essentially, the study focuses on an understanding of the expressions and proclamations of dirges that emphasise the values of culture and the creative use of language. This is why this researcher is defining the basic task in this study to be a critical analysis of the Sɪsaala dirge. This is the oral poetry of the Sɪsaala which is performed on the event of death.

In this poetry, there are four structural types: dirges that consist of very short lyrical compositions and are therefore sung; dirges that consist of songs and appellations; dirges that combine tales, appellations and songs; and dirges that are chanted but are comparatively longer. There are some social types of dirges as well. Depending on the age of the deceased, there are dirge performances which are dominated by lament and there are those which are dominated by didacticism, commentaries, and reflections.

The analysis is based on the premise that oral funeral poetry provides a platform for some understanding of culture, especially its didactic aspect, values, practices, and aesthetic qualities. The overriding objective in this research is to contribute towards the understanding and appreciation of Sɪsaala cultural values through a critical examination of oral funeral poetry among the Sɪsaala. This study covers five main areas. The first is the comparative analysis of dirges in order to bring out their cultural values and artistic qualities. The other four areas concentrate on the description of dirge performances among the Sɪsaala, the interpretation of the artisti qualities of these dirges, the analysis of themes and functions emanating from the dirges,

and the impact of Christianity, Islam, and Western lifestyle on the rendering of these dirges, and mourning among the Sɪsaala.

Background to the Study

Ethnographic Background

Sɪsaalɪ is one of the 79 languages spoken in Ghana. It is classified as one of the Gur Languages under the Grusi language group (Naden, 1988:16). The language is Sɪsaalɪ while the native users of the language are Sɪsaala (Luri, 2009).The Sɪsaalɪ language has several dialects, including *Pasaalɪ, Tumuluŋ, Kpatolie, Gelbaglɪ, Gbieni, Bʊwaali* and *Bosillu*. Sɪsaala land (*Sɪsɔ*) lies to the north, between latitudes 10 and 11 degrees, and thus is in the Sudanic savannah zone (Luri, 2009). The Sɪsaala are mainly dominant in the Sɪsaala East and West Districts. Their numbers are considerable in the Wa East, Nadowli, and the Lambusie districts in the Upper West Region. *Sɪsɔ* is bounded to the north-east of the Upper West Region by the Kassena –Nankani District and to the east by the Builsa District which are both in the Upper East Region of Ghana. The West Mamprusi District in the Northern Region borders *Sɪsɔ* to the south-east while the Lawra District in the Upper West Region borders it to the north-west. Wa West District borders it to the south-west. To the north is an extension into the *Sɪsɔ* Province of neighbouring Burkina Faso.

The Sɪsaala District was divided into Sɪsaala East and West Districts in 2005 with Tumu and Gwollu as the district capitals respectively. Funsi became the capital of the Wa East District the same year and Lambusie, a Sɪsaala community, became a district of its own in 2007. Administratively therefore, there are four districts in *Sɪsɔ* and the same goes for political constituencies since each district is a constituency. Culturally, Christianity and particularly Islam

have made significant influences on the cultural beliefs and practices of the Sısaala. Western education has also made an impact on the Sısaala way of life. This has resulted in a continuous change in the cultural values, beliefs, practices, and way of life of the people.

Motivation for the Study of Oral Literature

The study of African culture by the West started with the advent of the whites in Africa. The interest of the West in areas of commerce, territorial expansion, and the spread of Christianity made it imperative for it to take a special initiative aimed at learning the languages and the ways of life of Africans in general. Consequently, deliberate efforts were made by slave drivers, colonial administrators, and missionaries to learn the African way of life so that meaningful communication could always be achieved in the interactions between the Europeans and their African counterparts. The missionaries, in particular, led the campaign in the effort to document African languages and the African culture. The motivation behind this enthusiasm of the West in the mores of Africans was therefore, at first, driven by the need for the Europeans to promote their agenda on trade, territorial expansion, and religion. It had nothing to do with a peculiar intellectual quest into the way Africans lived and interacted with one another.

With the passage of time, however, evolutionists such as Edward Burnet Taylor and James George Frazer started developing a particular zeal for the study of human culture. They believed that a comparative analysis of the cultures of two different societies at the same stage of cultural development could reveal common deeper structures between the two cultures since we have one human race and one human mind across the world. The surface phenomena of such cultures may differ; but the fact is that there could be a common underlying structure that organises all the

surface phenomena within the two cultures. In their comparative study of cultures across the world, evolutionists also took the trouble to examine aspects of African culture in their works. In *The Golden Bough*: *A Study in Magic and Religion* (2003), for instance, Frazer makes references to some areas of African culture though his main interest is in the magical and religious practices of a small tribe in Italy. It was evolutionists like Frazer and Taylor who later encouraged scholar – administrators such as Robert Rattray and P. Amaury Talbot to document data on the Akan and Ekoi cultures.

Some of the Western scholars who later decided to devote their research to the study of African culture, such as Gordon Innes with his *Sunjata: Three Mandinka Versions* (1974) and Ruth Finnegan with her *Oral Literature in Africa* (1976), had to confront a few problems that affected the quality of their works. First, most of the Western scholars who later decided to delve deeper into African oral traditions had still not been able to do away completely with some of the prejudices they inherited from the missionaries and the colonial scholar-administrators against Africans and their culture. (Okpewho, 2007: 84) In fact, as Frantz Fanon (1967:121) observes in *Black Skin, White Masks*, everything about Africans had already been "anticipated, thought out, demonstrated, made the most of" by some of these Western scholars before they could embark on any meaningful analysis of African oral literary pieces. As a result of this, some of the findings of some of these Western scholars in African oral traditions lacked objectivity.

In instances where some of these scholars should have acknowledged ignorance about aspects of African culture, or should not have made categorical statements in certain grey areas of their research, they made such observations that prejudiced the objectivity of their conclusions.

(Kolawole, 2007: 93) For example, though Finnegan's *Oral Literature in Africa* (1976) is very insightful, she makes some statements in her work which, to some extent, are not entirely true. Instead of acknowledging her inability to ascertain whether there are epics in African oral literature or not, she concludes that such literary pieces do not exist in African orature. To Finnegan (1976:109), the reasons that narrations that could qualify as epics in Africa have not been rendered in verse, are relatively shorter, and lack internal unity, are enough to disqualify them from being considered as such. Most of these criteria, on the basis of which Finnegan rejects these narrations as epics can, however, be waived under Abrams's exegesis of the same subject. In his own words, Abrams observes that, "The term "epic" is often applied, by extension, to narratives which differ in many respects from this model but manifest the epic spirit and grandeur in the scale, the scope, and the profound human importance of their subjects." (Abrams, 2005:83) Abrams goes further by referring to works such as Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*, and Joyce's *Ulysses* as literary pieces that can be described as epics. Evidently, it is not all the examples cited by Abrams that are strictly composed in verse and are on the same scale with Virgil's *Aeneid* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

The second problem that Western scholars interested in the study of African oral traditions had to face was their lack of knowledge about African languages in which folktales, songs, and rituals were first documented, and which served as the basis for further analysis. Ignorance about the languages in which these cultural practices were carried out prevented most Western scholars from appreciating the stylistics contained in them; and they could not, therefore, understand and appreciate the creative mind of the African oral artist. Achebe makes an interesting observation on the weakness of the European critic on African literature and concludes that "the European

critic of African literature must cultivate the habit of humility appropriate to his limited experience of the African world." (Achebe, 1994:1192)

Lastly, most Western scholars who expressed the desire to study African oral traditions tended to use Western literary tradition as the yardstick in determining what constituted literature in the African context. (Okpewho, 2007: 84) To them, Western literary tradition is universal and should be transposed onto all literatures. For this reason, most of their translations of African oral literary pieces were fashioned to fit the Western idea of what constituted an elegy, for instance, in the Western sense; or they simply ignored the stylistic aspects of the oral literary products that they collected. This attitude of Western critics towards other literatures in the world on the basis of universality is what Achebe is against when he writes that Western critics behave "as though universality were some distant bend in the road which you may take if you travel far enough in the direction of Europe or America, if you put adequate distance between yourself and your home." (Achebe, 1994:1193)

It therefore behoves African scholars who understand the cultures and languages of the various African communities to try and correct some of the misconceptions of Western scholars about African oral traditions that have found their way into the literary world. In the case of the Sısaala funeral dirge, though no major research has been conducted on it yet, it faces a problem that merits attention. For instance, most elderly Sısaala believe that the quality of dirge performance has evolved over the years. This is attributed to several factors which shall be examined later in the thesis. But quite apart from this, there is also the question of who succeeds the present professional dirge performers when they are no more since the youth are not interested in

apprenticeship in the art of professional dirge singing. In these circumstances, one is tempted to ask this question: Is it wise to wait till the practice disappears before it can be documented or it is better to study it now and try not only to codify it in written text but also to look at the possibility of encouraging the youth to go into professional dirge performance so as to ensure the continuity of the practice? In Sarpong's own words, "It is of importance to note that culture is learned and that it does not depend on inborn instincts or flexes, or any other biologically inherited forms." (Sarpong, 1974: XVII-XVIII) The import of this observation and other issues concerning the Sısaala dirge constitute the motivation behind this research.

Theoretical Framework

This researcher intends to use ethnopoetics as a theory to support discussions in the thesis. According to Catherine S. Quick, ethnopoetics is "an interdisciplinary construct that attempts to correct the Eurocentric and chirographic bias against non-Western, traditional ways of speaking and meaning by deriving an interpretive frame from discourse in its own cultural context." (Quick, 1999:95) This researcher intends to use an aspect of ethnopoetics known as the infracultural model in folklore analysis in developing the thesis. This strand of ethnopoetics is developed by Alembi (2002) for research into oral poetry. The infracultural model of folklore analysis combines elements from the two strands of ethnopoetics developed by Dell Hymes (1981) and Dennis Tedlock (1983). Thus instead of concentrating on Hymes's strand of ethnopoetics which lays emphasis on the written text or that of Tedlock which emphasises living discourse, the infracultural model gives cognisance to performance, the oral text, and the written text. The key elements of the model are that it demands an insider analysis and interpretation of works of art in a given reality of a community; interpretation of oral literary pieces in their

cultural context (Quick, 1999: 95); examination of oral texts beyond mere concern with stylistics in order to elucidate the theme of the study; deep involvement in dialogue and interaction in order to understand the structural and underlying issues surrounding a phenomenon and a community; the assigning of meaning to oral texts based on the cultural traditions of the performer and audience; and a close observation and participation in live performances of a given genre of oral art. (Alembi, 2003:23)

Organisation of Work

With regard to organisation of work, the whole thesis has been divided into seven main parts. The main chapters, which focus on findings and discussion, are five. The introduction to the study and conclusion also make up the other two additional parts. The background to the study, which constitutes the first part, situates the research topic in context by discussing the ethnographic background, the motivation for the study of oral literature, the significance of the study, theoretical frame work, as well as research strategy and data presentation. Literature review has also been covered under the introductory part. The conclusion highlights the salient points emanating from discussions in the study; and also recommends possible solutions to the objectives set in the thesis. The work has been planned in such a way that this researcher does not plunge straight into analysis of the Sısaala dirge. In fact, the study of the Sısaala dirge proper starts in chapter two. Chapter one therefore concentrates on the general study of dirges. Chapters two,three, four, and five of the thesis are mainly concerned with the dirge in the Sısaala context, the Sısaala dirge as an artistic expression, the themes and values of the Sısaala dirge and, the place of the dirge in the life of the Sısaala.

Significance of the Study

This researcher is of the view that the study is of significance since it deals with an area of the Ghanaian way of life. As citizens of one nation, we need to learn and understand one another's culture to enable us to live in peace and harmony. It would also help us avoid certain negative tendencies such as prejudice against one another's culture, ethnocentrism, or misinterpretation and misrepresentation of facts about our diverse and rich cultural practices which can sometimes serve as a recipe for conflicts.

General Objective

The overriding objective of this research is to generate interest in the learning of Ghanaian culture as a means of comprehending the Ghanaian tradition which, in the words of Awoonor, is "a compendium of long accumulated experiences operating on the basis of what are essentially moral laws which are part of natural law as it responds to the fundamental question of human survival." (Awoonor, 2006:210) This would help us, as Ghanaians, to understand and know ourselves better.

Specific Objectives

The first specific objective of this research is to help the Sɪsaala youth and, by extension, the younger generations in Ghana, to understand and appreciate the value of dirges in Ghanaian funeral contexts. The other objectives of this research include the need to document dirge performances for future generations among the Sɪsaala; the interest in exposing the diverse nature of dirge performances in Ghana; and the desire to promote the good aspects of our culture as a way of encouraging the youth of today not to abandon our cultural values. The research also

aims at sensitising Ghanaian youth to consider the dirge as an art form that should be appreciated as such; and, above all, to have confidence in good Ghanaian cultural values as the basis for sustaining and unifying our society.

Justification for the Study

Justification for this research stems from the fact that so far, no major study has been conducted into the rendering of dirges among the Sɪsaala in the Upper West Region. Besides this, most of the studies on dirges in Ghana have been dedicated to funeral laments from the major ethnic groups while neglecting those from the minor ethnic groups. There are, however, some marked differences between dirges from the major ethnic groups and those from the minor ethnic groups. The languages and cultures of these smaller ethnic groups contain rich oral literature and traditional values that could be harnessed for the advancement of knowledge in the country. For example, while the Akan dirge remains the preserve of women, some dirges are performed by both men and women. Again, while the Akan dirge is a solo performance, other dirges are performed in an interactive manner between artist and mourners. Also, the spiritual dimension of apprenticeship and performance of some dirges is an aspect that differentiates them from other dirges in Ghana. The present researcher's background as someone who is a native user of the Pasaalɪ dialect of Sɪsaalɪ, his ability to understand the Tumuluŋ, Debi, and Gelbaglɪ dialects of the Sɪsaalɪ language, and the fact that he grew up in a Sɪsaala cultural milieu, are added incentives for the choice of this particular topic.

Type of Research

This research is not an experimental one. Rather, it is an investigation into dirges and how they are rendered among the Sɪsaala in the Upper West Region. It therefore constitutes a case study.

Research Methodology

In the course of gathering information for this thesis, this researcher has had to rely on two main types of data. These are the primary data and the secondary data. The primary data has not been collected from documentary sources but from the Sɪsaala communities in the Upper West Region. To collect this data, the researcher had to interview four professional dirge performers from different communities. The choice of the four dirge performers has been motivated by two factors: the level of popularity or the level of appreciation that listeners show for the performances of the bards, and the location of the bards such that they are fairly distributed in the different districts of Sɪsaala land. The choice of the bards from different districts is to enable the research reflect little variations that may exist in the rendering of dirges among the four Sɪsaala districts. Two of such professionals in the persons of Kuri Baŋmɔ and Jebuni Sumani are from Sombisi, a village found in the newly created Wa East District. One professional in the person of Halukɪ is from Pulma, a village which is about three kilometres to Tumu; and the last one in the person of Maani is from Kandia, a village which is about ten kilometres after Tumu. Thus among the four professional dirge performers, three are men and one is a woman. Besides this, separate interviews were also conducted with some elders in the three villages where the four professional dirge performers were interviewed.

An interview, according to Kahn and Cannell, "is a purposeful discussion between two or more people." (Kahn and Cannell, 1957) The purpose for the use of interviews is to enable the researcher to gather valid and reliable data that is relevant to the research topic. All the interviews were conducted on face-to-face, and on one-to-one bases. It is also important to note that all the interviews conducted with the bards and elders were semi-structured in which "the researcher will have a list of themes and questions to be answered although these may vary from interview to interview. This means that you may omit some questions in particular interviews, given a specific organisational context that is encountered in relation to the research topic." (Saunders et al., 2007:312) The order of the questions may also change depending on the flow of the discussion.

Despite the fact that questions are often raised about the reliability and generalisation of answers obtained from semi-structured and in-depth interviews, this researcher decided to use the former method of conducting interviews for very good reasons. First, doubts about the reliability of answers obtained from semi-structured interviews have got nothing to do with whether they are true or not. Rather, "reliability is concerned with whether alternative researchers would reveal similar information." (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002) Also, there need not be an issue about the generalisation of the findings from the interviews since this researcher has made it clear that this research is a case study and therefore some of the anwers obtained from the questionnaire may be specific to Sısaala land. But above all these, semi-structured interviews have some advantages inherent in them. They are the most suitable for case studies and explanatory studies. (Saunders et al., 2007:313, 314) Semi-structured interviews are used for the collection of qualitative data and more of their merits have been explained by Saunders et al. as follows:

> Semi-structured and in-depth interviews provide you with the opportunity to 'probe' answers, where you want your interviewees to explain, or build on their responses. You may also lead the interviews into areas that you had not previously considered but which are significant for your understanding, and which help you to address your research question and objectives, or indeed help you formulate such a question. They also afford each interviewee an opportunity to hear herself or himself 'thinking aloud' about things she or he may not have previously thought about. The result should be that you are able to collect a rich and detailed set of data. (Saunders et al., 2007:315-316)

The present researcher has also visited funeral grounds at Yaala Number Two and at Sombisi where live performances of dirges were recorded on audio cassettes, and pictures at such funerals taken. The two villages were visited on the 12th and 13th of November, 2008. This researcher paid a second visit to the Upper West Region from 23rd–26th March, 2009 where a video recording of live performance of funeral dirges was carried out at Kundungu, another village in the Wa East District. All these funeral grounds have been visited by this researcher to enable him observe live performance of dirges and to enter into the arena of dirge singing as a method of studying the Sɪsaala dirge in its essential form. Apart from the primary data, this researcher has also reviewed some literature on dirges. The literature review covers different documentary sources on oral literature including encyclopaedias, books, journals, and articles. Some articles on oral literature from the internet have also been reviewed.

The problems encountered in the course of this research were many and varied. The most daunting challenge had to do with translation. Sɪsaalɪ language has several dialects and became a written language not long ago. Many of the written works in the language exist in the form of Bible translations, a basic dictionary by Blass (1975, 2002), a collection of folktales by Fembeti (1995), and a book on relevant relations in discourse by Blass (1990). Other works on the Sɪsaala

concentrate on the linguistics of the language such as its phonology, grammar, and orthography (Nkrumah, 2006, McGill, Fembeti, and Toupin, 1999, Toupin, 1995, Rowland, 1965). This researcher, in translating dirges from this language into English, was handicapped since he did not have access to an advanced dictionary or other reference books that could make the task easier. Coupled with this was the style of translation to be adopted which would be suitable for this type of research. In other words, the translation could not be literal since such a translation could not have made any meaning in English. At the same time, the translation did not have to be too close to the Western idea of poetry to the extent that the literary pieces under study would only conform to what constituted an elegy, for instance, in the Western literary sense while ignoring the specific context and stylistics in the rendering of dirges among the Sısaala. The difficulty therefore lay in choosing the right style of translation such that translated dirges could make sense in English and also maintain the peculiar style and meaning of Ghanaian oral literary products. This difficulty, which is inherent in the rendering of African oral literary pieces into English, is highlighted by both Ulli Beier (1970:11) and Babalola (1982:13). The latter puts it that there are many words used by the chanters which are "obsolete, and others, particularly names, are untranslatable."

The second problem that this researcher encountered was the question of lack of knowledge about the origins of the various clans and villages. It was evident that most of the appellations had significant historical meanings; and the present researcher therefore needed to apprise himself of such historical contexts before any meaningful translation could be done. Apparently, most of the bards knew the appellations of the various clans and villages offhand but did not know their historical significance. Due to this problem, apart from the professional dirge singers,

this researcher had to talk to some of the elders of the different clans and villages who know and understand the history of their own founding fathers and could situate the present researcher in the proper historical context.

Another dimension that made the research on the field quite difficult to handle was the unwillingness on the part of some of the professional dirge performers to provide in-depth information about their profession. It became evident in the course of this research that dirge performance among the Sısaala is not simply about the ability to sing but that it also involves elaborate efforts aimed at preparing the artist spiritually to enable him or her understand the world of the dead, and to be able to compete gallantly enough with other professionals on the funeral grounds. The processes involved in this kind of spiritual preparation have always remained a secret which most of the professional bards themselves were not prepared to discuss with this researcher. C. A. Bodunde identifies the same problem in his article entitled *Oral Literature: Research Strategies and Problems of Documentation*. In Bodunde's own words, "One of the problems of oral research is the lack of co-operation from the informants themselves especially on issues relating to the secret elements of the oral art."(Bodunde, ORAL%20LITERATURE%20RESEARCH%20STRATEGIES%20AND%20PROBLEMS%20OF%20DOCUMENTATION.)

The last problem this researcher encountered was that of documentation. Indeed, some symbols for certain Sısaalı sounds are not to be found in the English alphabet or sound system or in the sound system of some of the local Ghanaian languages. There was no way the researcher could have circumvented this problem other than using the right symbols so as to produce the right

pronunciation in the Sısaalı transcription. The attempt to get the right symbols for usage proved quite challenging.

Presentation of Data

The contextual meanings of dirges recorded on audio cassettes were first explained to this researcher by some of the poets themselves and by some of the women who acted as the chorus during dirge performance at funerals. Such dirges have been transcribed, translated, and some of them have been selected for analysis in order to develop the thesis. The transcription and translation of the dirges under study by this researcher have been edited by Mr. A. S.B. Sulley, a native user of Sısaalı and a tutor at Nusrat Jahan Training College, Wa; Mr. James Dumah, who is in charge of the Funsi Agricultural Development Project; and Mr. Justin Hogih, a member of staff of the Pasaalı Bible Translation Bureau at Funsi. The symbols used for the Sısaalı transcription have been obtained, with the help of Mr. James Dumah, from the Tumu Parish. Some of the pictures taken at funeral grounds have also been scanned and incorporated into the thesis in order to provide empirical evidence on the aspect of rendering the Sısaala dirge. Apart from the recorded dirges and the pictures which have been taken at the funeral grounds, information on interviews conducted with poet-cantors, elders, and other natives has been incorporated into the thesis. In the same vein, useful pieces of information from documentary sources have also been used to enhance analysis in the thesis by quoting such pieces of information, examining them, and explaining the kind of light that they shed on arguments in the thesis.

Literature Review

This is not the first time that research is being conducted into the study of dirges. Scholars such as J. H. Nketia, Ruth Finnegan, Isidore Okpewho, S. Kichamu and A. Bole Odaga have all published materials on some aspects of dirges. The thrust of this literature review is to examine these publications in order to bring to the fore some of the areas of the subject matter that have not been researched into.

In *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, Cuddon (1998) looks at the etymology, meaning, and the performance of dirges. According to him, the word dirge is derived from "the beginning of the antiphon of the Office of the Dead: Dirige, Domine… 'Direct O Lord…" (Cuddon 1998:227) Though Cuddon's account on dirges seems brief in his dictionary, he is still able to trace the development of the dirge as a literary genre from the Greek literary tradition, through the Roman, and English literary traditions. Thus he explains that dirges in Greek tradition consisted of two parts which were both sung; and in the Roman tradition, the song of praise for the dead was also chanted. According to Cuddon, dirges later developed into lyrical poems, and Shakespeare's dirges in both *The Tempest* and *The Cymbeline* are popular.

Ruth Finnegan in her *Oral Literature in Africa* (1976) also looks at sample dirges from different ethnic groups in Africa. She equally identifies some of the recurrent themes in African dirges. In fact, what Finnegan does in her book from pages 141 – 166 is to highlight the salient points on Akan funeral dirges that Nketia raises in his book. Consequently, most of her examples of elegiac poetry and analysis on them in the pages mentioned here have been drawn from Nketia's book.

E. O. Apronti also looks at the structural unity in the Akan dirge using some of Nketia's dirges as the basis. According to Apronti, the fact that Akan dirges concern a particular topic which is death, and the fact that they generally draw their vocabulary from a set field help such dirges to evince coherence of theme and of subject. Internal devices such as repetition and parallelism further help in unifying the Akan dirge structurally. (Apronti, asrv008002007.pdf)

Still on the dirge, Okot p'Bitek (1974) analyzes aspects of the subject among the Acoli of Uganda in *The Horn of My Love*. P'Bitek's discussion centres on the Acoli's perception of death, the manner in which dirges are executed among the Acoli, the meaning of specific dirges as well as the functional aspect of dirges in the Acoli cultural set up. Six main themes have been identified in the Acoli dirge and they include songs of the pathway, songs of the battle with death, songs of surrender, songs of cruel fate, the attack on the dead, and the attack on the living. (1974:144) p'Bitek also goes beyond the mere point of identifying these themes and tries to trace them to poems from the Western part of the world.

Ezekiel Alembi in *The Abanyole Dirge: "Escorting" The Dead with Song and Dance* also discusses the role of song and dance in the context of a funeral among the Abanyole of the Western Province of Kenya. In addition, the critic looks at who performs the dirge among the Abanyole, the time at which the performance takes place, the structure of the performance as well as the implications of such performances in the funeral context (http://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol38/alembi.pdf). In his doctoral dissertation entitled *The Construction of the Abanyole Perceptions on Death Through Oral Funeral Poetry* (2002), Alembi again looks at what oral poetry tells us about the Abanyole's perception and understanding of death. In short, the

researcher uses detailed analysis on four main areas to arrive at the Abanyole's interpretation of death and its causes. These four main areas include analysis of expressions and statements in the poems that expose the socio-cultural causes of death among the Abanyole, the effect of death on the individual and the community, description of the performance and interpretation of the poems, and the poetic features of the oral funeral poetry. Babila J. Mutia, on the other hand, analyzes the structure of dirges, their chant and antiphonal form, their figurative language, and their free rhythm among the Kpe (Bakweri) ethnic group in the Southwestern region of Cameroon (Mutia, 2003).

S. Kichamu Akiraga and A. Bole Odaga (1982), also define dirges and the occasion that calls for their performance. They further examine dance as an accompaniment to dirges depending on the community, the age, and status of the deceased. The nature of the song and dance is also contingent upon the same factors. They also discuss the fact that whether we look at death as a natural phenomenon or not, as an end to life or a transformation of life, and as something evitable or inevitable, it is dreaded everywhere and therefore constitutes an occasion for mourning and performing dirges.

Isidore Okpewho (1992) equally touches on certain areas of dirge performances in Africa. The areas that Opkewho explores include the definition of dirges, the occasion for their performance, and some of the stock words and phrases used in some dirges, particularly in the Akan funeral dirges of Ghana. He also observes that most African dirges have musical qualities since they are often chanted or sung. He points out, however, that depending on how the community perceives death, lament may be present or absent in some dirges. By referring to dirges from the Maragoli

of Kenya and the Acoli of Uganda, Okpewho further explains that death is not always viewed with a sense of loss in all African communities. In some communities, death is seen as a normal occurrence which need not destabilise us since we all have to die in one way or the other. Some theories that can be used in the study of oral literature have also been discussed in this work.

Kofi Anyidoho is one poet who has explored Ewe dirges in many of his poems, especially in the collection entitled *Brain Surgery*. What the poet does in some of these poems is to use his creative ability to expand original Ewe dirges. In this sense, the original elegiac atmosphere of the Ewe dirge is maintained while other elements are added to the song to make it the product of a cross fertilisation of African and Western ideas. *My Song* and *A Dirge for Christmas* are some of the poems that easily come to mind as being the hybrid forms of Ewe dirges. Pietro Deandra observes that "in Anyidoho's poems, the elegiac atmosphere of Ewe funeral dirges is pervasive, and Awoonor himself seems to be aware of this." (Deandra 2002:135) In the same vein, Kofi Awoonor also uses rhythms and motifs from Ewe traditional dirges in his collections of poems entitled *Rediscovery* (1964) and *Night of My Blood* (1971). In *This Earth, My Brother…….An Allegorical Tale of Africa* (1971) the elegiac atmosphere is pervasive throughout the novel. It is therefore not surprising that Richard K. Priebe explains that in this novel:

> Awoonor employs rhythms and motifs from traditional Ewe dirges to express the alienation and anguish that demand a restructuring, refocusing and revitalizing of individual and communal order in contemporary Africa. (Microsoft ® Student 2009[DVD])

In *Guardians of the Sacred Word: Ewe Poetry* (1974), Awoonor again examines some Ewe dirges in their essential form. In this book, Akpalu's funeral dirges are used as the basis for further analysis. The author provides background information on how the dirges have been

collected, the importance of drumming in the execution of Ewe funeral dirges, the kind of drum that is used in the rendering of Ewe dirges as well as an in-depth analysis on the contextual meaning of each sample dirge. By so doing, the author is able to establish a link between the meaning of each dirge and the circumstances that might have inspired the poet-cantor to compose it.

J. H. Nketia also examines the dirge in detail in *The Funeral Dirges of the Akan People* (1955). In this book, he touches on the social function of Akan funeral dirges, their social and structural types, the occasions for their performance as well as their musical qualities. The other areas of Akan funeral dirges which have been given attention in Nketia's book include the themes, language, and literary form of these dirges.

According to Nketia, funeral dirges are of social importance since they constitute an important part of the rites which are normally performed to bid farewell to the dead. Furthermore, Akan funeral dirges are a medium for self expression and also provide an opportunity for "personal reactions to the situation of the funeral." (Nketia, 1955:17)

Dirges are equally used to emphasise the sombre atmosphere of the funeral as well as evoke sorrow and sympathy. Though the principal occasion for the execution of dirges is during funerals, it is sometimes possible for one to hear them outside funeral grounds. Touching on language, Nketia observes that Akan funeral dirges contain stock phrases and words which are repeated by performers during the execution of dirges. Musical qualities are also embedded in Akan dirges though meaning takes precedence over form and rhythm in such dirges. Structurally,

Nketia is able to identify types of Akan dirges based on their internal structures and further observes that certain dirges are more appropriate for royals than others. He also identifies four recurring themes in Akan funeral dirges and explains that "the literary form of the dirge is that of the poem."(1955:17)

More light has also been shed on dirges by both Akosua Anyidoho (2002) and Angkaaraba Saanchi (2002). Akosua Anyidoho interests herself in the contemporary funeral eulogies in Akan known as *'amoma'* and explains at length the way in which modernisation and multiculturalism have contributed to the production of hybrid forms in Akan oral performances. One peculiar feature of '*amoma*' eulogies is that they are composed by educated Akans who are contracted to write eulogies tailored to the needs and wishes of bereaved families. In consequence, they are not delivered extempore or in the traditional context of the rendering of dirges. Rather, they are woven into Christian funeral service. '*Amoma*' as a contemporary genre is a combination of elements from traditional Akan dirges, royal appellation poetry, and hunters' songs.

Saanchi, on the other hand, limits himself to an analysis of the use of repetition and parallelism as devices that contribute to the unity and easy memorisation of the Dagaaba dirge. He also discusses how dirges are rendered in the funeral context among the Dagaaba.

From the literature review on dirges, it is quite clear that funeral laments have generated some interest in the past and will probably continue to do so since they are associated with a universal subject. Notwithstanding this, some interesting observations can be made about the works which have been reviewed by this researcher.

First, Cuddon's treatment of dirges in his dictionary is scanty. Apart from the definition of the dirge and its etymology, the lexicographer has not provided any detailed analytical framework of specific dirges. Finnegan also gives a general treatment of the theme of death in African poetry. Her findings are that funeral poems have received insignificant academic attention in Africa, dirges are less elaborate in performance, the performers are less specialised, and they remain a preserve of women folk in Africa. In fact, Finnegan gives a very general discussion on funeral poetry in Africa and there is no clear analytical framework guiding her study. The findings of the study are supposed to be generalised for the African continent as a whole. Her examples, however, are mainly drawn from the Akan people and this is not representative enough for Africa. She uses a methodology of synthesising and interpreting poems from already existing documents. Apronti, on the other hand, uses a clear analytical framework in his article. His analysis, however, is limited to finding structural unity in the Akan dirge through the theory of coupling. Like Finnegan, his analysis is based entirely on Nketia's sample dirges.

Akiraga and Odaga's work is a collection of African oral poems. In-depth analysis of sample poems in the book has not been provided. Indeed, the two critics collected and published poems from their fieldwork. P'Bitek's work gives a general discussion of funeral dirges among the Acoli of Uganda. The findings are that funeral dirges exist among the Acoli, the songs or poems are performed by both men and women, the performances are quite elaborate, and they occupy an important position in the socio-cultural set-up of the Acoli. The work is a collection of oral poems from fieldwork and there is no clear theoretical framework guiding the analysis. Okpewho has provided theoretical framework guiding research into oral literature in general. His analysis

of funeral poems, however, is quite brief and his criticism of dirges is based on documentary sources.

Nketia's work on the Akan dirge provides an interesting in-depth analysis on the subject of dirges. The themes of Akan dirges, their structural types, the occasions for their performance as well as their language have all been analysed. Comparative analysis with other Ghanaian, African, or Western dirges has not received enough attention in this work. Both Awoonor's and Anyidoho's creative works throw light on the fact that it is possible to draw inspiration and resources from oral traditions for the valorisation of African values and aesthetics through Western education. Akosua Anyidoho's and Saanchi's articles examine specific aspects of the Akan and Dagaaba dirges and therefore present a limited scope of the subject. In consequence, one must admit that despite the interest in the study of dirges, a lot of thought provoking analysis can still be made on the subject matter.

For instance, the works under review here do not offer us an overview of dirges in general through detailed comparative analysis of Western, African, and Ghanaian dirges. The spiritual dimension of dirges that caters for the apprenticeship of oral poets and serves as a medium of communication between the dead, the artist, and the community has not received the needed attention. Equally important is the ability of some dirges to marry tales to poetry in a harmonious manner so as to engender better understanding of meaning. Mention must also be made of the fact that the impact of Christianity, Islam, and Western lifestyles on the rendering of dirges has not received the needed attention. The Sısaala perception of death, their process of mourning the dead, and some values which are peculiar to them have not also been explored. These are the

gaps in the study of dirges that this research seeks to fill. In short, though the deep structures or "the invariant elements," as Levi- Strauss would put it, are all the same for dirges all over the world, their surface phenomena or "superficial differences" are not the same. (Levi-Strauss, 2006:6) They vary from community to community, from country to country, and from continent to continent. These surface phenomena, such as the ones mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, will continue to motivate researchers to produce works of this nature.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DIRGE

Introduction

In *African Religions and Philosophy*, Mbiti observes that:

> Death is something that concerns everybody, partly because sooner or later everyone personally faces it and partly because it brings loss and sorrows to every family and community. It is no wonder, therefore, that rituals connected with death are usually elaborate. (1976:149)

The elaborate nature of rituals associated with a universal and a particular phenomenon like death makes it possible for us to have some variations in dirges from different parts of the world. Dirges have different designations in different parts of the world; their execution and functions differ from culture to culture; and their content, which normally deals with the loss occasioned by death, may sometimes vary depending on the community's understanding of the concept of death. The diverse and rich qualities of dirges in the different cultures of the world constitute the focal point in this chapter.

The Dirge

Death is as old as humanity; and so are some of the rites associated with it. The dirge, which is sometimes referred to as an elegy, a requiem, funeral lament, chant, or song has a history that dates back to ancient times. It is a genre whose performance has gone through a lot of metamorphoses. And though the dirge is often interchanged with an elegy, there seems to be an interesting development in the meanings that have been assigned the two terms over the years. According to the 2009 version of the *Microsoft Encyclopaedia for Students:*

> The elegiac couplet or elegiac distich became popular throughout Greece in the Seventh Century B. C. and was used for compositions of all kinds,

> ranging from dirges to love songs. The first known writer of elegiacs was, perhaps, Callinus of Ephesus. (Microsoft ®Student 2009[DVD])

From this definition, it becomes clear that elegy, at the beginning, did not have anything to do with death in Western literary tradition. It simply referred to a particular metre; and once that metre was used in any poem treating any subject matter, then the metre used made it obligatory to call the poem an elegiac one.

The observation that elegy, at the outset, referred to a specific metre in Western literary tradition is also supported by evidence from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* ((1975:844) and Abrams (2005:76). In the encyclopaedia, it is explained that, "in classical literature an elegy was simply any poem written in the elegiac metre (alternating lines of dactylic hexameter and pentameter) and was not restricted as to subject."

It is further elucidated in the encyclopaedia that even in some modern literatures, such as German, in which the traditional elegiac has been adapted to the language, the term elegy still refers to this metre rather than to the poem's content. Consequently, Rainer Maria Rilke's famous *Duino Elegies* are not laments; they deal with the author's quest for spiritual values in an alien universe. Cuddon also explains that "in classical literature an elegy was any poem composed of elegiac distichs also known as elegiacs, and the subjects were various: death, war, love and similar themes." (1998: 253)

Thus all the four definitions of elegy point to the fact that it referred to a specific metre at the beginning. As a result of this, it could be used to compose a poem on any subject matter. This, to

a large extent, explains why we have many elegies in English poetry which do not necessarily treat death but deal with the issues of loss and mutability confronting humanity. Examples of such poems include some of John Donne's love poems which are regarded as elegies, or poems like *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, the authors of which have not been established.

A dirge, on the other hand, has been referred to by Cuddon as:

> A song of lament, usually of a lyrical mood. The name derives from the beginning of the antiphon of the Office of the Dead: Dirige, Domine….Direct, O Lord…. As a literary genre it comes from the Greek epicedium, which was a mourning song sung over the dead and a threnody sung in memory of the dead. In Roman funeral processions the nenia, a song of praise for the departed, was chanted… (1998: 227)

Abrams equally explains that "the dirge is also a versified expression of grief on the occasion of a particular person's death."(2005:77) Right from the onset, the dirge is a term that is closely related to death. It has nothing to do with a particular metre which must be used though it seems to abound in the lyrical form in most literatures in the world. In the African context, Okpewho, (1992:156) Akiraga and Odaga, (1982:78) have all defined dirges as funeral songs or chants. This definition is synonymous with the one given by Cuddon and Abrams.

Having pointed out the difference in meaning between an elegy and a dirge at the beginning of the creation of these two terms, one must also add that this difference seems to have disappeared with the passage of time. The contemporary definitions of the two terms indicate that they both deal with the expression of grief on the death of a person. Technically speaking, however, the two words cannot be regarded as completely synonymous terms though the line of difference between them is admittedly thin. An elegy, in contemporary time, means "a meditative lyric

poem lamenting the death of a public personage or a friend or loved one; by extension any reflective lyric on the broader theme of human mortality." (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1975: 844) Cuddon even goes a step further to explain that the contemporary meaning of elegy has nothing to do with death. Thus, he argues that "later the term came to be applied more and more to a serious meditative poem, the kind that Coleridge was hinting at when he spoke of elegy as the form of poetry 'natural to a reflective mind.'"(1998: 253) The dirge, on the other hand, has also "developed into a lyric poem." (Cuddon, 1998: 227) In consequence, from the contemporary meanings of these two terms, it is now possible to conclude that both words refer to poetry in the lyrical vein.

However, whereas the composition of dirges is normally occasioned by death, it is not the same with elegies since the latter are sometimes written due to serious meditation on man and his place in this world. Besides this, the dirge is shorter, less formal, and is usually composed as a text to be sung whereas the elegy is normally presented as the utterance of a single person. (Abrams, 2005:77) As a result of this, the word elegy has been used in this research work with emphasis on its contemporary meaning, especially the part that deals with death. In the same vein, chants and songs used in this work refer to funeral chants or songs unless otherwise specified. Requiems and funeral laments are much closer in meaning to the dirge and have therefore been used interchangeably with it.

Relationship between Western and African Dirges

In *Myth and Meaning*, Levi -Strauss observes that:

> It is probably one of the many conclusions of anthropological research that, notwithstanding the cultural differences between the several parts of mankind, the human mind is everywhere one and the same and that it has the same capacities. I think this is accepted everywhere. (2006:15)

The fact that the human mind is one and the same everywhere presupposes that human reaction to certain events, occurrences, or incidents can be the same. This also implies that there are bound to be some similarities among the rites that are normally observed to mark certain stages in life such as birth, adulthood, and death. Funeral songs are not an exception to these universal rites in man's life and there exist some similarities between Western and African funeral laments.

In the first instance, funeral chants, no matter where they are performed, have one thing in common. Their formal performance is normally triggered off by death and hence they are mainly executed at funerals. At least, this is evident from the analysis made on the meaning of the dirge in the introductory part of this chapter. The fact that dirges are executed on the occasion of death also tells us that they constitute a very important way of bidding farewell to our departed ones. Dirges therefore constitute an integral part of human culture the world over. It is also not surprising that in cultures where oral traditions are still very strong, the essence of funerals is centred on the performance of dirges. In the chapter entitled *The Place of the Dirge in the Funeral Celebration*, Nketia (1955) makes mention of the pivotal role that dirges play in the organisation of funerals among the Akan. In most traditional set-ups in Africa, funeral ceremonies for deceased adults cannot be regarded as complete until dirges have been performed. The success or failure in the performance of dirges at a funeral could therefore

determine, to some extent, whether the deceased has been accorded a decent burial or not. It also determines whether the deceased's spirit can depart in peace and allow those who inherit him or her to enjoy such inheritance peacefully or the deceased's spirit should come back and demand an apology from the living for failure to organise a befitting burial ceremony for the deceased.

The other area where there seems to be a convergence between Western and African dirges is in the area of form. Most Western dirges or elegies are written in the form of poems; and more particularly in the lyrical vein. For instance, dirges such as Henry King's *Exequy*, Ariel's song for Ferdinand's dead father in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, or Fidele's dirge in *Cymbeline* are all in the form of poetry. The same goes for the four major elegies in English literature __ *Lycidas* by Milton, *Adonais* by Shelly, *In Memoriam* by Tennyson and *Thyrsis* by Arnold. In the African context, most of the dirges are often composed in the form of poems which are highly rhythmic and can be sung or chanted. Even if the entire dirge is not composed in the form of a poem, at least part of it is normally executed in the form of poetry. This is what leads Nketia to conclude that "the literary form of the dirge is that of the poem. It is within this form, that the "collaboration" between the verbal and musical aspects is effected." (Nketia, 1955:102) In consequence, all the Akan dirges which Nketia uses as illustrations in *The Funeral Dirges of the Akan People* have been composed in the form of poetry. Also, all the dirges which Okpewho uses for analysis from pages 156 -159 of his book are in the form of poetry. (Okpewho, 1992:156-159) Yet, it is interesting to note that Okpewho's poems did not come from one community in Africa. They have been taken from communities like that of the Yoruba of Nigeria, the Kipsigi of Kenya, the Akan of Ghana, the Maragoli of Kenya, and the Acoli of

Uganda. The predominance of the poetic form in all the dirges referred to in this paragraph tells us that most dirges, whether African or Western are composed in one form.

The use of language is another area where there is a similarity between African and Western dirges. In both kinds of dirges, instead of using full narrative or descriptive language, mourners often compress their ideas into language that is loaded with imagery. It is this kind of language that allows mourners to convey a lot of meaning in their relatively short dirges. In the situation of mourning, it is apparent that the general feeling of loss calls for the use of language that can create mental images that reflect the feelings of mourners. This way, mourners are able to evoke sympathy from listeners, and to express the degree of their loss. In effect, the use of imagery allows mourners to present mental snapshots of their state of loss in which we, as readers or listeners, can identify ourselves.

A lot of metaphors abound in the dirges Nketia uses for analysis in his *Funeral Dirges of the Akan*. Consequently, expressions such as "where the fruit of the pawpaw tree grows on a banana tree", "two skulls rose to dance to the music of the Apirede orchestra", "your children and I will feed on the spider, the mouse is too big a game", and references to persons in terms as "the big cooking pot", "the wicker basket", "the wayside palm tree" are all metaphorical expressions which have been used extensively in Nketia's collection. Similarly, imagery is contained in lines such as "Can Honor's voice provoke the silent dust/Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death? / Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile/ The short and simple annals of the poor" which are all taken from Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. (Gray, 1985:423-424) In Ariel's song for Ferdinand's dead father, Ariel uses an elaborate image of the sea to describe the

transformation the deceased has gone through after death. Indeed, the appropriateness of imagery in circumstances of this nature is aptly expressed by Harold Schenb who has observed that, "This plotting of images is really the special language of all humans: communication happens not through words but by images created with the assistance of nonverbal as well as verbal techniques."(Schenb, 2007: 98)

Apart from the issue of death, the use of poetic form, and the use of language which are common to both African and Western dirges, one can also talk of reference to culture as a similarity that is shared by Western and African dirges. The aspects of culture normally referred to in Western and African dirges may not be the same; but the fact is that both types of dirges are anchored on cultural reference points. It is a widespread belief that the traditional African is an animist. He believes in God, but he also believes in his ancestors and the existence of smaller gods in different forms. This is a belief that is often integrated into most African dirges where we may find references to the ancestors and other smaller gods. Besides this point, in most African dirges as we may find in the Akan ones or even in Sısaala dirges, there are always references to names of specific persons, places, and to certain events which are typically African. These are directly related to the African culture and history. In most cases, the imagery used in African dirges is not Western in nature. It is imagery that is most often created based on the cultural beliefs and practices of African people, especially in the traditional context. For instance, the following lines taken from a dirge of the Kipsigis of Kenya reflect some of these cultural issues:

My big son has been murdered.
I have been torn like a piece of cloth,
I feel helpless as pond.
I am not as in past years
When we were harvesting the fields,

When I was killing elephants:
Now the hyena of the tall grass devours me
Because I have no son living. (Mapanje and White, 1983: 99)

Imagery such as "the hyena of the tall grass", "I feel helpless as a pond" and "I have been torn like a piece of cloth" is totally anchored on the Kipsigi way of describing death and the attendant loss that it brings to humanity. It is not Western in nature. This is why Schenb observes that "a performer of oral narratives utilizes the materials of her culture much as a painter uses color" to achieve the desired effect and meaning in his painting. (Schenb, 2007:97)

On the other hand, Western culture, especially after the Birth of Christ, is centred on the belief in one God, the belief in angels, and the belief that when one dies the person either goes to heaven or to hell. In addition to the question of beliefs, practices such as the tolling of bells at funerals, the use of flowers to bid farewell to the deceased, the use of headstones and sepulchres are all Western practices. These cultural beliefs and practices are often embedded in their dirges. For instance, in Ariel's song in *The Tempest,* he sings that "Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell," (Shakespeare, 1969: 413); and in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*, the bird is used as a symbol of death. In Dryden's *To the Pious Memory of the Accomplished Young Lady Mrs. Anne Killigrew,* the deceased's soul is associated with angels, paradise, and heaven.

Besides these similarities that Western and African dirges share in common, there is also a common denominator between them when it comes to their musical qualities. As pointed out under the definition of the dirge, funeral chants are usually composed in the lyrical form in Western literary tradition. Lyrical poems are generally known for their musical qualities since

they were originally composed to be chanted alongside the lyre. They are usually brief and compressed since they treat a single subject candidly, expressing personal emotion. Today, most lyrical poems still conserve the musical qualities that are often associated with them. Both the internal and end rhymes as well as the punctuation of lyrical poems normally invest them with the smooth rhythm that they are noted for. Ariel's song in *The Tempest*, which is quoted in the following lines, lends evidence to this observation:

> Full fathom five thy father lies;
> Of his bones are coral made;
> Those are pearls that were his eyes:
> Nothing of him that doth fade
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange.
> Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell. (Shakespeare, 1969:413)

The /f/ sound which has been repeated in the first line as well as the regular end rhyme of the dirge invests it with some musical qualities.

African oral artists are often able to enhance the musical qualities of their dirges through other techniques. Through the effective application of stylistics such as repetition, ideophones and voice pitch, African bards are able to invest their funeral songs with a lot of musical qualities which contribute to their rhythm. This explains why most of these dirges are often sung, chanted, or are performed alongside drumming which further enhances their musical qualities.

In some of the Western communities where the cultures are still predominantly oral in nature, a much closer affinity between African and Western dirges can still be identified in terms of their rendering. For instance, expatiating on Nenola-Kallio's ideas on the Ingrian funeral laments,

Alembi explains that there are some similarities between the Abanyole and Ingrian dirges when it comes to their execution. In Alembi's words:

> Even though Nenola-Kallio's work comes from a different culture, her observations on the performance and meaning of the laments show a lot of similarities with the Abanyole laments category of the funeral poetry. Like the Abanyole laments, Ingrian laments are performed on solemn occasions and involve the use of paralinguistic features and expressive language (Alembi, 2002:53)

In addition to this observation, Cuddon's definition of the dirge and its execution in early Greek and Roman literary traditions suggest that it was rendered orally. (Cuddon, 1998: 227) This means the performance of the dirge involved the use of expressive body language and music in particular during the early period of Greek and Roman civilisations. The significant change that has occurred in the rendering of dirges in these societies is that dirges are now composed in the written form, thus imposing a change in the manner in which the dirge is executed. In consequence, in a situation where orality is still dominant in the culture of any Western community or ethnic group, one should not be surprised to find closer affinities between African dirges and dirges from such a community or ethnic group.

Despite these qualities that both Western and African dirges have in common, there are some significant differences between the two forms when it comes to their rendition. In most of the Western nations where cultures are no longer primarily oral but highly chirographic, dirges are no longer performed in the oral state. They are written; and because they exist in the written form, there is a marked difference between them and their African counterparts when it comes to the areas of stylistics and performance. In the area of performance, Western dirges or elegies are carefully thought out before they are put into writing. In addition to the fact that such literary

pieces are normally carefully planned, there also exists an opportunity for the composer to go over his or her dirge and edit it before it can be chanted, sung or read. But the fact is that such dirges become fossilised once they have been committed to writing. On the other hand, due to the fact that most African dirges are still performed in their oral state, they remain very malleable and protean, and can be used by the very gifted dirge singers to achieve considerable feats in their communities.

Quite apart from this point, Western dirges can only be chanted, sung or read once they have been composed. In other words, the person who performs such dirges can only follow faithfully what has been written on the paper. This is not the case in the African context. This is because in Africa, most of the dirges are still performed extempore. In consequence, the African bard does not only deliver dirges from his memory, but he creates them as he delivers them to meet the needs of specific audiences under specific circumstances. In short, the bard adds certain details which are his own creation to a dirge that he might have heard elsewhere; or he leaves out certain details which he may deem inappropriate within a particular context. Besides this, certain dirges are usually created entirely out of the professional resources of the dirge performer and this creative process is often simultaneous with the rendering of the dirge.

Another area where there is difference between African dirges and their Western counterparts is the presence of audience and their contribution to the creation of literary pieces. In the Western milieu, because dirges are usually written prior to their execution, it becomes impossible for the audiences, if there are any, to contribute meaningfully to the composition of such literary pieces. All the audiences can do is to sit down and listen to the composer mourn on their behalf. Akosua

Anyidoho refers to this aspect of contemporary written Akan eulogies (*amoma*) as one of the things that violates traditional norms since one does not expect a man to mourn on behalf of a woman in the traditional Akan context. (Akosua Anyidoho, 2002:372) The argument here is that since *amoma* is normally put into writing, the composer could be a man and it is most often the same composer who chants or sings it during the funeral. He thus mourns on behalf of the bereaved family who may be men, women, or a combination of both. In the African context, however, the audience that is usually present during dirge performance does not just listen to such literary pieces but contributes in diverse ways towards the materialisation of the oral text. For instance, in most instances in Africa, the audience normally acts as the chorus, thus supporting the bard in the composition of the dirge. In some cases, the audience encourages the poet-cantor by throwing in words of encouragement or by rewarding the bard with money, food or alcohol when it is moved by the performer. (Saanchi, 2002:411, Alembi, http://www.folklore.ee/vol38/alembi.pdf) It is further observed in *African Folklore: An Encyclopedia* that, "The interaction between the narrator-singer and persons present takes many forms, from encouragements formulated as simple ejectives, exclamations, and handclapping to praises, repetitions, questions, and comments on the narrated text." (Peek andYankah, 2004:55)

One important domain where there is significant difference between Western dirges and African funeral laments is that of ownership. In the Western context, dirges are composed by individual artists. The audience has no hand in their composition and they are therefore regarded as the "property" of the individual bards who creates them. Such dirges cannot be used elsewhere without due acknowledgement of the author. In Africa, audience participates directly in the creation of most literary products, including dirges. As a result of this, the African bard does not

require any permission to use a dirge he has heard elsewhere and which he deems appropriate for a particular funeral context. Even if the dirge in question is the creation of the individual effort of an artist, the oral text becomes communally owned once it has been created. These are some of the reasons that make some Western critics to erroneously conclude that there are no oral artists in Africa. To such critics, those referred to as bards merely repeat oral texts which do not have authors, which are communally owned, and which have therefore become an integral part of the culture of the people. The fact is that African dirges can be created individually but are owned communally whereas Western dirges are created and owned individually.

Another area where some divergence can be identified between African and Western dirges is in the area of drama which some critics prefer to call histrionics. Thus, since dirges in Africa are normally rendered orally together with drumming in most communities, it is possible for one to identify aspects of drama in such performances. Drama therefore constitutes a principal area in which African and Western dirges are at variance when it comes to their execution.

According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "a dramatic act further demands that the performer should imitate an existence other than his own…" (1975:250) In the African context, the rendering of most dirges involves a certain level of drama. Apart from the fact that some features of Western written drama such as actors, audience, and theatre are often replicated in the form of professional dirge performers, the audience, and the market place or the village square, there are times when deliberate attempts are made to enact the life of characters in anecdotes used as an integral part of funeral laments. In a community like that of the Sısaala where anecdotes are employed to clarify the meaning of dirges, professional dirge performers usually try to enact the

life of animals or personalities involved in such anecdotes by imitating their voices, their actions, and demeanour. These are acts that enhance the drama of such dirges and help create a conducive atmosphere for the transmission of whatever messages the bard may have. Indeed, the highly dramatised nature of African life is a phenomenon that has not escaped the attention of many critics. Zora Neale Hurston observes that "every phase of Negro life is highly dramatized. No matter how joyful or how sad the case there is sufficient poise for drama. Everything is acted out."(Hurston, 1981:49) But it must be admitted that these acts which constitute drama in the rendering of African dirges are almost absent in Western dirges. Western dirges are usually free from such dramatic acts and are therefore not close to life like their African counterparts.

Apart from the question of impersonating characters in the course of performance, the highly emotional and expressive body language that usually accompanies the rendering of dirges in the African context is almost absent in literate Western societies. This may be attributable to two main factors. First, Africans have a philosophy that seeks to promote communal values through the sharing of pain and joy by all members of the community (Mbiti, 1976:108); and second, they have a system of kinship that has a very deep sense in the African context (Mbiti, 1976:104-105, Nukunya, 2003:19). The family systems in Africa are equally extensive in nature. In most circumstances in Africa, people who attend funerals are often related to the deceased in one way or the other and might have known the deceased very well. In consequence, mourners are often directly related to the pain of loss occasioned by the death of the deceased. This factor usually motivates mourners to use highly emotional and non-verbal modes of communication. In the Western milieu, because the dirge is often put into writing, it does not create room for the use of

paralinguistic features. In addition to this, the written nature of Western dirges helps in distancing the poet from the emotions associated with its performance.

In consequence, Western dirges do not often have the same stylistic qualities that their African counterparts are usually invested with. African funeral chants are rich in the use of stylistic aspects such as repetition, digression, piling and association, imagery, metaphorical allusion, symbols, ideophones, and the use of voice pitch in order to achieve the intended effect and rhythm. But quite apart from these features, one must also admit that African dirges reflect the use of parallelism as well as formulae. They are conservative or traditional; and they constitute a living experience of African people.

This is not to say that all the qualities mentioned here are peculiar to only African dirges. Some of these stylistic aspects can be found in Western dirges as well. For instance, repetition is a device that is common to both Western and African dirges (Whitman, 1963:96, Mutia, 2003:389). The argument here is that whereas repetition may be used to achieve rhythm and to emphasise meaning in Western dirges, the same device can be used to achieve more dramatic effects in African dirges due to their oral nature. This is why it is argued that the qualities mentioned in the previous paragraph are considered more as the natural characteristics of African dirges than those of the West.

Some Features and Functions of African Dirges

It has already been observed in this work that African dirges are rendered orally. They are not just executed orally, but most of the time, they are also composed extempore. These are factors

that contribute to assigning special features to these dirges. Consequently, some stylistics of African dirges shall be examined first, to be followed by a discussion on how these dirges are executed as well as their functions in African societies.

Repetition is a stylistic aspect that is often used in most African dirges. It is a device that can be found in Western poetry and prose. According to Cuddon, repetition "may consist of sounds, particular syllables and words, phrases, stanzas, metrical patterns, ideas, allusions and shapes. Thus refrain, assonance, rhyme, internal rhyme, alliteration and onomatopoeia are frequent in repetition."(Cuddon, 1998:742) Repetition in Western literature is often used to achieve two main objectives. First, it is used to emphasise meaning; and second, it is often employed to achieve rhythm in any literary piece. There are instances when this device may be used for reasons other than the two objectives stated here. In the same vein, emphasis on meaning and rhythm are also achieved whenever an African oral artist uses repetition in his composition. But besides these two goals, repetition has other impact when it is used in African dirges due to their oral nature and the fact that they are delivered in an improvised manner. The sing-song rhythm which repetition brings to African dirges helps both the artist and his audience in two ways. For the audience, it is able to participate in the dirge when it comes to the parts that are repeated. Repetition also helps both the artist and his audience to easily memorise the dirge; especially when the device is employed with dexterity in the dirge. This is because it is easier to commit to memory the refrain of any song than the song in totality. This particular contribution of repetition is important when one considers the fact that dirges are executed orally; and whatever is rendered is lost and cannot later be referred to unless it has been committed to memory.

Besides these contributions, repetition enables oral artists to buy time in order to try and remember the point they got to before a digression was made; or to think of the next segment of the dirge that should follow. In repeating a particular word, phrase or sentence, a special feeling is evoked depending on the reaction that the artist wants to create in his audience. Due to this effect of repetition, an oral artist may be able to evoke sympathy from his audience at funeral grounds or create the feeling of man's helplessness in the face of death. This is why Okpewho (1992: 72) observes that repetition "has both an aesthetic and a utilitarian value" in African oral literature.

Agyekum, in his *Introduction to Literature* further explains that repetition as a device in oral literature can be used to achieve the fullness of an effect, to sustain audience attention and interest, to mark off segments in oral performance, and as a formulaic device. (Agyekum, 2007: 45) All of these effects of repetition in oral performance are obtainable in the execution of dirges in the African context. In the following lines taken from a dirge among the Acoli of Uganda, the performer's readiness to do battle with death is evoked in the repetition of the line "If I could reach the homestead of death's mother." This line also contributes to the rhythmic aspect of the dirge.

> Fire rages at Layima, oh,
> Fire rages in the valley of River Cumu,
> Everything is utterly utterly destroyed,
> If I could reach the homestead of death's mother,
> My daughter, I would make a long grass touch;
> If I could reach the homestead of death's mother,
> I would destroy everything utterly utterly… (p'Bitek, 1974: 126)

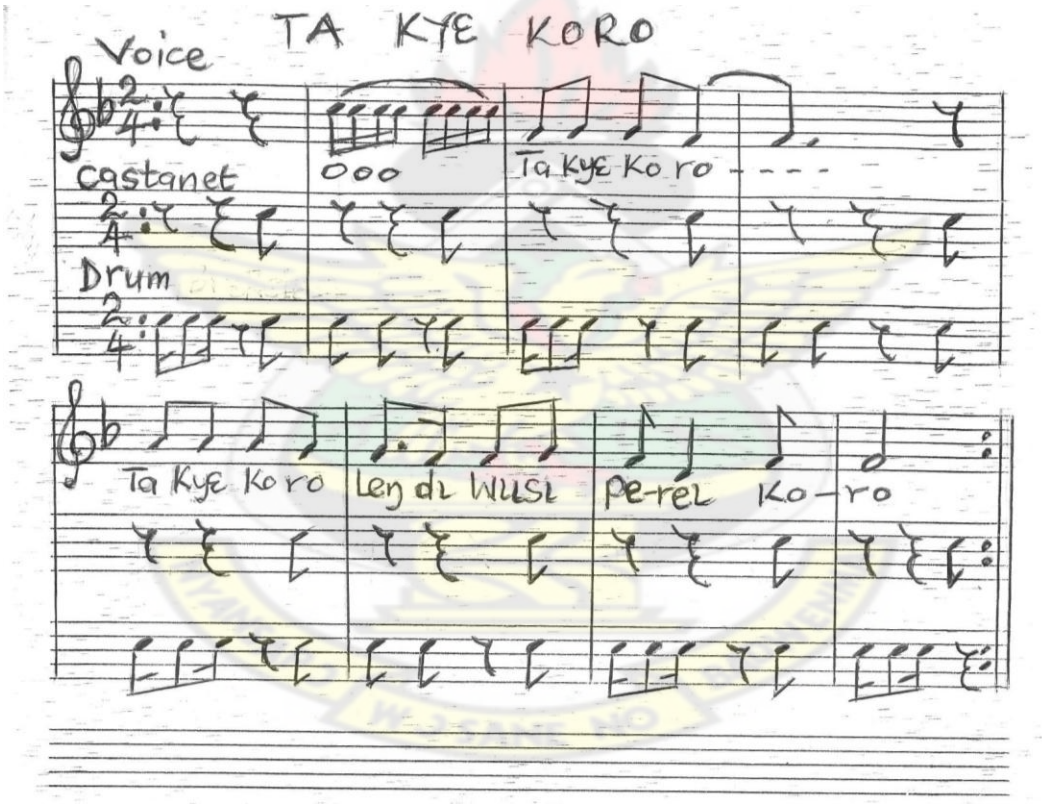
The second stylistic feature of African dirges is digression. It is a technique that is often employed by poet-cantors in the African context to reduce boredom and to keep the audience abreast of the performance as well as its meaning. Digression occurs when the bard departs from the main line of the subject matter of a dirge to address somebody or an object at the scene of performance. In fact, these external digressions are inevitable when one considers the level of distraction that the dirge performer faces in the course of rendering dirges in the oral context. There are times when the audience may be rowdy, thus forcing the artist to depart from chanting his dirge and appeal to them to listen to him attentively. In the rendition of the Sısaala dirge, one common statement that is always in the mouth of most bards is *"Ma leŋ yɔwɔɔ*", which literally means "Stop buying and selling." This is normally said to draw the attention of the audience to the fact that it needs to keep quiet and listen to the performance instead of being rowdy as one may find in the traditional market where sellers usually have to shout to attract the attention of potential buyers. Sometimes, it is necessary for the bard to digress and tell those drumming to beat the drums according to the right rhythm. But apart from these external digressions, it is often possible for the performer to comment on certain aspects of the song or the anecdote. This is done in order to explain some parts of the dirge whose significance may not be apparent to the audience. In this context, the digression is internal since the commentary is still related to the song or the anecdote but constitutes a redundancy when the main storyline of the funeral song is considered. In addition to the issue of distraction, one cannot be oblivious to the fact that the dirge performer is facing his audience directly in the course of performance and must be able to read their reactions and act accordingly. If the audience is bored, the artist will have to come up with a digression to sustain its interest. When the technique is abused, it can mar the coherence

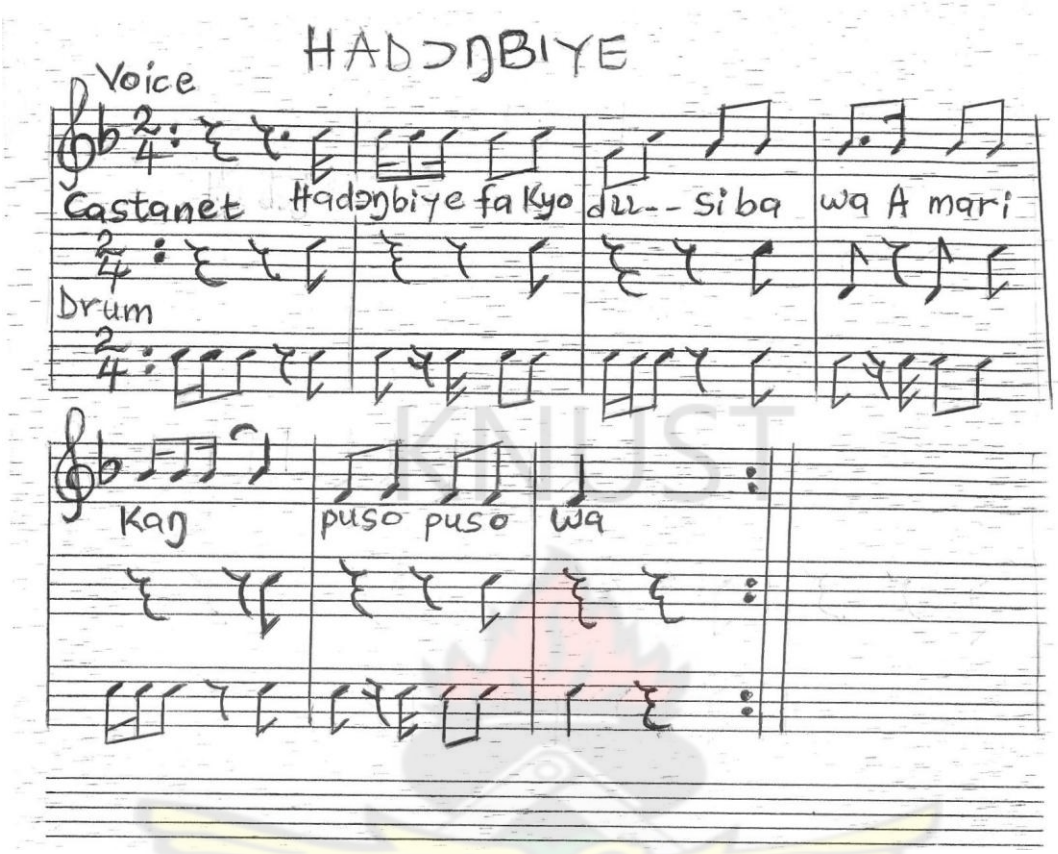
and internal unity of the performance. Digressions are absent in Western dirges since they are planned, written, and are not rendered in the context in which African requiems are sung.

Voice pitch is another stylistic element that is often put to good use by oral artists and their audience when it comes to the rendering of dirges in the African context. The fact is that African dirges are obtained in human voice, and not in a written text. Due to this situation, professional bards and their audience often make sure that they employ the pitch of the voice to achieve particular rhythms in contexts where there seems to be none. Besides this practice, it is also apparent that most African languages are tonal ones (Finnegan,1976:56, Okpewho,1983:96).The influence of voice cannot, therefore, be ignored when it comes to the rendering of funeral songs. African bards recognise the importance of voice pitch in oral performance; and this explains why in certain communities they will go to any lengths in order to ensure that they are able to sing in a variety of voice pitch. Among the Sısaala, shades of voice are named after animals from which such voice pitch can be obtained. Consequently, shades of voice are named after the nightingale, the skylark, and the lion and most professional dirge performers will strive to be able to sing in all the types of voice pitch. This is even so because in the context where the performance is oral and there can be unnecessary interferences from the audience, "the soloist must have the vocal ability to project over the voices of the chorus. This quality is especially important since the solo is textually distinct from the chorus." (Cosentino, 1982:61)

Apart from the need to use different types of voice pitch to perform under different contexts, most African oral artists also use voice to achieve the desired effect in funeral songs. Again among the Sısaala, especially in most of the villages in the Wa East and Sısaala East Districts,

voice pitch is the fulcrum of the rhythm that is obtained in the part of the dirge where the audience normally joins the artist as chorus. In this part of the dirge, two lines are repeated six times or more, with the chorus and the lead singer all raising the pitch of their voice in the penultimate line and bringing down the pitch in the last line. The last syllable of the last word of the last line is also stretched in order to further lower the pitch. This helps in achieving a smooth rhythm in a context where it seems almost non-existent. Below are examples of two dirges which have been transcribed for this researcher by Mr. Agyapong, a music tutor at Wesley Training College, Kumasi.





Ideophones also constitute one of the stylistic techniques that are often used in executing African funeral songs. According to Opkewho, ideophones "are not like normal words to which meanings are readily assigned. They are simply sounds used in conveying a vivid impression." In short, an ideophone is an "idea-in-sound."(Okpewho, 1992:92) Ideophones can be obtained in the form of a sound; in the form of a word that makes adequate impact on the oral text; and in the form of words that are traceable to root verbs or other words and are therefore onomatopoeic in nature. (Agyekum, 2007:51) They are normally employed in the African oral context to achieve different effects. In songs and chants, ideophones are mainly used to achieve complete rhythm. In short stories, riddles, and in other contexts, ideophones can be used to achieve vividness in the description of events in such circumstances. It is difficult to assign meaning to ideophones and as such, they are not often translated. Some researchers in African oral literature sometimes

describe such syllables as "nonsense syllables." Despite the difficulty involved in assigning ready meanings to them, the impact of ideophones on rhythm and the vividness they lend to descriptions in African oral literary pieces cannot be ignored.

With regard to the use of ideophones in requiems in Africa, Nketia points out that this technique is used in the composition of dirges among the Akans of Ghana. He, however, refers to such ideophones as "end particles."(Nketia, 1955:75) According to him, some of the ideophones which are employed in Akan dirges to achieve rhythm include "*ee*", "*oo*" and the rest as illustrated in the following lines:

Praa ee,	O mother,
Menko m'anim!	the path confronting me.
Apemanim Kofi Minta	It is Apemanim Kofi Minta
Trɛtrɛtuo oo	Trɛtrɛtuo
Ogya na ɛrehye aman.	States are in flames. (Nketia, 1955:75)

In Sısaala dirges, ideophones such as "*yeyi*", "*oo*", "*woyi*" are also used to achieve rhythm. But quite apart from rhythm, in circumstances where anecdotes are used to clarify the meaning of dirges, ideophones are used in such narrations to achieve vivid description of events and activities. The speed with which a lizard may run onto a wall may be described as "*nyaratatata.*" The delay involved in carrying out an action may be described as "*tetete*" or "*deŋ, deŋ, deŋ*." In the case of the ideophone involving duration, it is interesting to note that the longer the ideophone is stretched, the longer the time duration involved in such an idea.

Parallelism is another stylistic technique that abounds in oral literature and can therefore be identified in most African dirges. It is a device in which the bard brings together, in a balanced

manner, ideas and images that may seem independent of each other. Parallelism can be obtained in lexical, structural, and semantic forms. It can serve as an effective unifying factor in dirges when it comes to their meaning and structure. Cuddon puts it that "parallelism is common in poetry of the oral tradition."(Cuddon, 1998:637) In the following lines taken from a Bakweri dirge, semantic parallelism has been used in the second and fourth lines of the dirge.

L.S: *wonya gbami, mba na mɛndɛ*	L.S: O my brethren, I am gone
e liya n'ewoka, e liya n'eyolɛ	Take care of my home, live in peace
wonya gbami, mba na mɛndɛ	My family members, I am gone
e liya n'eyelɛ, n'ewoka	Live in peace, take care of yourself
ehɛa ne ya	Don't weep for me (Mutia, 2003:396-397)

Commenting on the effectiveness of the parallelism that has been used in this dirge, Mutia explains that:

> In this example, the order of words in the second line "*e liya n'ewoka, e liya n'eyolɛ*" is reversed in the fourth line "*e liya n'eyelɛ, n'ewoka*." Although the central idea in the dirge is "taking care of the home" (in Line 2) it is substituted with another idea of "taking care of yourself" in Line 4, thereby creating a balance in music and rhythm. (Mutia, 2003:397)

The last stylistic aspect that can be obtained in African dirges is the use of formulae. The use of this technique is not just peculiar to dirges in Africa alone but to other aspects of oral literature on the continent. Formulae help in easy memorisation of these oral literary pieces. Most communities in Africa have formulae for introducing and concluding short stories. These same formulae can be employed when an anecdote is used to clarify the meaning of a dirge. Apart from such formulae in anecdotes, certain structures are identifiable in African dirges. Nketia is able to identify four of such structures in Akan dirges. This is possible because the formula used in each of these structural types is unique.

The same situation is applicable to Sɪsaala dirges where certain structural types exist due to the method used in each of them. But quite apart from the issue of structures, there is also a formula that most professional dirge performers in the geographical area under study use whenever they are about to sing. If it is the first time that the performer is singing at a particular funeral, ethics demand that the performer acknowledges his father by chanting his father's appellation first. Second, the bard must chant the appellation of his or her mentor, calling on him to come and help in executing the dirge. Third, the artist acknowledges any other senior performer or drummer at the funeral by chanting their appellations. After all these have been done, the bard can then move ahead to introduce himself by chanting his own appellation before addressing anyone present at the funeral grounds. This is a formula that is normally followed to the letter and it aids in the easy memorisation of dirges. Sometimes too, the whole dirge is composed in such a way that it revolves around one image. In other words, no matter the length of the composition, the analysis of its internal structures will reveal that the whole dirge is an extension of a simple image.

Indeed, African oral literature and for that matter African dirges, are very rich in their aesthetic qualities. All the devices and the techniques often employed by African bards to give a sense of unity to their dirges in terms of structure and meaning cannot be discussed only in this part of the thesis. Some of the major techniques have been covered in this section of the thesis but others will surely come up in other parts of this work.

By their nature, African dirges are conservative. This is due to the predominantly oral nature of African culture. In *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, Ong observes that "in

primary oral culture conceptualized knowledge that is not repeated aloud soon vanishes."(Ong, 1984:41) Consequently, one sure way of conserving knowledge in African culture is not just to memorise it but to make sure that such knowledge is handed down from generation to generation through practice. This is not to say that African dirges are mere repetitions of old songs and that professional dirge performers lack ingenuity. The argument is that the oral nature of African dirges makes it expedient to conserve them through memorisation, practice, and adaptation while an effort is made to increase their stock as the years go by. The creativity of professional dirge singers comes out in the context of performance where variations may be made in the form of additions or subtraction to the content of existing songs. These changes may alter the meaning of songs and expose the creative skills of bards since they have to execute same dirges under different situations to different audiences. In certain circumstances, new funeral laments are composed but once such songs are executed, they are immediately added to the existing stock of dirges.

Apart from the oral nature of our culture which makes it convenient for us to conserve old requiems and add new ones to them, the relevant aspect of African art is also a contributory factor in this regard. In other words, African dirges are often composed with the society in mind and the values or lessons embodied in most of these songs are timeless. As a result of this, these dirges are often relevant to the society at any point in time. Many critics of African literature, including Achebe (1977:45), Robert July (1987:1), Ngugi (1972:47) and R.N. Agudu (1972) have all acknowledged the relevant aspect of African art, be it written or oral. Indeed, in *Modern African Poetry and the African Predicament,* Agudu puts it that "the artist is a member of society and the context and style of his work are affected by social reality." (Agudu, 1972:2) This is the

reason why in some African communities, such as that of the Sısaala, entire songs are memorised and performed for generations. In the Akan context, some stock words, phrases and sentences are preserved from generation to generation. In fact, in the words of Nketia (1955:93), "the use of key words and of stock expressions with unmutilated components in appropriate contexts" is one of the obligations of dirge performers in the Akan context.

In addition to their conservative nature, most African dirges are also participatory with regard to the manner in which they are rendered. Dirges are executed in the circumstances of funerals where the whole community participates in mourning the deceased. Due to these factors, dirges are normally composed in a way that allows mourners to take part in chanting them as a way of releasing emotions; as a way of reflecting on the human world; and as a way of reflecting on the situation of an individual mourner. Even in communities where professional dirge performers take the centre stage in executing funeral songs, such as among the Dagaaba (Saanchi, 2002:411) or Sısaala, there are stages in the execution of such funeral laments where the audience is allowed to join the bard in performing certain parts of the dirge. Quite apart from this, members of the audience sometimes motivate bards by throwing in words of encouragement. Among the Sısaala, a performer who wants to chant the appellation of a mourner but does not have much information on the mourner may turn to the audience for help. This is done to forestall mistakes whereby the wrong appellations could be used for people.

In the following dirge taken from Akpafu-Mempeasem in the Volta Region, the performer makes us aware that he or she is not alone. The audience is with the bard in order to share in his or her grief. And sharing in the grief of a bereaved person in the traditional African context implies that

the audience is there to take an active part in mourning with the poet-cantor. This indirectly means that the audience is there to help execute dirges whose performance is an integral part of the mourning process. In short, audience participation in the delivery of the dirge is implied in its very lyrics.

Siwu	**English gloss**
mɛ́sɔ màturi pia mɛ́	I said, 'people are with me'
sêgbe kàku kaɖè	not knowing it meant mourning
sêgbe nnɔmɛ miɖè	not knowing it meant tears
sêgbe ìsoma iɖè	not knowing it meant sadness
sêgbe àsekpe aɖè	not knowing it meant graves (http://ideophone.org/a-mawu-dirge/)

Though ellipsis is implied in the last four lines of the dirge, the audience's presence in those lines is still strong. This indicates the premium that the performer places on the audience's participation in the process of mourning.

The final point that is related to the nature of African dirges is that they are closer to real life situations as compared to their Western counterparts. In primary oral cultures such as the ones obtained in traditional African societies, it is difficult to conceptualise and verbalise knowledge without close reference to everyday life. In a culture where writing is highly developed, it is possible to distance and even denature man by itemising such things as the names of leaders and political divisions in an abstract and neutral list that lacks human action. Oral cultures do not have such things as neutral lists. This is why in some of the dirges presented by Nketia in his *Funeral Dirges of the Akan*, most of the names mentioned in such songs are accompanied by titles, the actions of the individuals, or even the places where they hail from. Thus expressions such as "Mother, the okro full of seeds," "Grandsire Gyima with slim but generous arm," "Mother Aba, the great Breast that children suck" abound in Nketia's sample dirges. In addition

to this, imagery in African dirges is "largely drawn from nature; birds, animals, domestic life and intimate features of everyday living…" (Awoonor, 1974:24)

One other area of African dirges that brings them closer to real life is their aspect of apprenticeship. Like all the other domains of oral cultures, there are no written manuals on how to perform dirges. Mastery in the rendering of African dirges is acquired through observation and practice. Observation and practice involve social reality and are not like written manuals that are completely removed from our day to day experience. In consequence, the content of these dirges are usually influenced by topical issues that affect the day to day life of the people in a given community.

It would be wrong for one to consider African funeral laments as an art that is only rich in its aesthetic appeal. They reflect values that render them relevant to the individual and the community at large. Perhaps it is this dimension of African funeral songs that has enabled them to withstand the passage of time and the influence of foreign cultures in some communities in Africa.

African funeral chants normally provide a good platform for the propagation of communal values in the traditional context. In the African context, a great deal of emphasis is normally placed on communal values. In the words of Gyekye (2003: 35), "The communal structure of African society has created a sense of community that characterizes social relations among individual members of African society." It is therefore necessary for the individual to regard himself as a social corporate being who has a symbiotic relationship with the society in which he

lives. As a result of this philosophy on the relationship between the individual and his community, efforts are often deployed to inculculate in members of the community values such as "sharing, mutual aid, caring for others, interdependence, solidarity, reciprocal obligation, and social harmony." (Gyekye, 2003:35) Mbiti throws more light on this philosophy when he puts it that:

> Just as God made the first man, as God's man, so now man himself makes the individual who becomes the corporate or social man. Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people. When he suffers, he does not suffer alone but with the corporate group; when he rejoices, he rejoices not alone but with his kinsmen, his neighbours and his relatives whether dead or alive. (Mbiti, 1976:108)

This philosophy of the African on the place and role of the individual in the society is often instilled into people through several means; and funeral chants constitute one of the channels for the transmission of such values. African communal values are deliberately woven into funeral laments in order to promote such values. In the African context, a dirge which describes a deceased woman as "Mother Aba, the great wooden food bowl around which children gather" (Nketia, 1955:10) is certainly promoting the communal value of motherliness towards members of the community. A father is a guardian to all children in the society and so is a mother. An elder has the right to reprimand or correct any child who misbehaves in the community irrespective of the absence of direct biological affinities between the elder and the child. This is why "Mother Aba" is a bowl around which children in general gather to eat and not just her children alone. In the same vein, the Sısaala dirge, "It is several trees that form a forest" (*Tıı kana yaa lɔgɔ yeyi*), is thus promoting unity and co-operation. Society is aware that it cannot

survive without these values; and this is why it will do all it can to promote them through different channels.

Besides this, the importance attached to funeral attendance and, by extension, the performance of dirges, is highlighted by Sarpong when he observes that "funerals are regarded as a duty, and no pains may be spared to make them memorable." (Sarpong, 1976:26) The acceptance of funeral attendance as a communal duty by African societies is a practice in itself that promotes unity and co-operation within the community. In this sense, society is able to carry out its duty towards the individual, and the individual is also able to honour his communal obligations.

African funeral chants also play an important role in contemporary African societies where literacy is even high. It is a known fact that oral literature in general has provided modern African creative writers with a lot of resources and inspiration to produce their works. Mention can be made of Chinua Achebe who uses a lot of African proverbs in his novels; Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Ayi Kwei Armah, Ama Ata Aidoo who use a combination of aspects of oral literature in their creative works; and p'Bitek who has used oral literary pieces in explaining the Acoli philosophy about life and death in *The Horn of My Love*. All of these writers have been able to draw some inspiration from the role that oral arts play in the African context. In the *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara*, it is observed that, "In Africa, the boundaries between written and oral traditions are porous; the two inform and feed off one another." (Middleton, 1997:19) Also, in an article published in *African Literature Today*, C. A. Bodunde puts it that:

> The influence which the various elements of oral traditions exert on modern African writing especially poetry is indeed tremendous. In fact major African literary texts indicate attachment to the African cosmic setting. This is the setting which Mazizi Kunene describes as the primary bases of all literatures. Part of the reason why many African writers borrow from the stock of oral traditions can be attributed to the writers' recognition of the functions which verbal art forms perform in the society. (Bodunde, 1992:25)

In the case of funeral songs, they have inspired and influenced many writers across the continent. In Ghana, Ewe dirges have been explored and certain aspects of them have been incorporated in the creative works of Awoonor and Anyidoho. Mention can also be made of Okleme, who has used motifs from the Krobo dirge in his collection entitled *Beyond Azizanya*. It can therefore be argued that requiems have contributed, and will continue to contribute positively to the promotion and development of written African literature.

The rendering of dirges in Africa also gives African bards the opportunity to pay homage to "the word" and for others to see orality in the African context "as the means by which societies of varying complexity regulated themselves, organised their present and their past, made formal spaces for philosophical reflections, pronounced on power, questioned and in some cases contested power." (Gunner, 2007:67)With the invention of writing, there is a tendency among some scholars to always consider it as the basic form of language. Besides this, some scholars often associate primary oral cultures with minds that lack ingenuity and creativity. (Irele, 2007:75) What is more, some of the scholars do not even associate primary oral cultures with the idea of a proper culture. These are misconceptions that can easily be corrected by paying attention to the literary products of professional dirge performers. Ferdinand de Saussure is much aware of the importance of oral speech even in highly literate societies and this is why he argues

that oral speech underpins all verbal communication. In consequence, Saussure considers "writing as a kind of complement to oral speech, not as a transformer of verbalization." (Saussure, 1959:23-24)

The acceptance of orality as something which encompasses more than the mere absence of writing is very important. Orality should be regarded as a system that is "self-constitutive, as *suis generis*." It is only when this is accepted by both North and South that the world will be in a better position to appreciate the contribution made by orality towards the development of humanity over the years. Writing must not be considered as the only means that explains the trajectory of human progress over the years. Throwing more light on the importance of orality with respect to the development of human culture, Liz Gunner explains that:

> Orality was the means by which Africa made its existence, its history long before the colonial and imperial presence of the West manifested itself. In this sense, orality needs to be seen not simply as "the absence of literacy" but as something self-constitutive, *suis generis*. The accepting of this proposition has consequences for an understanding of world culture: namely, it is neither possible nor accurate to take one model that valorizes the written word as the blue print for how the human race has developed. (Gunner, 2007:67)

Also, requiems in the traditional African context afford members of the community the opportunity to bid farewell to the dead in a befitting manner. Many a time, one gets to know the social importance of the deceased by assessing how well his funeral rites, and by extension, dirges dedicated to him or her, have been organised. A well attended funeral gives the indication that the deceased was not only successful in acquiring material wealth but that he was also rich in terms of human resources. But besides the issue of the social status of the deceased, the

performance of dirges gives the right opportunity to other members of the community to reveal the kind of life that the deceased lived before passing away.

It is generally accepted that Africans normally refrain from speaking ill of the dead because they no longer belong to the world of the living but to that of the ancestors who are more powerful. But beyond this point, there are individuals who enjoy helping others discreetly. Others do not just help people discreetly but they would not accept any form of repayment except "thank you." These are very commendable acts which may be kept secret until the death of the individual when people who benefited from such benevolent acts may reveal some of them in their dedications. Among the Sısaala, an individual may dedicate a particular dirge to the deceased based on what the person benefited from the deceased when he or she was alive. In some circumstances, people do not only request for specific dirges but they ask to be given the platform to explain the reason behind the choice of a particular song. All these dedications help in telling the kind of life the deceased lived. They also allow mourners to express their gratitude to the deceased for whatever assistance they might have enjoyed from him or her.

It has been observed, however, that in certain communities in Africa, dirges can be used to punish the deceased for living a worthless and uncharitable life. Most of the time, dirge performers use the occasion of the death of a wicked person to sing uncharitable songs to dishonour the deceased or the poet-cantors may simply refuse to perform at all. This particular function of dirges, used as a powerful weapon against the deceased, has been referred to in *African Folklore: An Encyclopedia* (2004:514) and in *The Horn of My Love* (p'Bitek, 1974:153).

Features and Functions of Some Ghanaian Dirges

It would be impossible, given the scope of this work, for this researcher to try at this point, to analyse the content and form of all dirges in Ghana. What is expedient at this stage is to examine some of the common features and differences that exist within dirges from some ethnic groups in Ghana. Some information already exists on Akan, Ewe, Dagaaba, and Krobo dirges. This researcher also has a fair knowledge of Sısaala dirges as well. It is therefore possible for this researcher to give a fair idea of the nature and functions of Ghanaian dirges in general based on the analysis emanating from dirges among the ethnic groups mentioned in this paragraph.

One striking feature about Ghanaian dirges is their diversity in terms of organisation and execution. With reference to Akan dirges, Nketia explains that:

> It is important to note that the singing of the dirge is usually not an organised performance. Neither is the funeral wail. Each singer sings dirges of her own choice often without regard to what others may be singing or how they may be singing them. The individual is left to her own resourcefulness and to her knowledge of the material of the dirge and the accompanying conventions of form and performance. (Nketia, 1955:8-9)

This is an aspect of Akan dirges that differentiates them from the performance of dirges among the Sısaala, the Dagaaba, the Krobos, and the Ewes. Among these ethnic groups also, a funeral wail is not an organised performance. However, the rendering of the dirge is an organised activity in which poet-cantors lead the mourners in chanting dirges. Mourners act as chorus while the bards act as lead singers or they act as both lead singers and chorus. In this way, there is uniformity in the singing of dirges. According to Nketia, the liberty given to mourners in the Akan context to sing their own dirges encourages individual creativity which is absent in the scenario where mourners merely follow bards in repeating certain parts of dirges. This

observation is not entirely true. In the Sısaala context, it is possible for individual mourners who act as chorus to add their own internal digressions as the funeral song is sung by the entire gathering. Room is given for such internal digressions such that the mourner is still able to join the chorus in the final two lines of the song. This is an instance where individual ingenuity among mourners is encouraged.

The second striking feature of Ghanaian dirges is their musical quality and how this is enhanced through different means among the various communities in the country. In the northern part of Ghana, the musical quality of dirges is normally enhanced through drumming. In the words of Awoonor, poetry among the Ewes too "is embedded in their drums." (Awoonor, 1974: 16) In consequence, instruments such as drums, rattles, traditional flutes, horns and castanets are used in the northern part of the country. In the Dagaaba, Sısaala, Ewe and Krobo communities, dirges are conveniently executed alongside drumming. The xylophone is an important musical instrument among the Dagaaba and in communities in the Lambusie and Sısaala West Districts. In the Wa East District, the xylophone is completely absent except the use of drums of various dimensions as well as rattles, flutes, horns, and castanets. Musical accompaniment is not a compulsory feature of all dirges in Ghana. In the Akan ethnic group, "dirges are solo performances without musical accompaniment." (Salm and Falola, 2002: 62) In short, whereas drumming may be an essential feature of the execution of dirges among some communities in the country, it does not constitute a necessary ingredient in the rendering of dirges among all ethnic groups. Besides this, the instruments used to enhance music also vary from community to community.

The question of who performs dirges among the various ethnic groups is another area where some difference can be observed among dirges in Ghana. Among the Dagaaaba, the Ewes, and the Sısaala, dirge performance is not the preserve of only men or women. Both sexes take active part in the rendering of dirges. Among the Akans, however, the execution of dirges is the sole preserve of women and it is unacceptable for a man to mourn on behalf of a woman in the Akan traditional set-up. (Akosua Anyidoho, 2002: 372)

Notwithstanding their differences with respect to their organisation and the instruments used in accentuating their musical quality, Ghanaian dirges still share some common features. The first of these common features is that they embody Ghanaian values no matter the community in which they are performed. Though cultural beliefs and practices differ to some extent among the various Ghanaian communities, there are some values which are fairly widespread in the country. These national values are often woven into dirges which are executed at funerals. Sarpong (1974:65-67) explains that social values which include Godliness, respect, honour, gratitude, generosity, or national pride are well represented in the social philosophy of most Ghanaian communities. In the same context, moral values such as motherhood, motherliness, and chastity are also well embedded in the national culture. In consequence, it is not surprising that expressions like "Mother, the okro full of seeds of many issues proven", "Grandsire Gyima with a slim but generous arm" "Although a man, you are a mother to children" in Akan dirges extol motherhood, generosity, and motherliness. (Nketia, 1955:36-37) Among the Sısaala, a dirge which goes like "The elderly/Are the gods of the youth" (*Nıhıyawv yaa/Haŋbiye daalılii rɛ.*) is extolling absolute respect for the elderly, and for authority. In short, though there may be some

differences in Akan, Dagaaba, Ewe, Krobo, and Sısaala dirges in terms of their organisation and execution, they all try to propagate similar values.

One other dimension that dirges in Ghana have in common is that they reflect the Ghanaian belief about death. Ghanaians believe that death is inevitable and painful, and that it temporarily removes an individual from the world of the living. They do not, however, believe that death is an end to a person's life. Death only enables the deceased to access the world of the ancestors from which he may come to join the world of the living through reincarnation. Even when the deceased does not come back into the physical world through reincarnation, he can still visit the world of the living as an ancestor and he is still venerated as such. To the Ghanaian, therefore, death brings about loss and pain, but the loss is not a permanent one. This is why Sarpong believes that:

> The ambivalent attitude of the Ghanaian towards death can be summed up in the conception of death as a journey for a better life but with its implication of inevitable physical separation between people who do not want to be parted, even when they know that it is better for them to be parted than that they are not, and that in any case, they will sooner or later be rejoined. (Sarpong, 1974:24)

This ambivalent attitude towards death is normally reflected in dirges where mourners sometimes appeal to the deceased to come and visit them often or to wait for them in the next world. At the same time, some of these dirges lament the vacuum created through the physical loss of the deceased. As a result of this, most Ghanaian dirges do not consist of lament alone. They embody the hope of a better life for the deceased in the next world, the hope of seeing the deceased in the form of reincarnation in the world of the living, or the hope of meeting the deceased in the world of the ancestors.

Finally, most Ghanaian dirges make allowance for formal or individual reflections. In other words, dirges in Ghana are not only meant for mourning the dead. They are a platform which a mourner can use to reflect on his or her own plight in the world. Dirges can be used to reflect on issues affecting the community in general. Nketia (1955: 44), p'Bitek (1974: 151), and Awoonor (1974: 12) are in agreement on this particular function of dirges in Africa, and in Ghana in particular. In the words of Awoonor, "… funeral dirges are not for the ears of the dead. They are for the living. So Akpalu made them vehicles of self-lamentation, philosophy, ideas on morality and ethics, and comments on the total human condition." As a result of this, most of the dirges sung by Akpalu and which are documented in *Guardians of the Sacred Word: Ewe Poetry* are reflections on the world of the living and on the fate of Akpalu himself as illustrated in the following dirge:

> I am on the world's extreme corner
> I am not sitting in the row with the eminent
> Those who are lucky sit in the middle
> Sitting and leaning against a wall
> They say I came to search,
> I, Vinoko, can only go beyond and forget. (1974:19)

From the nature and content of dirges in Ghana, it can be surmised that they are composed to perform specific functions in the communities in which they are normally executed. These functions go beyond using them as the appropriate medium to mourn the dead.

It has already been explained that dirges in Ghana embody some social and moral values which are fairly represented in all communities in Ghana. But quite apart from the point of embodiment, funeral dirges are also used as a vehicle to inculcate these values in members of the various Ghanaian communities. This role is essential since it helps in bridging the cultural

differences that exist among the various ethnic groups. This function of dirges invariably leads to national unity and cohesion which are vital for the country's development.

In addition to this, it is also apparent that dirges help individuals not only to deal with the pain and loss occasioned by the demise of dear ones but they also help mourners to reflect on the day to day problems confronting them and the society at large. This is possible because funeral chants are sometimes used as platforms for reflections. By providing an opportunity for mourners to contemplate on aspects of their lives, funeral laments provide a special healing to Ghanaians. Dirges may not provide immediate answers to the problems that mourners normally reflect on; but they serve as outlets for containing, canalising, and orienting emotions and thoughts that could have a toll on their bearers. Funeral songs therefore provide psychological, emotional, and social stability for bereaved people and this helps them to move on with their life despite their loss.

In short, dirges are a common feature in different cultures throughout the world. Their content may vary from culture to culture based on the different perceptions that people have about the causes and meaning of death. Again, dirges also vary in terms of the manner in which they are executed; while some are rendered orally, especially in the traditional context, others are put into writing, particularly in the Western context which is highly chirographic. In consequence, certain functions of dirges such as their ability to serve as an appropriate channel for mourning the dead and their ability to contain and canalise the feelings of loss and pain of the living are common to all cultures. Some of the functions of dirges are, however, specific to different societies. Their manner of execution also imbues them with aesthetic qualities that are at once universal and

particular. In consequence, the next chapter is devoted to a detailed analysis of the specific manner in which the Sɪsaala render their dirges in the context of a funeral as well as other cultural practices that go hand in hand with the execution of such dirges.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SlSAALA DIRGE

Introduction

"The study of African culture is at once the study of a part and a whole. Cultural identity does not necessarily imply homogeneity."(Kolawole, 2007:93) This observation is true about African culture and, by extension, about dirges in Ghana. Though there are areas in which dirges in Ghana generally share similar values and characteristics, there are a lot of differences among such dirges when one comes to the details involved in the manner in which they are rendered. In short, this part of the thesis discusses dirges within and outside the funeral context among the Sɪsaala.

The Dirge among the Sɪsaala

Dirges are a common feature of funerals among the Sɪsaala. They have different designations among the users of the different dialects of Sɪsaalɪ. In some communities, especially in the towns and villages found in the Wa East and Sɪsaala East Districts, dirges are called *haŋyiye* while the performer is referred to as *haŋyiyetaal*. In the communities found in the Sɪsaala West District, dirges are designated as *gɔkɪɪ* while the artist is labelled as *gɔkʊ*. This therefore means that in the Sɪsaala context, the rendering of dirges is a specialised oral art. There is a title for the professional dirge performer and only people who have mastered the art of singing dirges are referred to by such a title.

The execution of dirges is a significant cultural rite that has to be performed on the death of any adult member of the Sɪsaala community. Dirge performance is an activity that usually covers one

to three days or more, depending on the age and social status of the deceased. In recent times, however, the number of days involved in the singing of dirges has been reduced. This is due to the influence of Western lifestyle as well as that of Christianity and Islam which has made the Sɪsaala youth less keen on taking active part in the execution of dirges. Notwithstanding this situation, dirges still constitute an integral part of the mourning process in the geographical area under study.

In the traditional Sɪsaala set-up, the death of children and adolescents does not call for the performance of dirges in their formal setting. This situation can be attributed to two main factors. First, the demise of children and adolescents is considered a most tragic and painful experience. It is so because children and adolescents are young and still have a long way to go in their lives. In consequence, any attempt to sing dirges on the death of such a youth would be unbearable. Poet-cantors cannot even attempt to digress and entertain their audience. This is as a result of the youthful age of the deceased whose life has been cut short. In other words, there is nothing celebratory about the short life that the youth has lived. And since poet-narrators cannot afford to provide any digression which could be a form of distraction to their audience in such circumstances, it means that they cannot lessen the grief and pain of the bereaved. Rather, performers will be compelled to perform more sorrowful pieces thus intensifying the grief of the bereaved. Such a situation can sometimes lead to more heartache among the bereaved. This is why Jebuni Sumani, a dirge performer from Sombisi, in an interview with this researcher, explains that "the ethics of dirge performance demand that the bard should not execute dirges when he or she is sad."(*haŋyiye lɔɔ bɪ daga nɪɪ dɪ ɪ fuu kyogi aŋka dɪ ɪ taʊ*)

The second reason for the reluctance to organise formal performance of the dirge during funerals for deceased children and adolescents is that such members of the society "…are not yet fully incorporated into the social order." Consequently, "there is no reason to exclude them from it slowly and painfully." (Salamone, 2004:109) Children and adolescents are not considered full-fledged members of the social order because they have not yet attained a certain age or fulfilled certain social obligations that can make the society regard them as complete corporate beings. Some of these social duties include marriage, child bearing, and the ability to create a family and fend for it. Until the criteria of age and these social obligations are met by members of the Sɪsaala group, it will be difficult for the community to recognise them as fully grown corporate beings whose death deserves the compliment of formal dirge performance. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okwonko insults Osugo as a woman simply because the latter has no title; and in *Houseboy*, the natives feel that the expatriates are boys and not men due to the fact that they are not circumcised. (Achebe, 1963:24, Oyono, 1996:54)

Indeed, when an adult passes away, it is the wails and cries from women, men, and children from the compound of the deceased which announce the bad news to other members of the community. While the wailing and crying go on, arrangements are made to mourn the deceased at the village square, which is an open clearing. If the deceased is a young adult, the performance of dirges normally ranges between one to two days duration. It is the execution of dirges that constitutes the most important component of the mourning process in the traditional set-up. In consequence, members of the community, including distant relations and sympathisers from other villages, gather at the deceased's village square to mourn. Thus, while the dirge performance goes on, efforts are also made to prepare the corpse for burial. Once the grave is

ready, the deceased is laid to rest and the mourning continues. Afterwards, those bereaved organise some "water" in the form of cereal and meat and distribute it among the groups of mourners. In the course of the mourning process, animals like goats and sheep are taken from people to whom the daughters of the deceased are married. Once the traditional "water" has been given by members of the bereaved family to the mourners and sympathisers, it implies that mourning has officially come to an end and all the people can go back to their homes. There are no second funeral celebrations for young adults.

Depending on the age and social status of the deceased, however, there may be a second mourning after some months, a year, or some years. In most instances where the deceased is over seventy years old and is blessed with children, grandchildren, and relatives who are well to do, there is often a second funeral celebration. In the case where there is the intention to organise a second funeral celebration, the first mourning is not prolonged. In this context, the execution of dirges for the first mourning may cover just a day and there is no attempt to give mourners the traditional "water." The "water" will be given during the second and last funeral celebrations.

But apart from the social status and the criterion of age, other factors also determine whether there should be one funeral celebration or two of them. First, weather conditions can determine whether two funeral celebrations are necessary for the death of an elderly person. For example, if the demise of the elder occurs in the rainy season when most people are engaged in their farming activities, and when most of the roads linking the towns and villages are unmotorable, it is often prudent in such a case to organise a second funeral celebration during the dry season. This is simply because many people would not be in a position to attend funerals in distant villages due

to work on the farm and the bad nature of the roads. If the bereaved family is bent on having a well attended funeral in honour of the deceased, which is the wish of every well meaning Sısaala man or woman, then the family will have to postpone the full celebration of the funeral until the dry season. By the dry season, most people might have gathered their crop on the farm; and since there is only one farming season in the north, it means that people would have some free time to attend funerals and other ceremonies in distant towns and villages.

The second factor that might determine whether there should or should not be another funeral celebration is the availability or otherwise of food. Thus if those bereaved feel they have enough food to cater for the numerous mourners that might attend the funeral, they can go ahead and have one funeral celebration for an elder who happens to pass away in the dry season. In this case, most of the conditions necessary for organising a successful funeral celebration would be satisfied. There is enough food to feed the mourners and the season is a dry one. In consequence, there would not be rain showers to disrupt mourning at the village open square, or keep people busy on their farms. On the other hand, if the demise of a person occurs in the dry season and the bereaved do not have enough food, they may postpone the second mourning to the following year when there might be a good harvest. This would enable the bereaved family to host and feed the mourners that would come to the funeral.

Again, if the deceased is an elderly person but is not blessed with enterprising relatives, children or grandchildren, the family may go ahead and have just one funeral celebration for the deceased. In this case, the family is aware that it cannot mobilise enough resources to feed mourners on two occasions. This is not to say that it is only the deceased's family that normally

feeds all the mourners from distant towns and villages. The truth is that a good number of the sympathisers would depend on the bereaved for food and accommodation. Apart from the issue of feeding, there are other ancillary expenses that have to be borne by those who are bereaved.

Finally, some customs also make it impossible to have a full funeral celebration until such customs have been performed. For example, if a title holder like a chief (*kuworu*) or a custodian of the land (*bɛyetɪma*) passes away and the full funeral rites for such a personality have not been performed, it would be a breach of custom to observe the full funeral rites of any elderly person who subsequently dies. In this context, the family of the deceased is obliged to postpone the full funeral celebrations of its beloved until all the funeral rites of the title holder have been observed. In consequence, the need to have a second funeral celebration is sometimes dictated by custom and not by the weather conditions or poor harvest from the farm.

It is important to note that the executions of dirges are usually enormously successful during the second funeral celebration and they can cover a three-day duration. In this instance, though the demise of the elder is a sad event, there is something to celebrate about the life of the deceased. The celebration comes from the fact that the elder has left behind a household full of men, women, children, grandchildren, and material possessions. The elder has had the opportunity to live his or her life to a stage where it would be deemed "normal" for such a person to join the ancestors in the other world.

In both the first and second funeral celebrations, dirges are normally executed. The deceased may be a Christian, a Moslem or an animist; the religious background of the person does not

prevent the community from performing dirges in his or her honour. Some communities judge the extent of success of funeral celebrations by considering how diligently dirges have been rendered at such funerals. Consequently, the performance of dirges still occupies a central position in the funeral rites of the Sɪsaala.

Occasions for the Performance of Sɪsaala Dirges

In its formal setting, the dirge is sung on the occasion of a funeral. (Alembi, 2002: 104, Nketia, 1955: 16) It is the same situation that prevails in the Sɪsaala context. The conventional setting of the dirge is normally an open clearing which is spacious enough to accommodate mourners, drummers, and poet-cantors. Performance of dirges in this formal context takes an interactive form in which mourners act as chorus by executing parts of the dirge with the bard. In some communities where the mourners may not execute entire parts of the dirge with the artist, they still contribute to the performance with their responsory interjections.

It is during the formal performance of dirges on the funeral grounds that one may come across two or more artists performing together. In such a case, the dirge performers complement one another. Each bard is given the opportunity to perform. At the end of the day, however, it is usually the most experienced ones who emerge with outstanding performance. They are able to stand on their feet and perform for hours on end. Their voice hardly fails them and they never run out of ideas and skill. Apprentices who are also interested in learning the art of professional dirge performance may take centre stage during the formal execution of dirges. Such apprentices do not lead the mourners in singing dirges. They only act as part of the chorus. The apprentices' proximity to the professionals affords them the opportunity to listen and hear all the appellations

of the various individuals, clans or villages that are chanted by the more experienced bards. The apprentices are also able to learn part of the technique of drama that is involved in the singing of dirges.

Apart from the context of the funeral, there are other instances outside it in which dirges can be heard. The distinctive features of dirges outside the funeral context are that they are solo performances (they are executed by one person); they do not involve wailing and crying; also, they are never accompanied by drumming. It is only in the funeral context that dirges can be performed by the whole community with musical accompaniment.

There are some factors that usually motivate the singing of dirges outside the funeral context. The first factor is the desire to practise singing so that individuals can take an active part in the performance of dirges during official mourning processes. Some of the women who usually act as chorus during the performance of dirges at funerals rehearse dirge singing while grinding cereal on a stone or working on the farm.

The second reason for the performance of the dirge outside its formal context is anchored in the culture of the people. The culture demands that men and women in general should be able to know how to sing the simplest form of the dirge on their own. This is to forestall any embarrassment in the event where individuals may be expected to sing their own dirges at funeral grounds so that other mourners can accompany such individuals in executing the dirge. For instance, in most of the communities in the Wa East and Sısaala East Districts, any man or woman who goes to the farm and comes home to find people mourning at the village square

must first proceed to the mourning grounds. The farmer is expected to go and sing a simple dirge of his or her own so that others can join and mourn with the farmer. In other circumstances, a group of women mourners who goes to another village to sympathise with a bereaved family after the dirge performance for such a funeral has been completed must be able to sing its own dirge. The group does not require the presence of a professional cantor to do so. This is a factor that makes it imperative for members of the communities to have some knowledge in the rendering of dirges even if they do not intend to become professional dirge performers. In this regard, the Sɪsaala dirge resembles that of the Akan whose performance must be known by most Akan women in the traditional set-up. In the words of Agyekum (2004: 123), "…there is evidence of women teaching their daughters to sing funeral dirges. This is practiced while they are on the farms or while completing domestic chores. It becomes a component part of the girls' upbringing."

The last factor that may explain the singing of the dirge outside its formal setting is where a woman who has lost several relatives is overcome with grief. She might have been reminded of her lost relatives through a particular incident or event that may set her singing dirges alone. In this instance, the motivation behind the performance is not the desire to practice. It originates from grief and pain. Nketia reports of a similar practice among the Akans in the following words:

> A woman who has lost many of her relatives, especially her brothers and sisters, and now lives alone may burst out into singing anytime she feels overcome by emotions of sadness or is by some chance event reminded of her losses. It is, however, bad to wail or mourn outside the event of death or on days other than those set aside for remembering it. (Nketia, 1955:16)

Finally, it must be observed that solo performances outside the funeral context are often brief in terms of their duration. They are not carried out in the night time and they do not involve the use of body language that expresses the emotions that are normally associated with the execution of dirges in their formal context. These solo performances are often conterminous with the activity that the singer is engaged in.

Types of the Sɪsaala Dirge

Nketia (1955:51-73) has been able to identify some structural types in Akan dirges based on the themes that they carry. In the same vein, Akosua Anyidoho (2002:373) has been able to identify "*amoma*" as a funeral eulogy that is unique on its own. This is not simply because it is normally written and is recited at Christian funeral services. It is also because this genre of the Akan dirge takes its resources from hunters' songs, royal appellation poetry, and traditional Akan dirges. In the Sɪsaala context, dirges can be categorised based on their structure and on the age of the deceased which may warrant the dominance or otherwise of lament in the songs. Structural and social types can, therefore, be discussed under Sɪsaala dirges.

Structural Types

The simplest form of the Sɪsaala dirge consists of a song of one or two lines. These two lines are repeated over five times before a pause is observed. The hiatus does not mark the end of the dirge; and the same two lines are repeated several times before the song is discarded and somebody brings up another song. As observed earlier in this work, the break in the song is normally observed by lowering the pitch of the voice in the final line and prolonging the last syllable of the last word in the last line. In consequence, the complete performance of a song

may consist of thirty lines or more. These thirty lines, however, are just a repetition of the initial two lines. Mutia reports of a similar instance of repetition in the Bakweri dirge in Cameroon. In his own words, "One line can, in fact, be repeated several times." (Mutia, 2003:391) This form of the Sısaala dirge is absolutely participatory in its formal setting, and performers as well as mourners execute it together. The following dirge is an example of the Sısaala dirge in its simplest form:

Nɪhɪyawʊ yaa	The aged are
Haŋbiye daalɪlii rɛ.	The gods of the youth.
Nɪhɪyawʊ yaa	The aged are
Haŋbiye daalɪlii rɛ.	The gods of the youth.
Nɪhɪyawʊ yaa	The aged are
Haŋbiye daalɪlii rɛ.	The gods of the youth.
Nɪhɪyawʊ yaa	The aged are
Haŋbiye daalɪlii rɛ.	The gods of the youth.
Nɪhɪyawʊ yaa	The aged are
Haŋbiye daalɪlii rɛ ŋaa ŋaa ŋaaaa.	The gods of the youth.

It must be observed that men and women who are not professional dirge performers are obliged by custom to know this simplest form of the dirge. This is the practice in the Wa East and Sısaala East Districts where drums are used to provide musical accompaniment in the rendering of dirges and not xylophones as it pertains in the Sısaala West and Lambusie Districts. In these latter two districts where xylophones are used to provide musical accompaniment, mourners do not execute entire parts of dirges together with the artist. They participate by chanting the responsory interjections in the form of "*oh," "yee," "waa,"* and *"haa."*

The second structural type of the dirge which can be identified is the one that comes with a song and an appellation or appellations. This type is considered complex and only professional dirge performers are able to execute it. It is considered difficult because the poet-cantor must know the appellations of many clans and villages offhand before he or she can attempt to execute it. In the formal context of dirge performance, an artist may try to catch the attention of mourners by first chanting their appellations before finally singing the song that he or she has in mind. It takes a long period of apprenticeship and practice for one to memorise most of the appellations which are fixed and cannot be changed by the bard. The chorus only assists the bard in executing the song.

The appellations of the mourners are chanted by the artist alone. The appellations and the song together form the dirge. The appellations are not, however, logically related to the song. The appellations are chanted while the song is sung. Again, while the song consists of just one or two lines which are repeated over and over, the appellations are longer, fixed, and more complex for effective participation in their execution by the mourners. Also, there is no logical connection between the song and the appellations since the same appellations can be chanted alongside different songs with different semantic implications. Indeed, the main function of the appellations in this context is to enable dirge singers catch the attention of specific individuals at the funeral grounds and to, perhaps, motivate such individuals to give money to the bard or to enable them formulate their dedications to the deceased. The following dirge, which consists of appellations and a song, is an example of structural type two.

Nʊhʊ tɪma waa!	Owner of the cow!
Ba naga ɛɛrɛ ɪ vɪya nʊhʊ ta?	What caused you to abandon the cow?

Gyaaŋ ma yaa laa nʊhʊ yige paŋ,	Please, help me push the cow forward.
Gyaaŋ ma yaa laa ŋ kyʊwala kana,	Please, accept my greetings.
Adama waa! Adama waa! Adama waa!	Attention Adama! Attention Adama! Attention Adama!
Ba naga ɛɛrɛ ɪ vɪya nʊhʊ ta?	What caused you to abandon the cow?
Dɪyakʊnʊ kyʊwalɪya Kagyiya nɪyɛla,	Nephew of Dɪyakʊnʊ who paid his respects to Kagyiya,
Badiye kyʊwalɪ Hallɪ nɪyɛla,	Nephew of Badiye who paid his respects to Halli,
Ŋwɪɪtuwo kyʊwalɪ Gbuŋgbogino nɪyɛla,	Nephew of Ŋwɪɪtuwo who paid his respects to Gbuŋgbogino,
Girigiri nɪyɛla baa faa,	Nephew of those full of vitality and strength,
Naagime ba lo gyeye nɪyɛla,	Nephew of those who crumble walls with the sound of their footsteps,
Yaa laa ŋ kyʊwala kana.	Please, I greet you!
Adama waa! Adama waa!	Attention Adama! Attention Adama!
l mɛ tɪrɪŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your own appellation?
Kyaŋdɔmɔ kyʊwalɪya Bakɔɔ nɪyɛla,	Nephew of Kyaŋdɔmɔ who paid his respects to Bɔkɔɔ,
Puri pɪna ba na kpanɛ nɪyɛla,	Nephew of those who value the truth above anything else,
Ba vɪya nyɪwa balɪya nɪyɛla,	Nephew of those whose totem is the crocodile,
Gyaaŋ gyaaŋ dɪ ɪ wuwolɪ ɪ dɪgɪna nɪɪ wɪɪ.	Please, please, listen attentively.
Agyiye bʊrɪ laara tuwo	Agyiye, our protector is no more
Aŋ sɪ bʊrɪ laara?	Who will protect us?
Agyiye bʊrɪ laara tuwo	Agyiye, our protector is no more
Aŋ sɪ bʊrɪ laara?	Who will protect us?
Agyiye bʊrɪ laara tuwo	Agyiye, our protector is no more
Aŋ sɪ bʊrɪ laara?	Who will protect us?
Agyiye bʊrɪ laara tuwo	Agyiye, our protector is no more
Aŋ sɪ bʊrɪ laara?	Who will protect us?

Agyiye bʊrɪ laara tuwo	Agyiye, our protector is no more
Aŋ sɪ bʊrɪ laara?	Who will protect us?
Agyiye bʊrɪ laara tuwo	Agyiye, our protector is no more
Aŋ sɪ bʊrɪ laaraaaaaa?	Who will protect us?

The third structural type comprises of a combination of appellations, an anecdote, and a song. The anecdote and the song usually have a very close link since the anecdote seeks to elaborate the meaning of the song. Sɪsaala dirges are usually rendered in highly metaphorical language. This makes the full meaning of such dirges a bit unclear to the younger generation and outsiders. Efforts are sometimes made to explain the meaning of such dirges through the use of anecdotes. The song is usually the last aspect of the dirge to be executed in this complex type of dirge. Again, it is important to note that this type of dirge is normally rendered by professional bards. The artist chants the appellations and narrates the anecdote alone. When it comes to the song itself, the chorus then joins the poet-cantor in executing it. Below is an example of the third structural type of dirge.

Bayoŋ waa! Bayoŋ waa!	Please Bayoŋ! Please Bayoŋ!
l nyɪnaŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your father's appellation?
Dalaa kyʊwalɪya Kagyiya nɪyɛla,	Nephew of Dalaa who paid his respects to Kagyiya,
Ɗmaŋ tɔɔrɔ nɪyɛla fira bana,	Nephew of those who ambushed wayfarers and forced them to retreat,
Nyukuŋkogilli bɪrɪmɪ hayaara gbuwoni nɪyɛla,	Nephew of those whose unkempt wives used human skulls as gourds,
Naasolli bɪrɪmɪ ba ŋmɪra nɪyɛla,	Nephew of those who used human tibia as flutes,
Ba naga ɛɛrɛ ɪ vɪya yoho ta?	How come you are not taking an active part in the execution of dirges?
Bayoŋ waa! Bayoŋ waa!	Attention Bayoŋ! Attention Bayoŋ!
l mɛ tɪrɪŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your own appellation?

Gbaŋgyaga kyʋwalıya Namaali nıyɛla,	Nephew of Gbaŋgyaga who paid his respects to Namaali,
Saalı kyʋwalı Kʋŋkɔŋ nıyɛla,	Nephew of Saalı who paid his respects to Kʋŋkɔŋ,
Gyagyınna gyaarıgenni nıyɛla,	Nephew of expert horse riders,
Krugu tɔɔ naanyiyere nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who wear baggy trousers to cover spindly legs,
Gawurini tɔɔ ba sawɛ nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who wear smocks to conceal their amulets,
Nyupugu tɔɔ nyukpʋrıya nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who wear hats to conceal their bumpy heads,
Agyiya baŋ kyʋwalı Saampuwo nıyɛla,	Nephew of Agyiya who paid his respects to Saampuwo,
Gyaaŋ gyaaŋ dı ı wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı.	Please, please, listen attentively.

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Kpʋŋkpalıyɛrıya rı sii, a mʋ saa ʋ dıya kuworu haŋ dıya tıyaŋ, a nyɛ ʋ hala. Ɛɛrɛ haa, kuworu balıya sii dı ba ŋmaa ba nıına dıya, a tıya ba nyına duwoso, "A kyiye sı ŋmaa a nıına dıya a mari saa." Ba bı tıya Wıʋsı gaaafura. Ɛɛrɛ haa, kpʋŋkpalıyɛrıya sii, a kaŋ Wıʋsı gyıŋ. A gyıŋ bası tıya Wıʋsı, " Na ŋ hala rɛ ŋ nyɛ kuworu haaŋ dıya tıyaŋ aŋkɛ kuworu balıya baa ba kyiye sı ŋmaa ba nıına dıya. Amɛ ba bı tıya ı Wıʋsı gaaafura." Ɛɛrɛ Wıʋsı baa nyɛ rɛ, dı kpʋŋkpalıyɛrıya tıyaŋ haa, dı ʋ sii a kı mʋ dıya. Dı ʋ ta kı faa kambıŋ ʋ hala hʋ wıya.

Sıya gballa haa, kuworu balıya sii yaa dı ba ŋmaa ba nıına dıya haa, dı kuworu bapuwasi lıı yaga gimem. Kuworu balıya sıı fiyɛsı kuworu biibal loho wıya aŋ yeŋŋı ba nıına dıya ŋmayi wıya. Ba we loho tıyaŋ kuloŋ, kuloŋ, kuloŋ yɔbɔ sıı balıya. Loho baŋ mʋ kı tı haa, dı kuworu balıya bila tıya ba nyına duwoso dı ba kyiye sı ŋmaa ba nıına dıya hʋ. Ɛɛrɛ haa, kpʋŋkpalıyɛrıya bila sii kaŋ Wıʋsı gyıŋ. A bila gyıŋ tıya Wıʋsı duwoso, " Kuworu balıya baa ba kyiye sı ŋmaa ba nıına dıya amɛ ba bı tıya ı Wıʋsı duwoso. Ɔ hala mɛ ŋ tiyese rɛ amɛ biisii ha yaa bii mulsi rɛ."

Ɛrɛ Wɪɪsɪ bila basɪ tɪya kpʊŋkpalɪyɛrɪya dɪ ʊ ta gyɪya aŋ sii kɪ mʊ dɪya. Dɪ ka kpʊŋkpalɪyɛrɪya baa kuworu balɪya bɪ tɪya ʊ Wɪɪsɪ gaafura? Ɛrɛ kpʊŋkpalɪyɛrɪya baa waa.

Siya gballa haa, dɪ kuworu haana kɪrɪgɪ aa sii haa, dɪ ʊ sɪba. Kuworu balɪya bila sii haa, a bila we loho tɪyaŋ kuloŋ, kuloŋ, kuloŋ. Yɔbɔ sɪɪ boto aŋ kɛ bana tɪ loho hʊ. Ɛrɛ haa loho baŋ mʊ haa, kuworu balɪya bila tɪya ba nyɪna duwoso dɪ kyiye kɛ, dɪ Wɪɪsɪ laa nyʊwa, ba kyiye sɪ ŋmaa ba nɪɪna dɪya hʊ. Ɛrɛ kpʊŋkpalɪyɛrɪya bila sii a kaŋ wɪɪsɪ nyu gyɪŋ. A gyɪŋ basɪ tɪya Wɪɪsɪ, "Wɪɪsɪ, kuworu balɪya baa ba kyiye sɪ ŋmaa ba nɪɪna dɪya hʊ. Amɛ nyɛ kɛ, ba tɪya ɪ Wɪɪsɪ gaafura rɛ. Ɔ balɪya mɛ, ba mɛ waa rɛ."

Ɛrɛ Wɪɪsɪ baa nyɛ rɛ, kpʊŋkpalɪyɛrɪya, ɪ kyiye sii kyɪkyʊwala pipipi, kyiye paa ɪ balɪya lɪɪ kuworu haaŋ dɪya tɪyaŋ. Kuworu balɪya a yɪrɪ mɪyaŋ Wɪɪsɪ feŋ nyɛ kɛ, ŋ kyiye sɪ tɪya ba ŋmanɪɪ dɪ ba kyiye ŋmaa ba nɪɪna dɪya hʊ. Nyɛ rɛ haa, sɪya gballi kyɪkyʊwala, kpʊŋkpalɪyɛrɪya paa ʊ balɪya lɪɪ aŋ kɛ kuworu balɪya ŋmaa ba nɪɪna dɪya. Kpʊŋkpalɪyɛrɪya paa ʊ balɪya a kaŋ mʊ fuwo bal a fo ba nɪɪ. Ɛrɛ kpʊŋkpalɪyɛrɪya balɪya pɪyɛsɪ ba nɪɪna, "A nɪɪna, aŋ kɛ ɛrɛ a sɪ yaa a nyʊwa nɪɪ?" Ɛrɛ ba nɪɪna basɪ tɪya ba, "A sɪ gyare aŋ kɪ nyʊwa nɪɪ." Ɛ wɪya, ɪ mʊ fuwo bal, kpʊŋkpalɪyɛrɪya a gyare aŋ kɪ nyʊwa nɪɪ rɛ.

"There lived a sparrow who built her nest in a room that belonged to the chief's wife. The sparrow then laid her eggs in the nest. One day, the chief's children decided to demolish and reconstruct their mother's room, and said to their father, "We will pull down and rebuild our mother's room tomorrow." They did not ask for God's permission. Then the sparrow got up and went up to God. She went and said to God, "I have laid my eggs in a room that belongs to the

chief's wife, and his children have decided to demolish and rebuild their mother's room tomorrow. The chief's children have, however, not asked for permission from you, God." Then God told sparrow to get up and go home and not entertain fears about the safety of her eggs.

The following day, just as the chief's children were getting ready to demolish their mother's room, one of the younger sons of the chief suddenly died. Then the chief and his children became completely absorbed in the funeral of the young man and they forgot about the demolition of their mother's room. They got busy with the funeral for two weeks. After the funeral, the chief's children again informed their father that the following day, they would demolish and reconstruct their mother's room. Then the sparrow got up and went to God again. She again went and said to God, "The chief's children have decided to demolish and rebuild their mother's room; and this time again, they have not sought permission from you. I have also hatched my eggs but the chicks are still too young to fly." Then God again told sparrow not to worry and that she should go back home. God, however, enquired from sparrow whether she had not just confirmed that the chief's children had failed to ask for His permission again. Then the sparrow said yes.

The following day, one of the wives of the chief passed away. The chief's children again became engrossed in the funeral of one of their mothers for three weeks. After the funeral, the chief's children again informed their father that the following day, God willing, they would pull down and rebuild their mother's room. Then the sparrow again went up to God and said to Him, "God, the chief's children said they would demolish and rebuild their mother's room tomorrow. This time round, they have mentioned your name. My chicks are also grown and they can fly." Then

God said that if that was the case, then the sparrow should evacuate her chicks from the room of the chief's wife the following day at dawn. Since the chief's children had sought His permission in their enterprise, He would give them the go-ahead the following day. The next day, the sparrow evacuated her chicks from the room early in the morning and the chief's children also pulled down their mother's room. The sparrow sent her chicks to a big river and gave them a bath. Then the children asked, "Mother, how do we drink water when we are thirsty?" Then their mother replied, "We shall fly and drink water at the same time." In consequence, when you go to the river, you will find sparrows trying to drink water as they fly."

Ta kyɛ koro	We do not fight for grace
Leŋ dı Wuısı pɛɛ koro.	It is God that blesses us with His grace.
Ta kyɛ koro	We do not fight for grace
Leŋ dı Wuısı pɛɛ koro.	It is God that blesses us with His grace.
Ta kyɛ koro	We do not fight for grace
Leŋ dı Wuısı pɛɛ koro.	It is God that blesses us with His grace.
Ta kyɛ koro	We do not fight for grace
Leŋ dı Wuısı pɛɛ koro.	It is God that blesses us with His grace.
Ta kyɛ koro	We do not fight for grace
Leŋ dı Wuısı pɛɛ koro waaaaaa.	It is God that blesses us with His grace.

All the three structural types which have been discussed so far are performed in the Wa East District and in most of the communities in the Sısaala East District as well. As observed earlier, in the Sısaala West and Lambusie Districts where xylophones are used to provide musical accompaniment, a fourth structural type which is different from the previous three also exists. Mourners act as chorus but they do not sing entire parts of dirges. Rather, they sing the responsory interjections like "*yee*," "*woo*," "*haa*," and so on as it pertains in the Dagaaba dirge. (Saanchi, 2002:411) The lead performer chants in a continuous form, mixing appellations with

commentaries and reflections. A careful analysis of this structural type will, however, reveal a careful internal organisation. Though the performer chants in a continuous form, he or she makes sure that the dirge is organised according to subject matter and these are treated one after the other. Dirges which fall under the fourth structural type are illustrated below.

Dʋnɪya wɪɪ wɪɪ wuŋ yaa Wɪɪsɪ wɪɪ yaala.	Everything that happens in this world is done by God.
Vʋvʋra wɪya yaa baa pɪyasɪ ʋ wɪya.	He is sought after on issues concerning soothsaying.
Nambala hɔnɔ baa pɪyasɪ ʋ wɪya.	He is sought after on issues concerning hunting.
Bapara wɪya yaa baa yɪrɪʋ.	He is sought after on issues concerning farming.
Bagɪla wɪya yaa baa yɪrɪʋ.	He is sought after on issues concerning animals.
Tʋŋtʋŋ bala baa dii.	One profession alone is not enough.
Haŋbolibiye rɪ gyɪŋ gyɪŋ baa kyɔrɪ,	The life of a weakling does not befit a man,
Yaara nya, haŋbolibiye rɪ yaara sɪya a kyɔrɪ?	How then can the life of a fool befit a man?
Baa kyɛ ba gyɪma ɪ kaa sʋʋ rɪ weree yaa	Is it better for people to learn of your sudden death,
A yaa kʋʋŋ kʋʋŋ mʋ sɪba ʋ rɪ weree?	Or is it better to die of a protracted illness?
l ko pere ɪ wʋlɪ wɪya diye wʋwʋl wɪɪ magɪsɪ,	Whenever you are to speak, you must raise important issues.
Leŋ ba yaa wɪɪ nyusɪ,	Let them be critical issues,
A bɪra lɪya kyɪŋ doŋ leŋ ba yaa wɪɪ wɪya.	Let them be of utmost importance.
Fagyɪma nya, nɪyaare rɪ wʋlɪ fagyɪma,	It is the fool who says had I known,
Hmm waa hmm na kpʋ nɪya.	And it is too much thinking that kills people.
Nɪɪna bɪ nyɪna ba diye kaŋ naŋa yaa,	Mother and father fought yesterday,
Mmaa bɪ ŋ nyɪna diye naŋa nangɔ	My mother and my father fought yesterday,
l sɪya ka vʋvra ɪ vʋvri pa aŋ la?	Who would you support if you were to do so?

l maa nya luworɪ wɪya ɪ nyɪna pɪŋ doŋ nɛ?	Did your father blink an eye when your mother was in labour?
Woyi woyi woyi woyiiiiiii.	Woyi woyi woyi woyiiiiiii.
Allahv akbarv allahv akbarv *ba nɪɪ kyeyi dvnɪya,*	Allahu akbaru, allahu akbaru and the world is becoming a worse place because of them.
Ɔ gyaa ŋ wvlla gyiŋbala wɪya mvwa, *New Ghana,*	I want to comment a little on our youth, New Ghana.
Karimv ba lɪɪ kyeyi la sɪsɔ,	The advent of Moslem clerics has led to the destruction of Sɪsaala values,
Karimv ba lɪɪ kyeyi la sɪsɔ wuŋ.	The advent of Moslem clerics has led to the destruction of all Sɪsaala values.

Social Types

With regard to the social types of dirges in the Sɪsaala context, there is little to write about except to point out that dirges performed at the funerals of young adults are less elaborate in terms of the number of days that they cover. Their mood is also darker than those sung on the death of elderly community leaders. The darkness in terms of mood usually comes from two main sources: the choice of songs, and the non-verbal modes of communication that are involved in the execution of such dirges. Most of the dirges that are performed on the death of young adults are not often celebratory; they rather emphasise the loss brought to the entire community as a result of the early demise of the deceased. For example, the following dirge is dark in mood as is manifested in the words used to compose it.

Wɪya rɪ suu	It is only sadness that has filled
Bii suŋ fuu.	The orphan's stomach.
Wɪya rɪ suu	It is only sadness that has filled
Bii suŋ fuu.	The orphan's stomach.
Wɪya rɪ suu	It is only sadness that has filled
Bii suŋ fuu.	The orphan's stomach.

Wɪya rɪ suu	It is only sadness that has filled
Bii suŋ fuu.	The orphan's stomach.
Wɪya rɪ suu	It is only sadness that has filled
Bii suŋ fuu.	The orphan's stomach.
Wɪya rɪ suu	It is only sadness that has filled
Bii suŋ fuu yeeeeeeeee.	The orphan's stomach.

The dirge tries to capture the exact feelings of the orphan on the death of his parent. The orphan is gloomy to the extent that his stomach is literally full with sadness. Apart from the possibility that the orphan in this context is still young and is therefore at a loss on the death of his parent, it is also apparent that there is nothing to celebrate about the death of the late parent. Perhaps, the parent did not live long enough so as to leave the orphan in the safe hands of other elderly brothers or sisters and this might have contributed to the deepening of the dejected state of the orphan. It is true that the Sɪsaala dirge is not about lament alone. It is a genre that is used to philosophise, criticise, comment, and to reflect on life. But in the situation where the deceased is a young adult, dirges which are performed at such a funeral naturally tend to dwell more on the loss and pain occasioned by the untimely death of the young adult.

The execution of these dark dirges is also often accompanied by the appropriate body language to lend more meaning to the words of the songs. Women are naturally gifted in the use of paralinguistic features to better expresss their feelings. They often employ their hands, the tone of their voice, facial expressions, and other bodily gestures to literally live through the pain of death right in front of their sympathisers. This manner of executing the dirge by women

contributes significantly toward the creation of an atmosphere of mourning on the funeral grounds of young adults who have met their untimely death.

Apprenticeship in the Art of Dirge Performance among the Sısaala

Generally speaking, every Sısaala man, woman, or adolescent is supposed to participate in the rendering of dirges when the occasion calls for it. It is in the course of participating in such communal events that men, women, and adolescents learn the art of singing dirges. They learn to sing basic parts of the dirge that will enable them serve as chorus during the execution of dirges at funerals. Men, women, and the youth can further sharpen their skill in the performance of dirges by practicing the art at their individual levels. The ultimate aim of this training at the individual level is to be able to take part in the interactive execution of dirges at funerals. In consequence, participation in the rendering of dirges in the funeral context is important since it does not only develop the skill of the individual but also affords him or her opportunity to learn how to sing in unison with other mourners. This kind of apprenticeship does not require any formal training where a learner may be attached to a professional bard.

On the other hand, young adults and adolescents who intend to take up the execution of dirges as a profession in future usually require formal training. The first and foremost step towards this goal is to get attached to an experienced poet-cantor. The artist may even be one's own relative. What is important is that there should be a formal agreement between the apprentice and the bard on their obligations towards each other. All the four dirge performers who have been interviewed by this researcher admitted to having received formal training from more experienced performers. Incidentally too, all the four artists are from families of oral poets. Halukı, the

woman from Pulma received her training in the art from her father. Kuri Baŋmɔ, from Sombisi, also learnt his art of rendering dirges from his own father who was a blind man. Maani and Jebuni Sumani have both been trained by their respective fathers.

Apprenticeship in the art of professional dirge singing is a process that involves considerable diligence. It is also a training that demands a lot of patience and discipline from the apprentice. There must be absolute respect for the mentor or else the apprentice will never make progress. Dirge performance in the Sısaala context is not just about having a beautiful voice or being able to memorise appellations, songs, and anecdotes. It involves more than that. There are many secrets in the art of dirge performance which are not revealed to the learner at once. Secrets embedded in the art are revealed to the apprentice based on his or her commitment to the art, discipline, diligence, and respect for the teacher.

Learning the appellations of the various clans is a task that the student can easily accomplish by attending funerals and staying close to the professionals as they perform. The songs and anecdotes that go with the appellations can be picked up at funeral grounds. Besides this, the apprentice can still go to the mentor and seek better clarification on any appellation that the student is not familiar with. But apart from this, the student needs to be prepared spiritually so that he or she can sing for hours without losing his voice. In addition to the fear of losing one's voice in the course of performance, which can be embarrassing, the professional dirge performer must be able to perform alongside other artists at the funeral grounds without getting intimidated. The bard should also be able to understand the world of the dead and be in a position to communicate important messages from such a world to elders of the community through the

dirge. Awoonor (1974:19) reports of a similar practice among the Ewes in which poet-cantors do not only produce oral literary pieces but are also guided by powerful family gods to make profound statements during the course of performance.

It is this dimension of the spiritual preparation of the apprentice that demands discipline. It is also this part of the training that prolongs apprenticeship. In an interview with the four poet-cantors from the three communities, they all admitted having taken one form of concoction or the other to improve the quality of their voice and to enable them perform for hours without losing their voices. Again, they all admitted to having received a form of spiritual preparation that enables them sing alongside other professionals without getting intimidated, or finding themselves suddenly short of ideas and skill in the course of performance.

Execution of the Sɪsaala Dirge in the Funeral Context

As observed earlier, the venue for the rendering of dirges in their formal setting is an open clearing that is spacious enough to accommodate mourners from different communities. Canopies are not usually provided. A tree or two may provide the necessary shade during day time. The seating arrangement is normally organised in such a way that the drummers, artists, and apprentices find themselves in the middle of a circle. Men and women do not often sit together. In most cases, men sit on benches and other locally made reclining chairs facing a section of women who sit on mats to mourn. Most of the female relatives of the deceased also find themselves mourning and shaking rattles to the rhythm of drums in the middle of the circle. These female relatives do not mingle with the bards. Their main duty is to mourn and go round the corpse which is normally placed on an improvised seat that is raised a few metres above the

ground. This improvised seat is normally referred to in Sɪsaalɪ as *dabɔgʊ*. This seat is normally provided if the deceased is a woman. On the other hand, if the deceased is a man, he is seated on a skin on the ground; leaning against a wall or a tree.

These days, in most communities, the corpse is no longer placed on the improvised seat raised above the ground (*dabɔgʊ*) or seated on a skin at the funeral grounds. This is attributable to a number of factors. First, the contribution of Christianity and Islam to putting an end to this practice is significant. Followers of these two religions feel that the practice is not only against what pertains in their religious practices but they are also of the view that it is heathen. And since most Sɪsaala are either Christians or Moslems, it means that the custom of placing the corpse outside for some days is usually waived under the practices of these two religions.

The second factor that has led to an end to this custom is the extensive health education campaign that has been carried out to educate the people on the health hazards that the practice brings along with it. Due to the fact that people die of different diseases, some of which are highly contagious, it is often risky to place corpses of deceased people in the open for several days. Flies which sit on such corpses and later sit on other people's food, drink, or even on the bare skin of mourners could pose health risks to such sympathisers. It must be noted that coffins are not normally used in these circumstances. It is this same health education that has led to an end to the practice whereby corpses were buried in residential compounds, or in permanent graves that could be used for the burial of several corpses over a number of years. Indeed, sometime in the past, a corpse could be placed on a seat at the funeral grounds for three days

before it was finally buried. The duration involved in the lying- in- state of the deceased was later reduced to a day and has gradually faded out in most communities.

Finally, it also came to the notice of few community leaders that people with callous intentions usually contrive ways and means of collecting fluids from corpses that are exposed for several days at the funeral grounds. Such fluids are later used to poison people from the same community or from other communities. This is why great care is often taken to dispose of fluids or waste matter from corpses in the most discreet manner to avoid contamination from contagious diseases, and to reduce the risk of such products falling into the hands of people that have ulterior uses for them. In short, putting an end to the custom of laying corpses in state for several days is one sure way of minimising all the risks associated with the custom.

The execution of the dirge is normally led by a professional dirge performer or a group of such artists. Since the performance usually covers both day and night times, the bards may take turns in performing in the middle of the circle. Dirges which are rendered at funerals may consist of familiar songs which the mourners know offhand. Sometimes, some of the dirges are created entirely new. In those communities where the mourners usually join the poet-cantor in performing entire parts of dirges, the sympathisers often wait for the bard to finish with the appellations and an anecdote if the artist intends using any. Once the performer finishes these parts of the dirge and then comes to the song, the entire gathering of men and women join the poet-cantor in executing this part of the dirge.

In some instances, after the bard has caught the attention of some bereaved members or sympathisers by chanting their appellations, one of them may simply come to the centre of the performance and reward the bard with some money. In some cases, the mourner may wait for the entire gathering to finish performing a dirge before he or she then takes centre stage. In this context, the mourner may ask to be given the platform to speak to the entire gathering of mourners. The speech often revolves around the genealogical relationship that existed between the deceased and the mourner; a benevolent service that the deceased once rendered the mourner or any of his relatives; or it may simply focus on the extent to which the mourner is saddened by the demise of the deceased. At the end of the speech, the mourner may start his or her own dirge which the rest of the gathering joins in executing. Usually, the dirge chosen has a close relationship with the theme of the speech made by the mourner. The sympathiser, if he or she is overcome by grief and cannot sing, may give the green light to the poet-cantor to sing a song on his or her behalf. But before the mourner leaves the stage, care is taken to reward the artist or artists. The philosophy here is that it is on the death of an individual that the person's full story in life is told. In consequence, the good deeds and character of the deceased are revealed and extolled on the occasion of his or her death.

It is important to note that in the case where a mourner takes centre stage to formulate dedications to the deceased, such a mourner does not chant appellations. It is only the song which is sung. But in the instance where the sympathiser leaves the option of choosing a song to the bard, the poet-cantor may chant the appellations of the mourner once more before singing the lyrical aspect of the dirge.

A bowl is often placed in front of the drums in which one may put the amount of money that he or she wishes to give away to drummers and poet-cantors alike. In short, any amount of money that is put in the bowl will be shared among drummers and bards at the end of the entire mourning process. On the other hand, if a mourner gives an amount of money to a bard directly, such an amount of money goes into the personal pocket of the artist. In consequence, to remain fair to drummers and poets alike, most mourners reward the artist with some money and also put another amount of money in the bowl. In fact, rewarding poet-cantors and drummers does not involve so much money. Most often, it is coins of five, ten, twenty, and fifty Ghana pesewa denominations which are used. One Ghana cedi denominations are sometimes used and they are considered very handsome rewards. In most communities, the highest reward that can be given to an artist is a smock. Such a reward is considered more valuable than any form of reward. Rewarding dirge performers for their skill and effort is not limited to the Sısaala alone. Alembi reports of a similar practice in the Abanyole community in Kenya. (Alembi, 2002: 120-122)

Musical accompaniment is an integral part of the performance of dirges in Sısaala land. The instruments used in providing music vary from district to district. For instance, while the xylophone is an essential musical instrument during the execution of dirges in the Lambusie and Sısaala West Districts, it is non-existent in the Wa East District and in some communities in the Sısaala East District. In these two districts, castanets, the gourd drum and other drums as well as rattles and traditional flutes are used to provide musical accompaniment. Ululation from the women also adds a touch of rhythm and life to the performance. There are few instances in which the dirge may be performed during a funeral without drumming. For instance, mourners who are late in attending the funeral of a deceased adult may get there after the formal dirge

performance of the funeral is over. Such late comers can still sing the simplest form of the dirge without any drumming, or without any professional poet-cantor leading them in the performance. The death of an adolescent does not call for the formal execution of the dirge with drumming in the traditional set-up. Women who come to mourn with the mother of the adolescent can, however, stay in the compound of the deceased and sing dirges without drumming. Men do not participate in the execution of such dirges, and professional dirge performers are not required. The whole process is described in the local parlance as mourning (*yelle)* and not *haŋyiye tana* or *gɔkɪɪ* because it lacks many features of the formal performance of dirges.

Due to the fact that the formal setting of the dirge normally covers day and night, fire is often built at different locations at the funeral grounds to keep mourners warm. They also light up the place. In communities where there is electricity or a generator, this modern form of energy is used to light up the funeral grounds at night. Women and children who attend the funeral can sleep on their mats on the funeral grounds when they are tired while the men remain sitting on benches or reclining chairs.

In the course of rendering the dirge, the bards normally remain standing while the audience is seated. The audience does not dance to the rhythm of drumming as it pertains in the Abanyole community in Kenya (Alembi, 2002:119). The dirge performers, due to the fact that they remain standing, are usually mobile. They can move to any convenient position to address a mourner in the crowd. In the words of Nketia (1955:9), the singing of the Akan "funeral dirge is usually accompanied by gentle and graceful rocking of the body and the head." This is done to express the feelings of the mourner and to enlist sympathy from the crowd. Apart from using such

movements of the body to enlist sympathy from the audience as it pertains in the Akan context, professional performers among the Sısaala also use body movement as a kind of mnemonic formula which helps them in executing their dirges effectively. Indeed, bards who are directly related to the deceased are not allowed to perform in order to avoid the situation where the artist will only perform more sorrowful dirges that will lead to more heartache for the mourners. In *Preface to Plato,* Havelock explains the close link between body movement and the spoken word in the following terms:

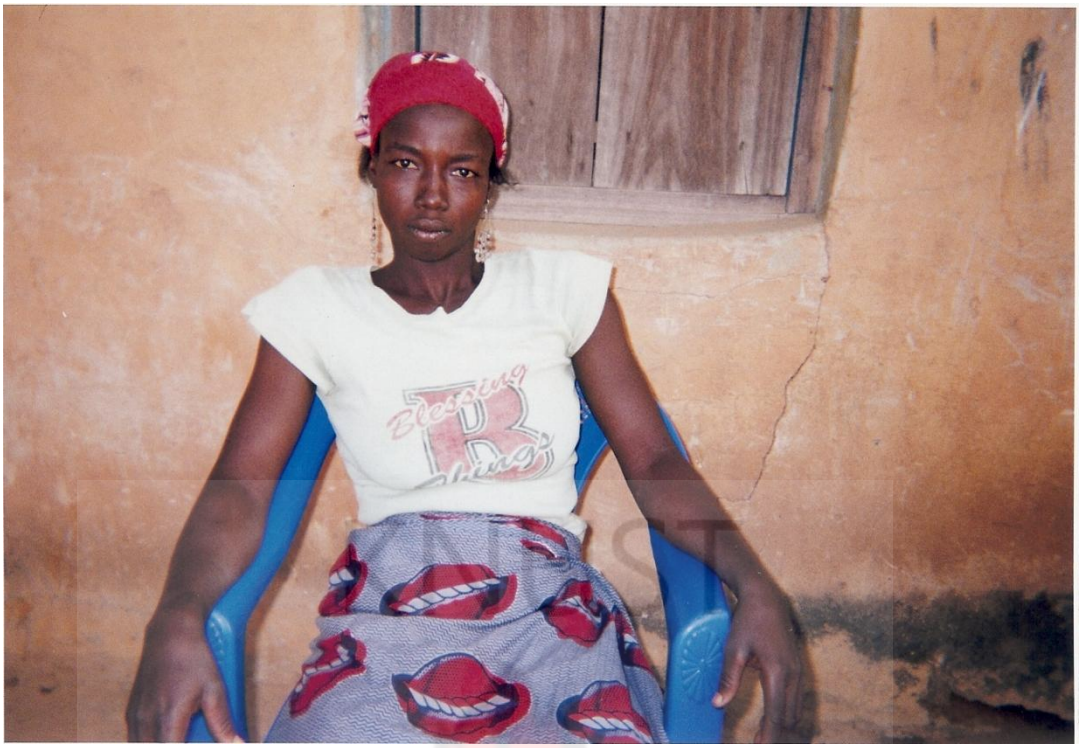
> Finally, there remains yet another part of the body and another set of physical reflexes which can also be set in motion parallel to the motion of the voice organs. These are the legs and feet and their motions as organised in dancing. Once more, as with the use of the lyre, we confront here a pattern of organised actions, the function of which is mnemonic. It moves in a rhythm which parallels the act of spoken words, and spaces and punctuates them, so that the choric recitation becomes also a bodily performance which consists in "acting out" the recital. Yet a third set of reflexes is pressed into service to enforce the memorised sequence. (Havelock, 1963:150)

Poet-cantors do not take money from bereaved people before they go to perform. According to Kuri Baŋmɔ, one of the dirge performers who was interviewed by this researcher, any bard who hears of a funeral within or outside his community is at liberty to go and perform at such a funeral provided he or she is willing. There are, however, some special cases in which the bereaved family may formally request for the services of a particular artist on the death of their beloved. In such a case, the bereaved family does not pay any amount of money to the poet-cantor. All the family does is to provide food, drink, and accommodation to the dirge performer. The family may even give the artist some amount of money if it is so inclined; but it is not obliged by custom or practice to do so. The bard gets his or her reward for coming to the funeral

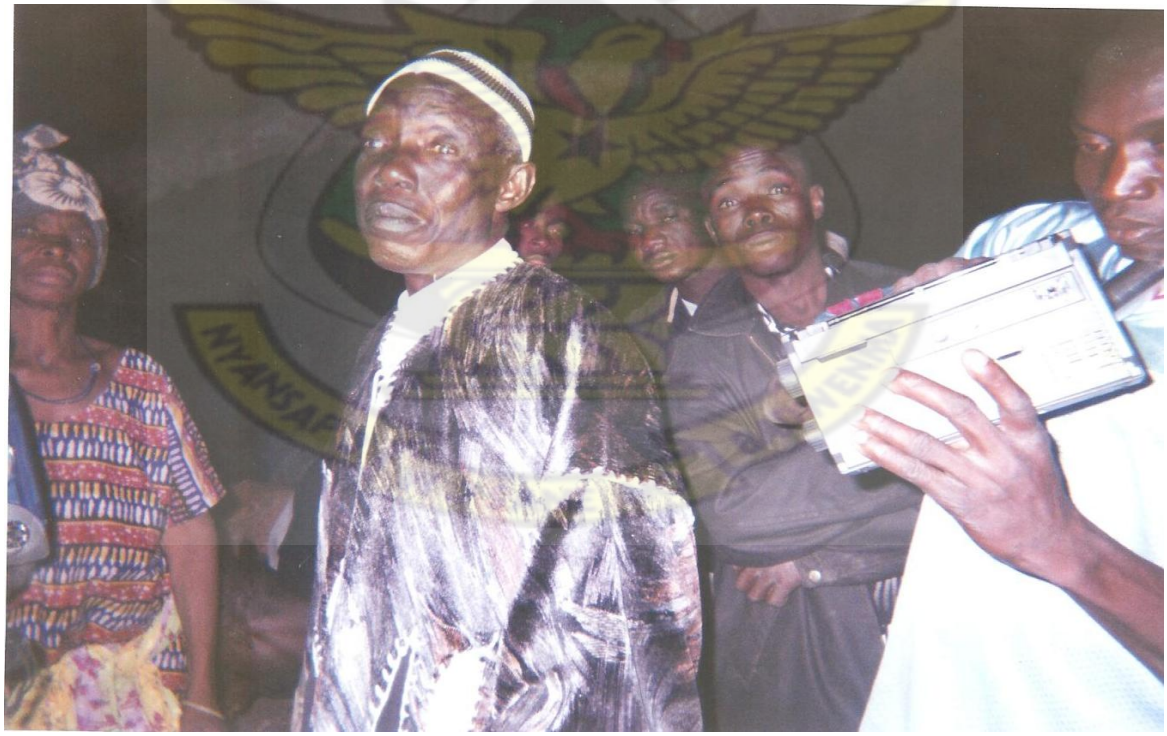
and by performing to the admiration of mourners and sympathisers who then reward the artist with any amount of money that they can part with.

In short, dirges remain an important aspect of the funeral rites that are usually observed on the death of an adult Sısaala man or woman. The execution of dirges is a complete art. One needs a lot of dedication and diligence to graduate as a professional dirge performer (*haŋyiyetaal* or *gɔkʊ*). The performance of the dirge is also a medium of spiritual communication between the dead, the living, and the poet-cantor. This explains the inclusion of the spiritual aspect in the training of professional dirge performers.

It must be observed that there are some variations in the structure of dirges among the Sısaala partly as a result of the different instruments that are normally used in providing musical accompaniment in the course of rendering dirges. Notwithstanding this structural difference, the performance of dirges remains fairly uniform in terms of their organisation within the various communities. The execution of dirges is an interactive performance between poets and mourners in all the four districts. Both mourners and artists contribute towards the materialisation of the oral text. Again, both men and women participate in the rendering of dirges and both sexes have the opportunity to train and become professionals in this field. The subsequent pages in this chapter contain some pictures of poet-cantors and the rendering of dirges at funeral grounds in the Sısaala context.

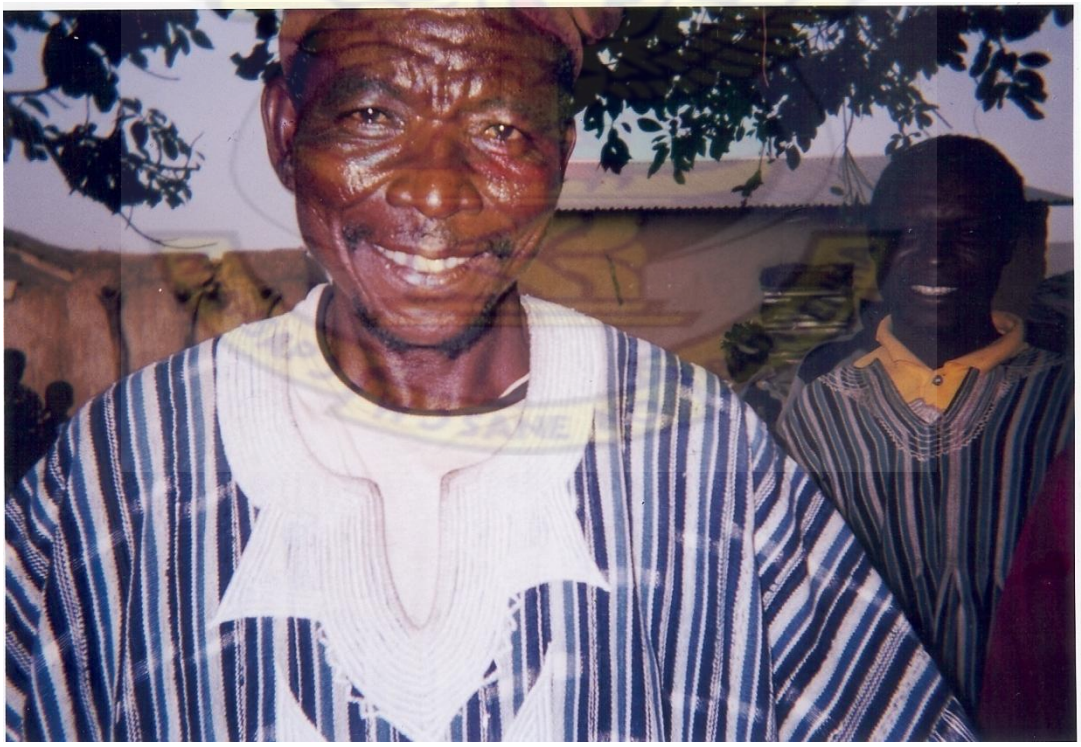


Halukɪ, a lady from Pulma. She is one of the few women who are into professional dirge singing. Photo by the researcher.



Gbawadumah Bafɔgɔ, one of the elders who were interviewed by the researcher. He is a chief and a dirge performer at the same time.

Kuri Baŋmɔ, a young poet-cantor from Sombisi.



Abu, an artist from Bufiama who performed at a funeral at Yaala Number Two. Photo by researcher.

A general view of dirge singing at a funeral. Photo by researcher.

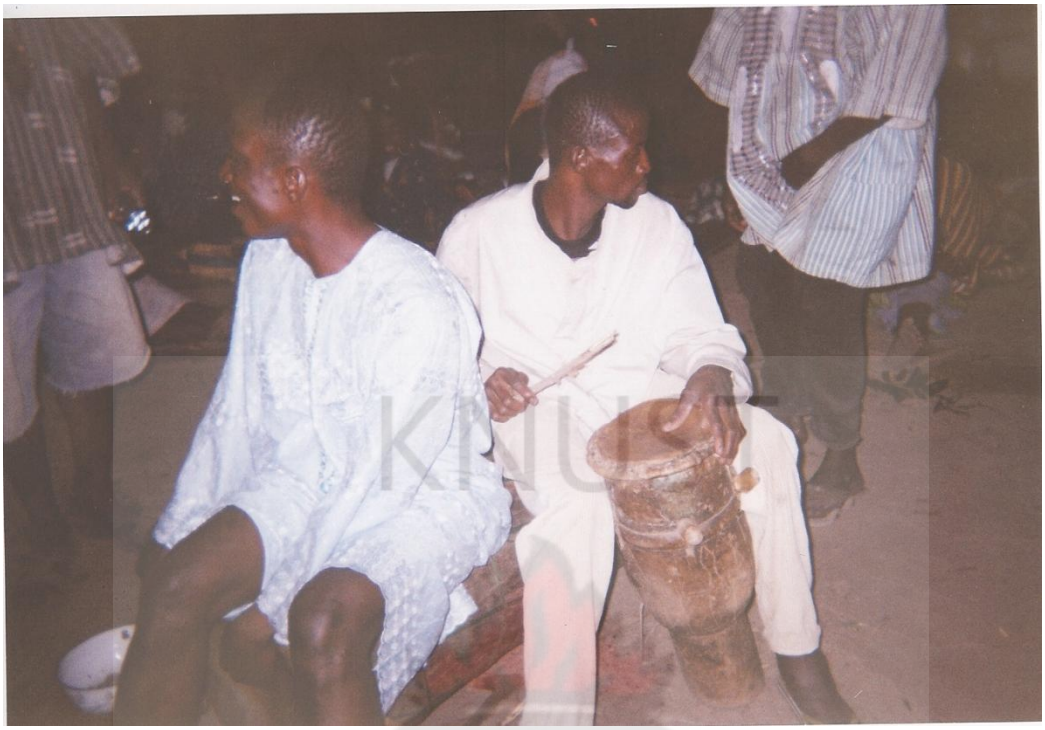
Dirge performers at work on a funeral grounds. Photo by researcher.

Drummers at work on a funeral grounds at Yaala Number Two. Photo by the researcher .

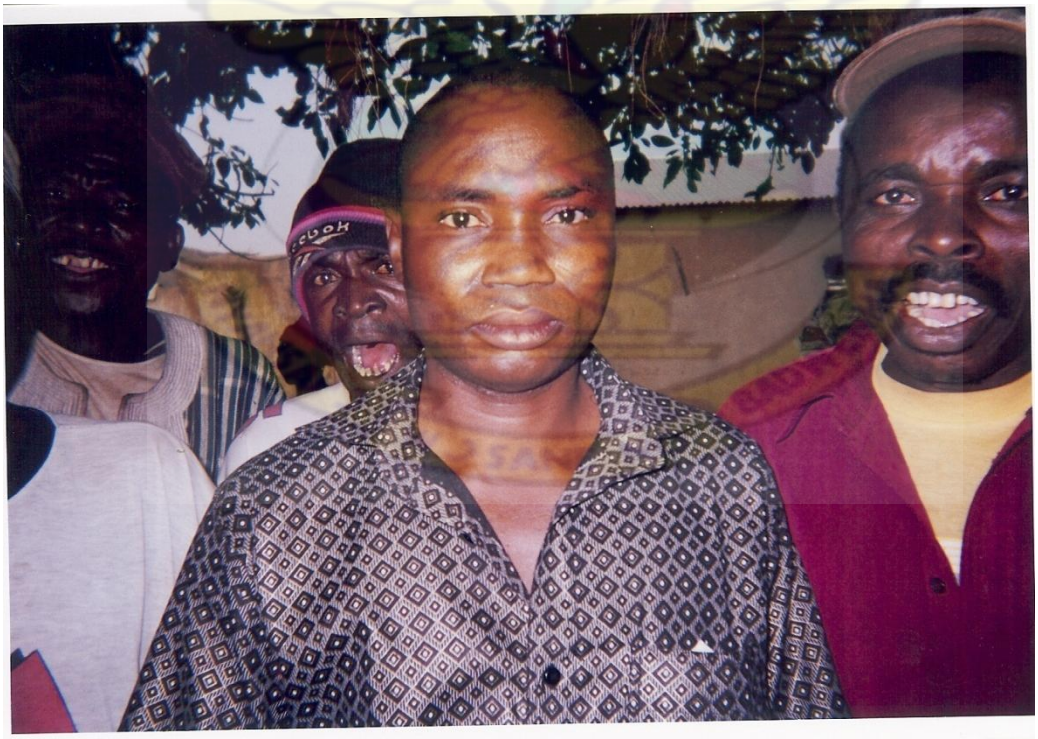
Bards and drummers are normally rewarded with money by relatives of the deceased as well as other sympathisers. The bowl put in front of the drums contains such money. Photo by researcher.

A section of women mourners at a funeral at Yaala No. 2. Rattles are used by women mourners to provide musical accompaniment during the rendering of dirges.

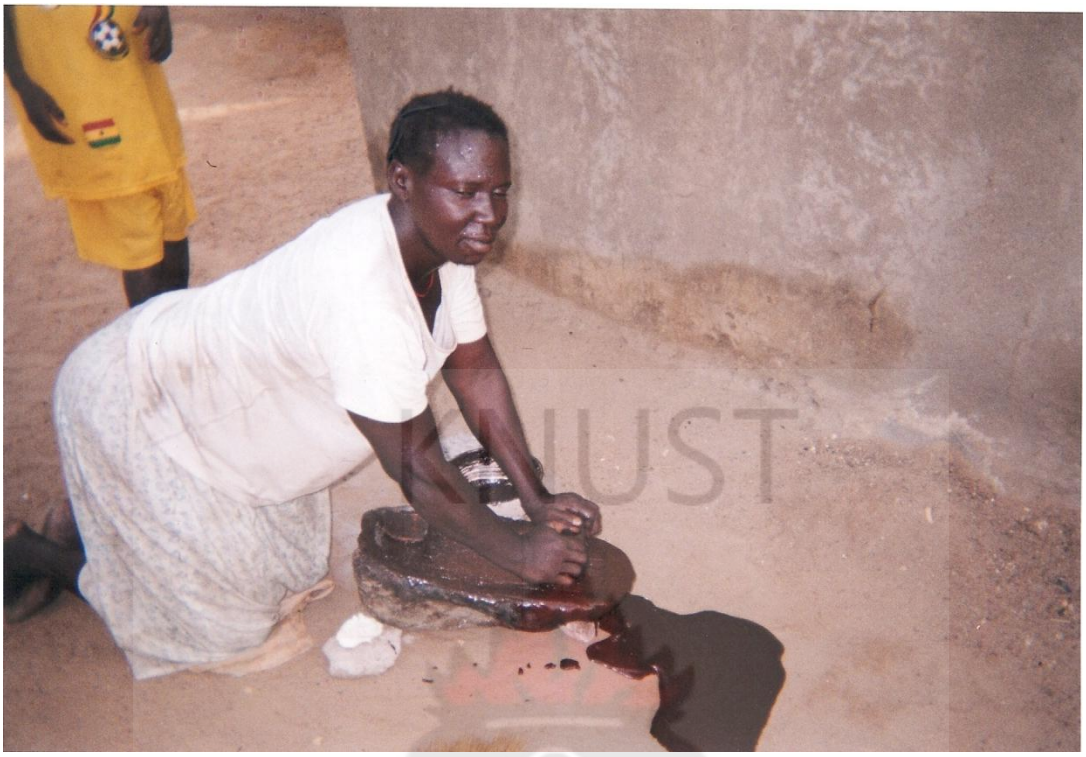
A group of women mourners at a funeral. Photo by researcher.



Drummers at work during a night performance of dirges at Sombisi, a village in the Wa East-District. Photo by researcher.



The researcher at a funeral grounds with some of the poets. Photo by Abu.



Takıba, a woman practicing dirge singing while processing shea nuts for shea butter on a stone. Photo bv the researcher.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SlSAALA DIRGE AS A LITERARY EXPRESSION

Introduction

Attempts made by various literary theorists to come out with a clear-cut definition of what constitutes literary language or literariness have often proved to be knotty (Eagleton, 1983:1-16, Webster, 1996:37-47). Shklovsky's theory of defamiliarisation or estrangement of language as the essence of literary discourse has received as much criticism as Jakobson's theory of the 'poetic' and the foregrounding of language. Some critics consider these two theories on the definition of literary language as being too formalistic in their approach, thus ignoring the historical and social aspects of language. Both theories also seek to create the impression that we have literary language which is quite distinct and always remains so as against normal discourse because the former 'thickens' and draws attention to itself. This absolute differentiation between literary and non-literary discourse is what some critics, including Roger Webster, find unacceptable. Roger Webster observes that:

> Certainly I think it is dangerous to have rigid categories and boundaries as to literary and non-literary discourse. Literary discourse is a 'relative' category both formally and historically and thus liable to change and open to redefinition. Its formal characteristics emerge by differentiation from other kinds of language, and its historical nature by differentiation from - or compliance with – official and conventional discourses. It would be unhelpful and inaccurate to suggest, as some critics have, that literary language is an entirely subjective phenomenon, in the eye of the beholder so to speak, which would ignore the larger social and ideological aspects of language and literary discourse. (Webster, 1996:46)

Both Eagleton and Webster have expressed some reservation about the rigid estrangement of language as constituting literary discourse because language that may appear special to us today

may not enjoy the same status tomorrow. In another context, language that may appear estranged to one class of people may not necessarily enjoy the same status with another group of people due to differences in their social background. Besides this, estrangement of language does not necessarily result in the the production of good literature since we have slang in English language whose use does not automatically result in the production of literary language. It is also interesting to note that if the estrangement of language is to hold as the definition of literary discourse, then there would be no literariness in natural language and this would automatically mean that naturalism as a movement has no place in literature.

Due to the encompassing and complex nature of literary discourse, Webster suggests that, "Perhaps a more profitable approach to adopt is to see all forms of writing, all texts, as employing various devices of language and narrative which seek to establish certain kinds of knowledge and validity." (Webster, 1996: 47) Some of the devices may be too familiar to us while others may be esoteric, difficult, and complex. In analysing any text for its literary value, attention must also be paid not only to the devices of language used in it but to the "forms of textuality" which "may display literary qualities or have complexities and subtleties equivalent to the 'literary' which have been ignored or dismissed because of the way in which 'literature' has been traditionally viewed or constructed." (Webster, 1996:47) Webster's approach to what constitutes literary discourse is more embracing and useful when one comes to the area of analysing the creative use of language in oral arts.

It is also interesting to note that the question of whether literary discourse exists in African oral texts and in other oral pieces in the world has already been settled. Evidence marshalled by

critics on African oral literature has so far proven that there is literary discourse in oral literature. This is because there is ample creativity in oral arts that warrants their description as genres of literature with regard to their content and form. (Finnegan, 1976, Nandwa and Bukenya, 1983, p'Bitek, 1974, Okpewho, 1992.) Indeed, N. K. Chadwick is of the view that the relationship between literature and writing is an accidental one. He explains that there are millions of people throughout Asia, Polynesia and Africa who have no knowledge of writing. This does not, however, imply that they have no literatures. To him, "Writing is unessential to either the composition or the preservation of literature. The two arts are wholly distinct." (Chadwick, 1939:77) In consequence, the focus in this chapter is to advance further the evidence that creativity, and by extension, literary language exists in African oral culture by analysing some sample dirges from the research field. The analysis will revolve around the identification and examination of some devices of language as well as the forms of narrative in these oral pieces which manifest the creativity and literariness embedded in them. The contribution of these language devices and forms of narrative to the style and content of these oral pieces would also receive the necessary attention.

Elements of Prose in the Sɪsaala Dirge

Most of the early critics have been consistent in classifying tales, proverbs, and riddles as prose in their approach to African oral literature. The same method of classification has been used by Finnegan in her *Oral Literature in Africa*. In this book, Finnegan does not only classify tales under prose but she also examines their content, plot, main characters, occasions for their performance, and the specific role of narrators. Other areas of tales that have received attention

in Finnegan's study include their purpose and functions, their literary conventions, their performance, originality, and the issue of authorship. (Finnegan, 1976:335-388)

It is interesting to note, however, that both Dennis Tedlock and Okpewho are opposed to the classification of tales as a prose genre. In Tedlock's view, there is no prose in oral literature. Prose only exists on the written page but outside which it ceases to exist. (Tedlock, 1977:513) He is of the view that we can only talk about poetry when we are dealing with oral literature since in the course of performing a narrative, various pauses and breath gaps are observed by the narrator due to the dramatic tension emanating from the narrative. Besides this, the performer uses different levels of vocalisation such as high, medium, low, and soft pitches of voice to articulate various emotions at different levels of the narrative. All these techniques which are employed in performing narratives are not catered for by the prose format when it comes to the documentation of such tales. Tedlock is therefore of the view that prose as a genre does not aptly describe oral narratives.

Okpewho is against the use of prose in describing oral narratives because to him, "the distinction traditionally observed between prose and verse does not make much sense in the study of oral narratives." (1992:163-4) Quite apart from this, Okpewho further observes that "… in many performances of oral narratives in Africa the artist moves quite freely between speech, chant, and song modes—— so freely sometimes that it is difficult to determine where one ends and the other begins." (1992:164) Notwithstanding the reasons advanced by both Tedlock and Okpewho, this researcher has decided to classify tales used in Sısaala dirges as prose for a reason. Apart from the fact that many critics of oral literature continue to classify tales as prose in many texts,

the narratives used in Sɪsaala dirges are also different in form and content from the stories usually told by the fireside in the evenings.

In most cultures, storytelling is a form of entertainment that is provided on evenings of relaxation. (Okpewho, 1992:222) It is the same situation that pertains in the Sɪsaala context. Tales which are performed in their formal setting are normally referred to as '*mvla*' in the Pasaalɪ dialect or *svŋsvgla* in other Sɪsaalɪ dialects. They are usually a mixture of animal, human, and fairy-tales. They range from the serious to the satiric and the comic in mood. Children often gather around elderly people to listen to such oral pieces. There are other instances in which the tale can be can be used outside its formal setting. It can be evoked in a conversation between elders in order to teach a lesson, buttress a point, or to sound a word of caution to a listening party. It is also used in the context of the funeral for a practical illustration of the meaning of the dirge. When a tale is evoked outside its formal setting in the Sɪsaala context, it loses its label as '*mvl*'. It becomes '*namaga*' which is a term used to designate a proverb, a parable, or a riddle.

The change in the label is not the only metamorphosis that the tale undergoes when it is evoked outside its formal setting. The occasion for the performance of the oral narrative also changes once it is evoked outside the fireside milieu. '*Namaga*' can be told at any time of the day. The audience of '*namaga*' is not children but grown-ups and the comic element is almost missing in it. '*Namaga*' is more serious, brief, and is devoid of the song performance which intersperses storytelling in Africa. In the funeral context, tales used to illustrate the meaning of dirges are not interspersed with song performance. The song is performed only at the end of the tale. Appellations may be chanted in the course of narrating the tale but these are not an integral part

of the tale. They are appellations of mourners at the funeral grounds and they are chanted to attract the attention of such mourners. In consequence, it is the song which is performed at the end of the tale that has a logical connection with the narrative. However, the song and the appellations have been considered under a different sub-heading and this means that we are left with only the narrated text. The execution of the narrated text does not involve a switch between speech, chant, and song. It is mainly made up of a narrated text which does reflect rhythm (the repetition of stresses and pauses), meter (the occurrence of regular units of stressed and unstressed syllables) or rhyme (the formalised consonance of syllables) and this is why this researcher prefers to use prose and not poetry under this sub-heading. It must be noted, however, that the sub-title *Elements of Prose in the Sɪsaala Dirge* does not naturally imply that we do not have instances in which there is the use of some poetic devices in these anecdotes. Some poetic elements do occur in these prose narratives but not to the extent that one would expect to find in the appellations or the songs. Besides this, the most important elements of poetry in the form of rhyme and rhythm do not feature prominently in these prose narratives. The text mainly consists of prose.

In an article entitled *Nana Ampadu and the Sung Tale*, Kwesi Yankah explains a similar situation in the Akan context in which the tale can be evoked outside its conventional fireside milieu. In instances where tales are used as rhetorical tools for persuasion, their name automatically changes. Indeed Yankah observes that:

> Yet in certain cultural domains tales, like proverbs, are also rhetorical so long as they are tools for persuasion, and they can be spontaneously evoked in conventional talk to demonstrate a lesson, teach a moral, or reinforce an argument. The basis of the close link between the proverb (brief, dense) and the tale (long, explicit) is that despite the varying structural features, the

> proverb and the folktale are the most accessible genres in which morals are embedded. It is not surprising that, in certain cultures, the two attract a single label. In cultures where different labels are used, such as among the Akan of Ghana, the tale (*anansesem*) attracts the label proverb (*ebe*) when it is triggered in normal discourse outside the conventional fireside milieu. (Yankah 2000:138)

Consequently, the following prose narrative which has been used as an integral part of a dirge has been criticised in the subsequent pages in order to illustrate the literary quality of the Sısaala dirge.

Banıhıyawv rı sii, a kanı v haarv aŋ nyvrımı. Wıısı a yaa wıya, banıhıyawv sıya dvŋ daa nyvrımıya amɛ v penni mɛ svwa rɛ. Kyiye buro banıhıyawv bee v haarv kı gyvv dıya, banıhıyawv a pına a bagısı, bagısı haarv rɛ aŋ sii. Waa bı wuwo a kı kyɛ haarv kıpınıı tvwa.

Ɛɛrɛ kyɛ kvwala, banıhıyawv sii a laha pına gyaŋı tvwa. Ʊ pına gyaŋı tvwa a kı mv kı maga ɛɛ dı piinıhe kiire geri v fa a kı kaŋ banıhıyawv garv tvwa gyvv. Ɛɛrɛ geri bvrı pa banıhıyawv,"Banıhıyawv, dı ını kı wuwo laa ŋ mııbori ta paŋ, ŋ sı kyısı ı penni a pɛɛ." Ɛɛrɛ piinihe mɛ bvrı pa banıhıyawv a bvrı, "Banıhıyawv, dı ını kı leŋ dı ŋ kaŋ geri a dii a fıyali ŋ losuu haŋ nyɛ, ŋ sı suri ı sıya pɛɛ. Lɛɛlɛɛ nyɛ waa, banıhıyawv aa kyɛ v sıya rɛ, a bıra kı kyɛ penni mɛ kyusino. Bakıbee rɛ waa lıısı aŋ leŋ bakıbee?

Ɛɛrɛ banıhıyawv sii a gyvv dıya a gyvv kana gyımıı kı pa piinihe. Piinihe laa gyımıı haa, a di. Lɛɛlɛɛ haa, dı piinihe sıya fıyalıya rɛ. Ɛɛrɛ piinihe sii haa, a gyına Wıısı nyuu aŋ kı tuu paası banıhıyawv sıya abee v naanifila kııŋu. Lɛɛlɛɛ dı kyalv a laha banıhıyawv sıya tvwa. Banıhıyawv kana v neni gyına lanı v sıya haa, dı v sıya suriye. Ɛɛrɛ haa, gebari mɛ sii haa, nyaratatata dı v

kaŋ gyee kuu nyuhu gyına. Ʊ gyına saga gyee nyuhu aŋ kana ʋ nyuhu gyollo aŋ kaŋ tuu bını. Lɛɛlɛ dı banıhıyawʋ penni ka sii rɛ kpogu, kpogu, kpogu anı gyaagu penni. Ɛɛrɛ tɔɔ bırı, banıhıyawu yırı ʋ haarʋ dı ʋ kaŋ kıı bını ba pına. Ɛɛrɛ banıhıyawʋ haarʋ bʋrı dı banıhıyawʋ mɛ tırı a bı wuwo wıı buro kı yaa aŋ aa kı walımı nara bee pına wıya. Ɛɛrɛ banıhıyawʋ tarı ʋ nyʋwa. Haarʋ kı kaŋ kıı bını haa, banıhıyawʋ tuu pına haa, dı ʋ kpa haarʋ pına.

"There lived an old man who had a wife but was blind. In God's mysterious way, the old man was blind as well as impotent. Each day when the old man went to bed with his wife, he would only lie down and admire the wife till day break. He could not make love to his wife in bed. Then one day, the old man went out and lay down under a shed. After lying down under the shed for a while, a hawk chased a male lizard and the lizard ran under the smock of the old man. Then the lizard said to the old man, "Old man! If you will save my life for me, I will make you a potent man." Then the hawk also said to the old man, "Old man! If you will allow me to catch and eat this lizard to satisfy my hunger, I will restore your sight for you." Indeed, the old man needed his sight as badly as he needed his potency. Which of the two would he choose; which one could he let go?

The old man, after listening to both the hawk and the lizard, got up and went and caught one of his own fowls for the hawk. This was to ensure that the lizard's life would be spared and the hunger of the hawk satisfied. The hawk accepted the fowl from the old man and ate it. After it had finished eating, the hawk became satisfied. The hawk then flew unto the sky and flew down again unto the face of the old man and scratched it with its claws. In no time, the old man's face was bleeding and the old man decided to wipe the blood off his face. When he did it, he gained

back his sight. Then the male lizard also got up and ran unto a broken wall. The lizard lay on the broken wall and nodded its head. After the lizard nodded its head several times, in no time at all, the male organ of the old man had jumped "*kpogu, kpogu, kpogu*" like that of a male horse. When it got dark, the old man called his wife to come and lay the bed. Then the wife told the old man that though he was inefficient in bed, he worried her a lot anytime it was dark. The old man never uttered a word. Then the wife finally came and prepared the bed; and that night, the old man was able to satisfy his wife sexually in bed."

Evidently, the logical conclusion that one can draw from the tale is that the old man has a lot of wisdom. Through this wisdom, he is able to satisfy the demands of both the hawk and the male lizard. As a result of the old man's ability to satisfy the requests of both animals, they in turn, fulfil their promises made to their host. In consequence, it is not surprising that the moral that is captured in the song that follows the tale is that one good turn deserves another (*Yaa wasɪ ɪ dɔŋ nɛ/ Ʊ mɛ kyiye wasɛɛ*)

Some language devices have been used by the artist to enliven the performance and to bring it close to real life experience. This in turn enables the poet-cantor to drum home the lesson contained in the narrative. The first of these devices are ideophones in the forms of '*kɪɪŋʋ*', '*nyaratata*,' and '*kpogu, kpogu, kpogu*.' These are words which have been used by the poet-narrator to portray the full effect of the force with which the hawk scratches the old man's face (*kɪɪŋʋ*), the speed with which the male lizard runs unto the broken wall (*nyaratata*), and the old man's sexual virility (*kpogu, kpogu*). It must be observed that in the tale, the hawk needs to scratch the host's face with full force so that blood will flow in order to necessitate the wiping of

such a face. It is in the mystical act of wiping blood from the face that the old man's sight is restored. In the same vein, *'nyaratata'* is used to describe the typical manner in which lizards run. The lizard also has to regain the broken wall with speed because the hawk has already made good his promise to the old man and there is pressure on the lizard to do likewise. '*Kpogu, kpogu, kpogu'* has also been repeated not only to capture the image of the typically erected male organ of a horse but it is also employed to reflect the sexual prowess that the host has gained back. The repetition is also employed to emphasise the reality that the man has actually regained his sexual potency. In effect, the three expressions do not add aesthetic quality alone in terms of their sound to the tale but they also contribute to the drama of the story by capturing the full effect of the activities that they describe.

In addition to the use of ideophones, a simile is also used to compare the old man's sexual prowess to that of a male horse after the former becomes potent again. The male horse is well known for its sexual virility in Sɪsaala culture and it is only apt that reference should be made to it on issues of this nature. Pun, in the form of '*pɪna*' has also been used in the last sentence of the story. '*Pɪna*' is a verb that can mean to lie down or to sleep when it is used intransitively. When it is used transitively as it has been employed in the latter part of the last sentence with wife (*haarʋ*) as the object, it refers to the act of making love. Even the use of '*pɪna*' to designate the act of making love is euphemistic and this is meant to reduce the shock contained in a crude way of describing the act. The bard is quite aware of the presence of children and adolescents at the funeral grounds and hence the need to remain decorous and oblique in the description of acts that are regarded as solemn and sacred in African culture. The rhetorical question used in relation to whether the old man should choose his sight over his sexual potency also heightens the conflict

in the narrative. Indeed, the old man needs both, and it would be difficult to make a choice that places one need above the other.

Finally, symbols have also been employed in the story to facilitate the understanding of the meaning of the dirge. The hawk is well known for its good sight and therefore symbolises sight in the story. The horse and the male lizard both symbolise male virility since they are known for that in Sısaala culture. The fowl is equally known for its intercessory role in the relationship between Africans and their Creator, divinities, and ancestors as illustrated in the following lines from *Death in the Dawn*:

> On this
> Counterpane it was-
> Sudden winter at the death
> Of dawn's lone trumpeter. Cascades
> Of white feather- flakes…but it proved
> A futile rite. Propitiation sped…(Soyinka, 1986:64-65)

It is also significant to note that though the tale is not interspersed with song performance which allows audience to participate in and sustain their interest in the narrative, the poet-cantor still manages to enlist the attention of mourners through the use of '*haa*'. '*Haa*' is an expression that has been used about six times towards the end of the narrative. It is an expression that is often employed in conversations in order to sustain the interest of the listening party. Its use in a discourse demands a simple *'mhmm'* from the interlocutor to assure the locutor that he or she is listening and, therefore, the conversation can go on. Children are fond of using the expression in their conversations because they usually want the listening party to show interest in their stories.

It is equally worthy to note the performer's ability to weave a simple but logical plot about man and other elements from his environment. In effect, the major question that seems to emerge from the plot is: If so much satisfaction can be derived from a relationship that is built on trust, then what prevents man from replicating the same thing in his dealings with others on daily bases? In short, the tale may not reflect language that 'thickens' and draws attention to itself but it certainly displays an ingenious use of language and subtlety of narration that bring out the creative ability of the artist.

Elements of Drama in the Sɪsaala Dirge

The most authoritative source which is often referred to when it comes to the definition and elements that constitute classical drama is Aristotle's *Poetics*. In *The Poetics*, Aristotle furnishes us with an implicit definition of drama in general by comparing comedy and tragedy to the epic. Thus, whereas both tragedy and comedy involve the use of spectale and melody, the epic does not contain these two elements. Drama, therefore, is a story that is acted out, not narrated. Aristotle further defines tragedy for us. Most documents from the classical period also dwell on aspects of drama.

One of the closest definitions of drama which has also been gleaned from the classical period is the one quoted by Dryden in his essay entitled *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. In this essay, Dryden quoted Lisideuis who defines a play as, "A just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humans, and changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind."(1982:603) This definition of a play reflects the essential elements of drama. First, drama is a mirror that reflects man himself, his passions, and

tribulations. Drama also seeks to instruct man as well as provide him with delight. Some of these components of drama which are in Lisideuis' definition of a play can be identified in most ritual performances and festivals in Africa.

Aristotle's definition of tragedy singles it out not only as an aspect of drama but as a literary genre that may have close affinity with the dirge. Thus tragedy does not only involve imitation, performance, audience, music and so forth, but it also deals with instruction through the treatment of serious issues that involve change of fortune and possible death. It is the serious nature of issues normally treated in tragedy that brings it closer to the execution of dirges since their performance also involves change of fortune as experienced by man on this earth. It must be admitted, however, that Aristotle himself has also highlighted some parts of tragedy which he sets out as elements that must be reflected in any tragic play in addition to those already mentioned in this paragraph. They include plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and music. (Allan H. Gilbert, 1982:76-77) These are all outlined in *The Poetics*.

In *Reading Fiction, Poetry, Drama and the Essay*, Robert Di Yanni defines drama as "a staged art."(1994:755) This definition gives cognisance to the fact that drama involves performance since it must be staged, be it in the theatre or at the village square. Di Yanni also goes further to identify plot, character, dialogue, staging, and theme as the essential elements of drama in its broad spectrum.

Having looked at the definition of drama as well as the ingredients constituting it, this researcher is of the view that it would be expedient, at this stage of analysis, to have a cursory look at the

history of Greek or Western drama. This approach would enable us to identify the core components of drama at its very beginning and to ascertain whether some elements which have become an integral part of contemporary Western drama are mere elaborations of the core elements or not.

This approach is necessary because first, it would enable us to establish that even in the Western world, it is not all dramatists who agree on every single element that should go into the composition of every play. Some of the elements such as plot, characterisation, and representation are core whereas others that have to do with the duration of the action of the play, the division of the play into a number of acts, and the kind of language used by actors on stage may vary from one dramatist to another. Second, a cursory look at the birth of Western drama would enable us identify some of its fundamental elements that can be traced to the Sısaala dirge.

Information abounds on how Greek drama started and later spread to the rest of Europe during the Renaissance period. One dominant idea concerning the birth of Greek drama is that it developed from rituals and celebrations honouring Greek gods, particularly Dionysus. During such celebrations, some of the basic and most important ingredients of drama such as chorus, a chorus leader, and audience were usually present. Music and dance also formed an important part of such rituals. The combination of these fundamental ingredients coupled with performance in an open space in the celebration of rituals honouring Dionysus marked the birth of drama. It was much later that an actor, detached from the chorus but who engaged in dialogue with the chorus, was introduced. Writing on the birth of Greek drama, Di Yanni makes the following observation:

> Greek drama developed from celebrations honouring Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and fertility. These celebrations included choric dancing as part of the religious ritual. It is possible that the leader of the chorus (the choragus) may have engaged the rest of the chorus in responsive chanting. Legend suggests that the poet Thespis introduced a speaker who, detached from the chorus, engaged in dialogue with it. At that point drama was born. A second actor was added by Aeschylus (524-456BC) and a third by Sophocles (496?-406). (Di Yanni, 1994:803)

Since Aristotle gave his definition of tragedy and its various components, a lot of other elements on drama have been churned out to guide playwrights in their dramatic compositions. Such components of drama include the view that a play must have a certain number of acts, a particular number of scenes within an act, and that there must be the use of decorous language, especially in tragedy. Some of the rules on drama also include the view that a play must have unity of plot, unity of place, and unity of time. A lot of these elements cropped up in the course of the development of Western drama.

Right from the Renaissance period in Europe, some critics and dramatists have reacted harshly to the rules in the above paragraph, labelling such prescriptions as a hindrance to creativity and artistic expression while other writers also advocated strict adherence to these rules. The opponents to the rules argue that drama as a literary genre is closer to real life than the other two genres of poetry and prose. Drama is supposed to be a reflection of what goes on in society; and since society itself is dynamic, it is only natural that drama should reflect this element of dynamism in its form and content.

Prominent among the opponents of a strict adherence to the rules and regulations in dramatic compositions is the French progressive poet and dramatist, Victor Hugo. In his preface to *Cromwell*, Victor Hugo advocates respect for the rule on the unity of action while condemning those on the unities of place and time as stumbling blocks to artistic expression.

Pierre Corneille, another French dramatist, also wrote an essay entitled *On the Three Unities*. In this essay, Corneille gives priority to the unity of action as the most important. The other two unities of time and place are considered as recommendable elements though their strict application in plays that they do not fit in is completely discouraged. Corneille argues that in drama, what is essential is the ingredient of verisimilitude. In consequence, if the strict application of rules in dramatic composition will render a play more artificial than natural, then it is better such rules are not used at all in drama. Corneille concludes his essay *On the Three Unities* by giving the following piece of advice to critics:

> It is easy for speculative critics to be severe but if they would give ten or twelve dramatic poems to the public, they might perhaps enlarge their rules even more than I have done, as soon as they realised by experience what constraint their precision required and how many beauties it banned from the stage. However that may be, these are my opinions, or if you will, my heresies on the principal points of dramatic art; and I do not know how better to harmonise ancient rule and modern taste. (Corneille, 1982:579)

True to the words of Hugo and Corneille, a lot of playwrights have come out with interesting and popular plays that do not embody most of the ancient rules on drama. Samuel Beckett, in *Waiting for Godot*, for instance, does not divide his play into five acts. He neither divides the play into scenes nor provides music to mark the end of each scene or act. The chorus has been eliminated and the play is acted out within a time of forty-eight hours. Despite Beckett's failure to make

provision for these rules, he is still able to achieve unity of plot in *Waiting for Godot.* The principal action in the play is waiting. It is a continuous action that takes place at the same place and needs not be divided into scenes.

Analysis of the definition and development of Western drama points to certain interesting features about written drama. First, written drama as we know it in the present form originated from drama in the traditional context which is embedded in rituals, festivals, and other traditional ceremonies. Second, it is not all the conventions on written drama which are applicable to every play text. Third, traditional oral drama and written drama may share certain common features but the fact is that they are obtained in different forms; and there are different conventions governing their organisation, composition, and performance. Consequently, it should be more helpful to consider each form of drama on its own merit instead of trying to impose the conventions of written drama on the traditional in order to ascertain the existence of drama in the latter. Commenting on the limitation of using play texts as a yardstick in determining the existence of drama in traditional African rituals, Michael Etherton makes the following observation in *The Development of African Drama*:

> The definitions of Western dramatic art derive from the model and precepts of Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher and teacher who formulated his analysis 2,300 years ago. Aristotle's critique concentrates entirely on the final product, the art manifest in a performance; and any surviving coercive function for drama is based on this analysis of an aesthetic. (Etherton, 1982:32)

Evidently, Aristotle's interest in dramatic performance is not only limited to the art manifest in a performance but it is also limited to the Western concept of written drama. Drama manifest in the rituals of traditional set-ups has not been adequately catered for under Aristotle's analysis of

the subject. This explains why in an essay entitled *Bharata and the Western Concept of Drama*, V. Y. Kantak observes that, "it is possible to say that Aristotle's approach to poetry and art in general is of greater universal validity than his approach to drama. The latter, as was but natural, was heavily biased by closeness to Greek practice, to Tragedy especially ——— that great artistic achievement of the Greek spirit." (Kantak, 2001:32)

Indeed, some African critics also believe that there is no drama (in the European sense, that is), in African oral traditions. Rotimi (1981), Echeruo (1973), and Horn (1981) are all of the view that there is no drama, in the Western sense, in African ritual performances. Echeruo in particular condemns the absence of a clear storyline (mythos) in Igbo ritual performances and proposes that the Igbo should learn from the growth of Greek drama from previous ritual ceremonies. To him, Igbo ritual performance as it exists is a dead end. (Echeruo, 1973:30) In reaction to Echeruo's views, Ossie Enekwe observes that, "myth is not the essence of drama, that the structure of drama is determined by the function that theatre serves in a particular culture, and that, far from being a dead end, ritual can easily be transformed into drama." (Enekwe, 1981:162)

It must be observed, however, that despite the fact that traditional drama in the oral context has not been adequately catered for in some definitions and analysis of the subject, some features that are dramatic in nature can still be identified in ritual performances in Africa. In most African rituals, aspects of drama such as performance, actors, audience, theme, the use of dialogue, music and dance as well as the use of costume can be identified. In most instances, an aspect of enactment is also involved in such rituals. The view that festivals and rituals in Africa manifest some elements of drama has been supported by Oyekan Owomeyela in his book entitled *African*

Literatures: An Introduction. In his own words, Owomeyela puts it that, "Traditional festivals incorporate many elements that are dramatic in the sense that they feature elements such as costuming, impersonation and the representation of past occurrences. The same can be said of all traditional cultures around the world." (Owomeyela, 1979: 113) The execution of the Sɪsaala dirge involves some elements of performance and their discussion will help bring out some features of drama in dirge performances in Ghana.

The first dramatic element that forms an integral part of Sɪsaala dirges is impersonation and the representation of occurrences from the world of tales. In the tale cited under elements of prose in the Sɪsaala dirge, the artist does not only impersonate the personalities of the hawk, lizard and the old man, but the full story from the world of tales is re-enacted in the human world in order to make it intelligible to the audience. In the course of narrating the story, characters are impersonated by the bard through the use of different shades of voice to represent each one, and through the use of specific bodily gestures as well as facial expressions in order to impersonate the characters in the tale. This form of impersonation brings about some level of verisimilitude in the story thus making the tale well represented to the audience of mourners. In oral literature, according to Okpewho, "The language of the songs and dramatic movements contribute to the sublimity of the representation in the performance." (Okpewho, 1992:263)

In addition to the issue of impersonation and enactment, there are also replica forms of actors, audience, and theatre in the Sɪsaala dirge as one may find in the performance of a written play. In this context, the mourners constitute the audience and the poet-narrators and drummers are the actors. The village square serves as the theatre in which the performance is carried out. Special

scenery is usually created at the village open square through the seating arrangement of men, women, and artists at the funeral grounds which has been fully discussed in chapter two. This is further enhanced through the building of fire at different locations on the funeral grounds at night to provide light and to keep mourners warm. In this scenario, actors do not charge specific fee for their performance though they are often encouraged to perform better through voluntary donations from mourners. In much the same way, the audience does not pay any amount of money in order to participate in the performance of dirges. Due to the fact that both cantors (actors) and mourners (audience) contribute towards the materialisation of the oral text, there is usually a better interaction between the two sides as compared to what takes place in a typical Western play.

Theme remains one of the important aspects of drama which can be identified in Sısaala dirges. Writing on the structural unity of the Akan dirge, Apronti observes that, "Content-wise, most texts evince a unity in their structure. Not only are they concerned with a particular topic, they generally draw on vocabulary from a set field or scatter. They thus evince coherence of theme or of subject." (asrv008002007) In the Sısaala context, dirges generally draw their vocabulary from the world of death, history, nature, and from everyday life as illustrated in subsequent pages. In consequence, they evince a common theme in which life and death find enough expression. It is believed that death is an integral part of life and that man is helpless in the face of it. Since man cannot overcome death on this earth, it is better for him to make the best out of his short stay on it by living a life that is acceptable to his Creator, his gods and ancestors, his parents, and the community as a whole. This is a preoccupation that always finds adequate expression in the performance of Sısaala dirges.

Dialogue is also one of the dramatic components that is usually given adequate expression in the performance of Sısaala dirges. A form of dialogue is normally resorted to when members of the audience (mourners) come to the centre of the funeral grounds to formulate their dedications or to explain the genealogical relationship between them and the deceased; or better still, to give an account of how they got acquainted with the deceased when he or she was still alive. During such narrations, the audience does not just listen but they also chip in expressions such as "It is the truth!" (*Wıı tırı rɛ*!), "That is the truth!" (*ı bee nyıya*!), to show their agreement with the account that is being narrated. Sometimes too, some members of the audience may engage in interactions that may interfere with the interpretation of dirges. In instances of this nature, the bards usually respond by reminding members of the audience that they are at the funeral grounds to mourn and not to make noise. This explains why expressions such as "Listen attentively!" (*Ma leŋ yɔwɔɔ*!) or "Beat the drums properly!" (*Ma ŋmɔɔ kıya ba sii*!) are common among Sısaala dirge performers on the funeral grounds. Dialogue, in this sense, is usually held between the artists and the audience in general or between the artists and certain individuals among the mourners. These instances of dialogue normally contribute to the maintenance of order at the funeral grounds which creates a conducive environment for better concentration on the performance of dirges.

Indeed, the performance of the dirge in general is a form of dialogue between poet-cantors and the mourners. For instance, there is a form of dialogue between the mourner and the audience at the funeral grounds in the following dirge.

Ɔ naa yɔwɔ sıŋbıusı taŋı	My mother has bought several baskets
Aŋ deŋ aŋ gʊʊnı.	And yet, she is not satisfied with her achievement.

Ŋ naa yɔwɔ sɪŋbɪɪsɪ taŋɪ	My mother has bought several baskets
Aŋ deŋ aŋ gʊʊnɪ.	And yet, she is not satisfied with her achievement.
Ŋ naa yɔwɔ sɪŋbɪɪsɪ taŋɪ	My mother has bought several baskets
Aŋ deŋ aŋ gʊʊnɪ.	And yet, she is not satisfied with her achievement.
Ŋ naa yɔwɔ sɪŋbɪɪsɪ taŋɪ	My mother has bought several baskets
Aŋ deŋ aŋ gʊʊnɪ.	And yet, she is not satisfied with her achievement.
Ŋ naa yɔwɔ sɪŋbɪɪsɪ taŋɪ	My mother has bought several baskets
Aŋ deŋ aŋ gʊʊnɪ.	And yet, she is not satisfied with her achievement.
Ŋ naa yɔwɔ sɪŋbɪɪsɪ taŋɪ	My mother has bought several baskets
Aŋ deŋ aŋ gʊʊnɪ yeeee.	And yet, she is not satisfied with her achievement.

Thus the audience is called upon to execute the dirge with the mourner as well as play an advocacy role in the propagation of the poetic message embedded in the dirge. In this context, the mourner is not only full of praise for his deceased mother's achievement in life but he is also calling on the audience to celebrate the value of hardwork with him. It is by virtue of hardwork that the mother has been able to achieve so much in life despite the fact that she does not seem content with her accomplishment. In consequence, while the mourner honours the deceased mother by acknowledging her achievement in life, he also calls on the living to celebrate with him his mother's attitude to work that is worth emulating. According to Okpewho, "the exchange of songs plays much the same role as the dialogue in a play, for though it does not lead to a conflict of will between characters it certainly yields an emotional counterpoint which brings the performance to a charged climax." (Okpewho, 1992:263)

Music and dance are important elements which deserve attention when one comes to ingredients that constitute drama. These two features of drama are an integral part of the execution of the

Sɪsaala dirge. Various types of drums including xylophones and rattles are often used to provide musical accompaniment during the rendering of the dirges. The music in this context is not usually meant for dancing. It is meant to add meaning and rhythm to the dirge so as to produce a mood of mourning among the audiences. Dance becomes part of the dirge when the deceased is an elderly person who the community feels has lived long enough to make his or her departure from this world bearable. Even in this instance, the dance is limited to only the cantors and drummers. In instances where the deceased is young and the funeral celebration is fresh, a lot of body language is usually employed by the bereaved during the rendering of dirges. In this context, body language is normally used to complement verbal language in the form of appellations, anecdotes, and songs so as to better convey both the thoughts and emotions of the bereaved to sympathisers. Women in particular are better able to express their emotions through non-verbal language. They use their hands as well as paralanguage to express feelings of despair, frustration, grief, and loneliness. In fact, drama and emotions go together just as the rendering of dirges involves the expression of sentiments of sorrow. This explains why Di Yonni observes that:

> Our experience of drama includes more than an intellectual understanding of the ideas particular plays may dramatise. It also includes our emotional reactions to plots and our responses to the interaction of the characters. It encompasses our vision of their dramatic worlds, and it is affected by our changing perceptions and feelings as we read. (1994:756)

Consequently, music and dance are just two of the several media that are used to create an appropriate atmosphere for the expression of individual feelings and emotions. In this context, music and dance play a special role in enhancing the meaning of dirges. Indeed, in an essay entitled *French-Language Drama and the Oral Tradition: Trends and Issues*, John Conteh-

Morgan maintains that music and dance "…are a supplement to dialogue and contribute to dramatic action." (1992:119-20)

The last dramatic component of the Sısaala dirge to be considered is costuming. Mourners who constitute the audience in this context do not use a specific colour to indicate a state of mourning as it pertains in the Akan cultural set-up. Any outfit that is decent enough to be used for public occasions can be used to attend funerals in the traditional set-up. Instead of the use of a particular colour to articulate a state of mourning, most women turn up at funerals with rattles which they use in providing music during mourning. Direct relatives of the deceased express their state of mourning by wearing certain paraphernalia instead of using a specific colour to indicate their state of bereavement. Female members of the bereaved family usually wear beads on their necks as a sign of mourning while the opposite sex normally have headgear of different colours tied to their arms to symbolise a state of bereavement.With regard to the professional bards, custom does not impose any particular costume on them though there is a general tendency to always wear the smock. It is an outfit that is decent enough and allows easy movement and other bodily gestures which are characteristic of performers. In the course of executing traditional dances in honour of the deceased, dark smocks which are specially designed for purposes of war are often used, especially if the deceased was a hunter.

So far, some of the basic elements of drama that are common to the written play and ritual performances in the African milieu have been identified in the Sısaala dirge and their significance explained. These elements may not be obtained in the same form in the two contexts; but the evidence is that there are some aspects of drama which are common to most

ritual performances including that of the dirge. Finnegan concedes, to some extent, that there are components of drama in traditional African performances. She makes this observation in the following words:

> ... it seems better to point to the various elements which tend to come together in what, in the wide sense, we normally regard as drama. Most important is the idea of enactment, of representation through actors who imitate persons and events. This is usually associated with other elements, appearing to greater or lesser degree at different times or places: linguistic content; plot; the represented interaction of several characters; specialized scenery, etc.; often music; and —— of particular importance in most African performances —— dance. Now it is very seldom in Africa that all these elements of drama come together in a single performance. One or several do of course occur frequently. But which, if any, of such performances are counted as fully 'drama' will depend on which of the various elements mentioned above are considered most significant. (1976:501)

To Kantak, however, the form of drama painted in Finnegan's observation is not absolute. In fact, Kantak is even of the view that over prescription in drama is likely to endanger the very survival of the art. In Kantak's own words:

> What all this comes to is the recognition that we have developed drama in a certain form which naturally is sacrosanct for us, being the most intimate expression of our culture, and of ourselves, but that such a form however is not absolute. Within the tradition itself we may be as prescriptive as we like, but there is the danger of over-doing it. Precept-oriented art runs the risk of dying of over-refinement, of anaemia…(Kantak, 2001:47)

Elements of drama, to a large extent, therefore exist in the performance of dirges in Ghana. The issue is that ritual drama might not reflect all the elements of a written play to the same degree because "drama as an independent art form was not developed in traditional Africa" (Owomeyela, 1979:113); but the bases or the fundamentals of what constitutes drama are certainly embedded in most of the ritual performances. The fact that ritual and written drama are

obtained in different forms and that the motivations for their performances differ, to some extent, are an indication that we cannot have the exact replica of written drama in ritual performances like the dirge.

Aspects of Poetry in the Sısaala Dirge

In an article entitled *Atukwei Okai and his Poetic Territory*, Anyidoho observes that, "In Africa the poetic art still exists in oral form, and poetry has not as yet 'liberated itself from both the drum and the dance.''' (Anyidoho, 1979:47) Nketia is even more specific with regard to the form of the dirge when he writes that, "the literary form of the dirge is that of the poem. It is within this form, that the "collaboration" between the verbal and musical aspects is effected." (Nketia, 1955:102) Other critics, including Finnegan (1976), p'Bitek (1974), Kofi Awoonor (1974), and Okpewho (1992) are all convinced about the poetic qualities of African dirges. In consequence, the scope will be narrowed down to the specific qualities of the dirges under study that imbue them with poetry in terms of language devices, vocabulary, and forms of composition.

Repetition remains one of the most significant devices that is used in the composition of Sısaala dirges. There are two forms of repetition which are usually employed. The first one consists of the usual repetition in which words, phrases, clauses, or sounds are repeated several times in a literary piece. This form of repetition is often employed in the structural type one which has been discussed in chapter two. As observed earlier, the main advantage with this kind of repetition is that it allows the audience to function as chorus and thus participates in performing the song with the artist. It also contributes to the structural and semantic unity of the dirge as well as to its rhythm. It is significant to note that in the communities where this form of performance is

practised, the essence of the entire dirge is often compressed into its lyrical part or the song. Thus even if one is unable to understand and to participate in chanting the appellations or in narrating the tale but succeeds in executing and understanding the song, the message of the entire dirge would have been understood by such an individual. It is therefore necessary that the essence of the dirge is repeated several times to allow audience participation and, in most cases, the commitment of the song to memory by members of the audience. Also, considering the fact that most of the songs are usually put in figurative language, it is useful that they are repeated to facilitate an understanding of their implications. The following song reflects the kind of repetition under dicussion.

l kaŋ kɪgyɪma gyʊʊ yɔwɔ	If you send wisdom to the market
Ganɪ ra yɔwɔɔ.	It is the fool who buys it.
l kaŋ kɪgyɪma gyʊʊ yɔwɔ	If you send wisdom to the market
Ganɪ ra yɔwɔɔ.	It is the fool who buys it.
l kaŋ kɪgyɪma gyʊʊ yɔwɔ	If you send wisdom to the market
Ganɪ ra yɔwɔɔ.	It is the fool who buys it.
l kaŋ kɪgyɪma gyʊʊ yɔwɔ	If you send wisdom to the market
Ganɪ ra yɔwɔɔ.	It is the fool who buys it.
l kaŋ kɪgyɪma gyʊʊ yɔwɔ	If you send wisdom to the market
Ganɪ ra yɔwɔɔ.	It is the fool who buys it.
l kaŋ kɪgyɪma gyʊʊ yɔwɔ	If you send wisdom to the market
Ganɪ ra yɔwɔɔ waaaaaa.	It is the fool who buys it.

The message contained in the song is that nobody is a fool in this world. Even people who are judged by others to be fools have some knowledge and this explains why they would not hesitate to buy more of it from the supposedly intelligent ones. Evidently, this interpretation of the song

is shrouded in figurative language and may not be apparent to someone who listens to it for the first time.

The second form of repetition that plays a significant role in the composition of these dirges is the incremental type or anaphora. In the words of Abrams, in incremental repetition, "a line or stanza is repeated, but with an addition that advances the story." (Abrams, 2005:19) For instance, in the appellation that is cited below, incremental repetition has been used to trace the roots of Abu. This is because though the phrase "Nephew of" has been repeated at the beginning of most of the lines, each line contains an additional piece of information on the roots of the mourner whose name has been mentioned at the beginning of the appellation, thus embedding the story in the appellation as it progressses in an incremental manner.

Abu waa! Yaa wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı.	Attention Abu! Listen attentively.
l nyınaŋ gaŋdaa feni rı yaŋ bee?	What is your father's appellation?
Habiye Gʋŋgʋŋna nıyɛla,	Nephew of Habiye Gʋŋgʋŋna,
Dahuunʋ bayuworo nıyɛla,	Nephew of the warriors of darkness,
Yuwo di bine gaŋdaara nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who fight for fame,
Siniya kyʋwalıya Kakyugu nıyɛla,	Nephew of Siniya who paid his respects to Kakyugu,
Bıranyaŋa kyʋwalıya Bayoŋ nıyɛla,	Nephew of Bıranyaŋa who paid his respects to Bayoŋ,
Yaa wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı.	Listen attentively.

This kind of repetition is often used in appellations and in structural type four which has been examined in the last part of structural types of dirges in chapter two. When incremental repetition is used in the appellations, it allows the composer to focus on one person and to tell the audience all that the poet-cantor knows about the ancestry of the individual. In other words, it

helps avoid the situation whereby part of an appellation may be attributed to a different person by the audience through the repetition of a key phrase that constantly refers to the mourner whose name has been mentioned at the very beginning of the appellation. For instance, in most of the appellations in the Wa East and Sɪsaala East Districts, the bard usually begins by asking the mourner for his father's appellation, or that of the mourner. The lines that follow this rhetorical question revolve around the phrase "nephew of" (*nɪyɛla*) which the artist elaborates further by mentioning the names of the founding fathers of the mourner's clan or village, the exploits of these ancestors, their totems, and most often, their hierarchy in terms of age as illustrated in the appellation cited above.

On the other hand, when the oral poet uses this device in structural type four, it enables him or her to organise the dirge into different subject matter. For each subject that is taken, five or more lines may be composed on it and it is incremental repetition that helps the audience to understand the structure and divisions within the entire dirge. In consequence, apart from the fact that incremental repetition adds some rhythm to the composition, it also gives a touch of rhythm and semantic unity to the dirge. Analysis of the following lines taken from structural type four will throw more light on the crucial role of incremental repetition in the composition of the dirges under discussion.

Karimʋ ba lɪɪ kyeyi la sɪsɔ,	The advent of Moslem clerics has led to the destruction of Sɪsaala values,
Karimʋ ba lɪɪ kyeyi la sɪsɔ wuŋ.	The advent of Moslem clerics has led to the destruction of all Sɪsaala values.
l tɪɪ haa mɪŋ maŋyalɪ la kaa vʋvʋg punni,	How come a follower of the Moslem faith still dabbles in soothsaying?
l tɪɪ haa mɪŋ maŋyalɪ la kaa kpɪkparɪ vʋga,	How come a follower of the Moslem faith still worships gods?

l tıı haa miŋ maŋyalı la kaa gı gaa nıya bʊʊna.	How come a follower of the Moslem faith still steals people's goats?
Allahʊ akbarʊ, allahʊ akbarʊ, allahʊ akbarʊ	Allahu akbaru, allahu akbaru, allahu akbaru
Ba nıı vʊga, ba nıı miŋ gaarı mɛ la.	Yet they are into soothsaying and they are into stealing too.
A mıŋ gaarı la kaa mıŋ vʊga mɛ la?	How can one worship the gods and steal at the same time?

In the above segment of the dirge, incremental repetition has been employed in lines one and two as well as in lines three, four, five and eight. In lines one and two, "The advent of Moslem clerics has led to the destruction of" (*Karimʊ ba lıı kyeyi*) has been repeated. The endings of these two lines, however, differ slightly. In line one, the object of the verb "destroy" (*kyeyi*) is "Sısaala values" (*sısɔ*), and in line two, the object of "destroy" (*kyeyi*) is "all Sısaala values" (*sısɔ wuŋ*). Incremental repetition has enabled the artist to qualify the nature of destruction in line two. In lines three, four, five, and eight, "How come a follower of the Moslem faith" (*l tıı haa mıŋ maŋyalı la*) has been repeated with different endings. These variations in the endings of the lines enable the dirge performer to list the different activities that he feels a true believer in any religion should not engage in but which, unfortunately, have become an integral part of the lives of the people in his community. In all the eight lines, the audience is aware that the poet-cantor is talking about the irreverent conduct of all believers in his community due to the repetition of certain key phrases. But the observation is that repetition is handled with such dexterity that the artist does not end up telling the mourners the same thing over and over. It allows the poet to advance his composition.

Parallelism is another device that has been deftly employed in this segment of the dirge. In lines seven and eight, structural parallelism has been used to achieve some level of unity. Thus in line

seven, “They are into soothsaying” (*Ba nɪɪ vɔga*) is parallel to “they are into stealing too” (*ba nɪɪ mɪŋ gaarɪ mɛ la*). In both clauses, the structure remains as follows: Subject (they) + verb (be into) + object (soothsaying/stealing). In line eight, the English translation does not reflect the syntax that has been used in the Sɪsaalɪ transcription. But a careful analysis of the Sɪsaalɪ transcription will reveal that the syntax in “*A mɪŋ gaarɪ la*” has been repeated in “*kaa mɪŋ vɔga mɛ la*.” While prarallelism has been used in line seven to emphasise the religiosity of the people in this context by citing attitudes that do not befit true believers, there is a sharp contrast between what is expected of a true traditionalist and the one who engages in the abominable act of stealing in line eight. To the dirge perfomer, the custom of worshipping the gods does not go hand in hand with stealing. This explains why the rhetorical question has been used in this line to draw the attention of the audience to the anomally in the traditionalist’s behaviour. According to Awolalu and Dopamu, the purpose of African divinities “is to serve the will of God in the theocratic government of the world.” (Awolalu and Dopamu, 1979:72) The will of God, as explained by the major religions of the world, does not include stealing and this act cannot therefore be sanctioned by the gods. In short, apart from using similar syntax in lines to establish structural unity, parallelism also helps in bringing out meaning by comparing expressions with similar semantic implications or by contrasting expressions with opposite meanings.

Metaphorical allusion is also one of the the language devices that is often used extensively in the dirges under discussion. In most instances, death or the act of dying is often referred to in language that uses a lot of mental imagery. It is usually referred to in an oblique manner as in the lines “The beautiful black dress/ Has become worn out” (*Garɪ bine garɪ nʊʊ/ Na we rɪ kyogo*). In this context, instead of putting it that the favourite wife of the bereaved man has finally passed

away, the concept of death is rather captured in the idea of the wearing out of a beautiful dress. Again the lines "A climbing plant that has grown among several trees/ Cannot easily be removed" (*Tıı kana tʊwa bankare/ Ba ları ları lɔlɔ*) is describing the inevitable nature of death. Once it is time for one to pass on to the next world, nothing can prevent it from happening. The difficulty involved in removing the climbing plant that has got itself firmly attached to a cluster of trees is being compared with the arduous task of saving human life from the claws of death. There are many other dirges whose composition involves an elaborate use of this device. Allusions do not only go a long a way in illustrating the creative manner in which Ghanaians can use their languages in the circumstances of funerals but they also enable bards to capture emotions or events in imagery that is more compelling than long, descriptive narratives.

There are also some stock expressions and words which are often used especially in the appellations and in structural type four. Rhetorical questions in the form of "What is your father's appellation?/ What is your own appellation?" (*l nyɪnaŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?/ l mɛ tɪrɪŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?*) are often raised when the performer is about to address a mourner at the funeral grounds. At the stage when the poet-cantor is about to sing the song that follows the appellations, he would chant "Please, please, listen attentively" (*Gyaaŋ gyaaŋ dı ı wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı*). An expression like "It is the fool who says had I known" (*Fagyıma ya, nı yaari rı wʊl fagyıma*) and a word like "nephew" (*nıyɛla*), or "lion" (*aŋwuwomi*) which is often used metaphorically to refer to a deceased male are often employed. In the same vein, sounds in the form of "*yee*", "*waa*", and "*yeyi*" form part of the stock expressions that are usually employed by dirge performers. These stock expressions do not only emphasise meaning because they are often repeated but they also add structural unity and rhythm to the entire performance.

With regard to sources of vocabulary, composers of Sısaala dirges often draw their words and expressions from four main areas. These areas include history, nature, everyday life, and the world of death. History becomes essential because of the use of appellations. Most of the appellations have significant historical meanings. Names of the founding fathers of clans, villages and towns, the hierarchies of the founding fathers in terms of age, their peculiar characteristics as well as exploits in the past usually form an integral part of the appellations. In most of the communities, gates (a section of a village or town that traces its roots to one ancestor) of villages and towns bear the names of these founding fathers. For instance, Funsi, the capital of the Wa East District has gates that are referred to as *Gbaŋgyagabɛyi* (the home of Gbaŋgyaga), *Kʋŋkɔŋbɛyi* (the home of Kuŋkɔŋ), and *Saampuwobɛyi* (the home of Saampuwo). It is interesting to note that the names of these gates have been derived from the names of the founding fathers of the entire Funsi community. It is equally important to note that these very names have also been immortalised through their insertion in the appellation of people from Funsi. In the ensuing appellation, the names of the founding fathers of the community in question do not only feature prominently but certain character traits of these heroes as well as their hierarchies in terms of age are also revealed since it was the younger founders who had to pay their respects to the elder ones.

Bayoŋ waa! Bayoŋ waa!	Attention Bayoŋ! Attention Bayoŋ!
l mɛ tırıŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your own appellation?
Gbaŋgyaga kyʋwalıya Namaali nıyɛla,	Nephew of Gbaŋgyaga who paid his respects to Namaali,
Saalı kyʋwalı Kʋŋkɔŋ nıyɛla,	Nephew of Saali who paid his respects to Kʋŋkɔŋ,
Gyagyınna gyaarıgenni nıyɛla,	Nephew of expert horse riders,
Krugu tɔɔ naanyiyere nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who wear baggy trousers to cover spindly legs,

Gawurini tɔɔ ba sawɛ nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who wear smocks to conceal their amulets,
Nyupugu tɔɔ nyukpʋrıya nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who wear hats to conceal their bumpy heads,
Agyiya baŋ kyʋwalı Saampuwo nıyɛla,	Nephew of Agyiya who paid his respects to Saampuwo,
Gyaaŋ gyaaŋ dı ı wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı.	Please, please, listen attentively.

Also, due to the fact that narratives are sometimes used in the composition of some dirges, vocabulary is sometimes drawn from the world of tales which has close links with nature. In consequence, names of animals, birds, and trees feature prominently in the vocabulary of dirges. For example, in the tale analysed under elements of prose in the Sısaala dirge, there is an interaction between humans and other animals which represent the world of nature. Thus while the impotent old man represents the human world, the hawk and the lizard represent the animal world. Both the hawk and the lizard represent nature and thus illustrate the close relationship that exists between it and man. In the same context, in the tale that has been cited under structural types of the Sısaala dirge, there is also an interaction between the sparrow who built her home in in the chief's wife's room, God, and the chief himself.

Quite apart from these two main sources, vocabulary is also often drawn from everyday life. For instance, the segment of the dirge cited below narrates an everyday experience which has nothing to do with death. This segment of the dirge is simply used to illustrate the fact that one needs to revere his father and mother since they both deserve his unqualified respect. In consequence, words such as "father," "mother," "fought," and so forth feature in this part of the dirge.

Hmm waa hmm na kpʋ nıya.	And it is too much thinking that kills people.

Nɪɪna bɪ nyɪna ba diye kaŋ naŋa yaa.	Mother and father fought yesterday.
Mmaa bɪ ŋ nyɪna diye naŋa naŋɔ.	My mother and my father fought yesterday.
l sɪya ka vvvra ɪ vvvri pa aŋ la?	Who would you support if you were to do so?
l maa nya luworɪ wɪya ɪ nyɪna pɪŋ doŋ nɛ?	Did your father blink an eye when your mother was in labour?
Woyi woyi woyi woyiiiiiii.	Woyi woyi woyi woyiiiiiii.

In another context, the lines of a dirge which go like, "Some mourners have come/ And they would like to drink water" (*Hvwara ko/ Ba sɪ nyvwa nɪɪ)* is a funeral song that has got nothing to do with death. This song, however, plays a very important role in the funeral context where members of the bereaved family might forget to serve mourners who have arrived at the funeral grounds from distant villages. Thus after waiting for a while without being served water, a mourner or mourners might take centre stage at the funeral grounds and execute this dirge; and the bereaved family would immediately know that such sympathisers have not been served the traditional water of welcome. This would draw the attention of those who have the duty of serving mouners from distant destinations to quickly discharge their duties according to custom.

The use of vocabulary from everyday experience has become inevitable due to the fact that some of the dirges are used to comment on events in the community, to philosophise on life, and to teach morals and values that are essential for the survival of the entire community. It is this aspect of the dirge which usually reflects the changes that are going on in the community and how the people are reacting to such transformations. For instance, the dirge "Modern values have/ Enslaved traditional values" (*Wɪɪ falɪya kaŋ wɪɪ bɪnɪya/ Kaŋ we kpɪyasɪ*) is a composition that sums up the community's reaction to modern values that seem to have rendered traditional values less functional in contemporary Sɪsaala society.

Poet-cantors also draw imagery and expressions from the world of death because the whole performance revolves around it and the lessons that can be drawn thereof. In the song "The climbing plant that has grown among several trees/Cannot be removed" (*Tıı kana tʋwa bankare/ Ba kaŋ ları ları lɔlɔ*), the artist uses the image of a climbing plant that has got itself firmly attached to several trees to paint the picture of death to his audience. It is difficult to save the life of a dear one that is destined to die just as it is arduous to remove the climbing plant from a cluster of trees. This makes man vulnerable in the face of death.

In most of the dirges, appellations (*gaŋdaa feni*) feature prominently. They are the most difficult, fixed, and complex segments of the dirge. They have to be memorised completely. The artist cannot change them according to his wish. On the other hand, narratives used in illustrating the meanings of songs can always be changed provided the modification will not disturb their meanings and the the logical connection that links them to the final song. The songs can always be created from incidents that take place even on the funeral grounds. Those songs that make great impression on mourners are memorised and repeated at different funerals due to their poetic messages.

The formula used in the composition of the dirges under discussion is that appellations (*gaŋdaa feni*) used are not logically connected to the meaning of the song. The appellations are those that belong to entire clans, villages or towns. As a result of this, the same *gaŋdaa feni* can be used to address several mourners either individually or collectively provided they are all from the same clan or village. This makes it possible for the dirge performer to master a few appellations and yet be able to address several individual members from the audience. Also, because the *gaŋdaa*

feni is not semantically related to the final song, the bard can address several mourners by chanting their different appellations before the song itself is performed. The narrative which usually has close links with the song can always be modified. Due to this possibility, the bard need not master a tale with all the details. All the poet-cantor has to do is to understand the storyline so that he or she can fill in the details from his or her own resources. This formula enables the artist to free his mind of unnecessary details and rather concentrate on his creative resources by filling in the necessary gaps. A considerable number of the songs used under structural types one, two, and three are often taken from a repertoire of old ones. The brief nature of songs of a line or two facilitates memorisation in these three structural types. Repetition is only used extentisively in extending the length of the song. The dirge which follows is actually made up of only two lines which have been repeated over and over.

Sɪɪ rɪ togo	When the eyeball gets destroyed
Bʋwatogu bee larɪ.	The socket still remains.
Sɪɪ rɪ togo	When the eyeball gets destroyed
Bʋwatogu bee larɪ.	The socket still remains.
Sɪɪ rɪ togo	When the eyeball gets destroyed
Bʋwatogu bee larɪ.	The socket still remains.
Sɪɪ rɪ togo	When the eyeball gets destroyed
Bʋwatogu bee larɪ.	The socket still remains.
Sɪɪ rɪ togo	When the eyeball gets destroyed
Bʋwatogu bee larɪ yeyi yeyi yeyiiiii.	The socket still remains.

In structural type four, the appellations remain fixed; but the rest of the dirge, which usually contains stock expressions, is normally created out of the artist's resources. In the first part of the following segment of structural type four, the dirge performer traces the history of the deceased by mentioning the various occupations which, in the past, the deceased's ancestors engaged in. In effect, the deceased is a descendant of farmers, hunters, and soothsayers. This is part of the

appellation of all the descendants of the clan of the deceased and this part of the dirge is fixed. In other words, the life history of all the descendants of the deceased's clan will always be traced to the same ancestors who engaged in farming, hunting, and soothsaying. The rest of the dirge is composed out of the resources of the poet-cantor and care has been taken to divide it into segments with each part concentrating on a different subject matter.

Dvnɪya wɪɪ wɪɪ wuŋ yaa Wɪɪsɪ wɪɪ yaala,	Everything that happens in this world is done by God.
Vvvra wɪya yaa baa pɪyasɪ v wɪya.	He is sought after on issues concerning soothsaying.
Nambala hɔnɔ baa pɪyasɪ v wɪya.	He is sought after on issues concerning hunting.
Bapara wɪya yaa baa yɪrɪ v.	He is sought after on issues concerning farming.
Bagɪla wɪya yaa baa yɪrɪ v.	He is sought after on issues concerning animals.
Tvŋtvŋ bala baa dii.	One profession alone is not enough.
Haŋbolibiye rɪ gyɪŋ gyɪŋ baa kyɔrɪ,	The life of a weakling does not befit a man,
Yaara nya, haŋbolibiye rɪ yaara sɪya a kyɔrɪ?	How then can the life of a fool befit a man?
Baa kyɛ ba gyɪma ɪ kaa svv rɪ weree yaa	Is it better for people to learn of your sudden death,
A yaa kvvŋ kuuŋ mv siba v rɪ weree?	Or is it better to die of a protracted illness?
l ko pere ɪ wvlɪ wɪya diye wvwvl wɪɪ magɪsɪ,	Whenever you are to speak, you must raise important issues.
Leŋ ba yaa wɪɪ nyusɪ,	Let them be critical issues,
A bɪra lɪya kyɪŋ doŋ leŋ ba yaa wɪɪ wɪya.	Let them be of utmost importance.
Fagyɪma nya, nɪyaare rɪ wvlɪ fagyɪma,	It is the fool who says had I known.
Hmm waa hmm na kpv nɪya.	And it is too much thinking that kills people.
Nɪɪna bɪ nyɪna ba diye kaŋ naŋa yaa.	Mother and father fought yesterday.
Mmaa bɪ ŋ nyina diye naŋa nangɔ.	My mother and my father fought yesterday.
l sɪya ka vvvra ɪ vvvri pa aŋ la?	Who would you support if you were to do so?
l maa nya luworɪ wɪya ɪ nyɪna pɪŋ doŋ nɛ?	Did your father blink an eye when your mother

	was in labour?
Woyi woyi woyi woyiiiiiii.	Woyi woyi woyi woyiiiiiii.
Allahʊ akbarʊ allahʊ akbarʊ *ba nɪɪ kyeyi dunɪya,*	Allahu akbaru, allahu akbaru and the world is becoming a worse place because of them.
Ɔ gyaa ŋ wʊlla gyɪŋbala wɪya mʊwa, *New Ghana,*	I want to comment a little on our youth, New Ghana.

Apart from this formula, ethics of dirge performance also impose another procedure on poet-cantors when they are executing dirges on the funeral grounds. This method has been referred to in chapter one where the cantor is expected to follow a certain formula when he is about to introduce himself to the audience at the funeral grounds. This involves the formula of the artist chanting his father's appellations, those of his or her mentor, the appellations of any senior artist or drummer at the funeral grounds before chanting his or her own appellations. All these formulae help in streamlining the composition of dirges as well as the observance of the code of ethics that is associated with the profession.

From the analysis carried out on the prose, drama, and poetic features of the dirges under study, some observations can be made about Sɪsaala dirges and dirge performers. Some of the dirges may not reflect language that draws attention to itself because it "thickens"; or their execution may not reflect all the elements that one is likely to come across in an archetypal Western drama. The absence of an exact replica of some of these qualities in African oral traditions may not necessarily imply that there is no literary discourse in Afrcan oral literature. Even with the simplest form of language, Sɪsaala dirge performers still demonstrate a lot of dexterity in the use of language devices, narrative form, and tone to put across the meanings of their dirges to their audience. The creation and use of these language devices as well as narrative forms clearly

accentuate the literary qualities of the Sɪsaala dirge. The deftness in the use of tone, language devices, drumming, and bodily expression in a given context usually produces effects that can only be understood and appreciated by those who are familiar with the language and cultural context of the performance.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEMES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SlSAALA DIRGE

Introduction

The relationship between African literature in the written form and its oral counterpart is very close. In some quarters, the link between these two forms of literature is described as being so close that the "boundaries between them are porous; and the two inform and feed off one another." (Middleton, 1997:51) This then implies that the two forms of literature may not have a common denominator between them only in terms of technique but they may also share similar concerns when it comes to their content and utilitarian value.

To Achebe and many other African creative writers, the functional aspect of African art and, by extension, African literature renders it diametrically opposed to the concept of art for art's sake. Indeed, in *Africa and her Writers,* Achebe makes the following observation in reaction to the principle of art for art's sake vis-a-vis African art.

> In other words I will still insist that art is, and was always, in service of man. Our ancestors created their myths and legends and told their stories for a human purpose (including, no doubt, the excitation of wonder and pure delight); they made their sculptures in wood and terracotta, stone and bronze to serve the needs of their times. Their artists lived and moved and had their being in society, and created their works for the good of that society. (Achebe, 1975:19)

In fact, Achebe continues his reaction by further noting that:

> In the beginning art was good and useful. It always had its airy and magical qualities, of course; but even the magic was often intended to minister to a basic human need, to serve a down-to-earth necessity, like when the cavemen drew pictures on the rock of animals they hoped to kill in their next hunt! (Achebe, 1975:19)

It is clear from these observations made by Achebe that it is difficult to obtain an art form in Africa which does not serve any practical purpose. Ghanaian dirges poetically reiterate values that are relevant to the communities in which they are performed and to the entire country. The principal objective in this chapter, therefore, is to examine the major themes in the dirges under study and to elucidate the functional aspect of these themes in contemporary Ghanaian society.

Thematic Analysis

Critics of African dirges have identified various themes that can be associated with African funeral poetry. In Ghana, references to the ancestor, references to the deceased, references to the domicile of the ancestor and of the deceased as well as reflections and messages have been identified as themes that are embedded in the Akan dirge (Nketia, 1955:19). In Uganda, songs of the pathway, songs of battle with death, songs of surrender, songs of cruel fate, the attack on the dead as well as attack on the living are the major preoccupations of dirges among the Acoli (p'Bitek, 1974:144). Finnegan has also identified other preoccupations such as praise, grief, resignation, and acceptance of the inevitable as some of the themes that manifest themselves in African dirges (Finnegan, 1976:147- 151). Some of these themes are reflected in the dirges under discussion though they are handled in a different manner from the way they have been treated among the Akan of Ghana or the Acoli of Uganda.

The first major theme that has been incorporated into the dirges under examination is the theme of the relevance of the past. History features prominently in these dirges due to the appellations (*gaŋdaa feni*) which are often chanted on funeral grounds to attract individual mourners' attention or to introduce the bard to the audience. The appellations do not usually treat history in

detail as one may expect to find in documented sources. They highlight some of the major exploits or peculiar characteristics of the founding fathers of various clans and villages. In some cases, totems of clans, their specific values, names of places of earlier settlements as well as principal occupations of founding fathers are often incorporated into the appellations. Sometimes, these highlights alone may not be sufficient for one to appreciate the historical context that constitutes the background for the composition of such appellations. The disadvantage, therefore, is that one still needs further probing in order to obtain full details of events that might have led to the background based on which the appellations have been composed. There is, however, a merit associated with the way in which the appellations limit themselves to major highlights of history. The advantage resides in the fact that it makes complete memorisation easier and possible in a culture that is primarily oral in nature.

In this context, one comes across an enduring method that is used by the people who cannot read and write to preserve their history and to pass it on from one generation to another. The ingenuity in this method does not only come from the consistent repetition of these appellations at funeral grounds and at the individual level in order to keep them in mind, but part of this ingenuity also involves highlighting only the important historical facts in order to facilitate easy memorisation. In short, once the major events constituting the past of a clan have been mastered by someone, it becomes easier for such an individual to understand and appreciate the details as and when they are provided to him or her. Again, though some of the details may vary from one version to another, the highlights remain the same thus preventing the introduction of elements that can change the historical context completely. The following appellations and the analysis

that follows them emphasise the significance of the past in the composition of the dirges under study.

Bayoŋ waa! Bayoŋ waa!	Please Bayoŋ! Please Bayoŋ!
l nyınaŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your father's appellation?
Dalaa kyʋwalıya Kagyiya nıyɛla,	Nephew of Dalaa who paid his respects to Kagyiya,
Ɗmaŋ tɔɔrɔ nıyɛla fira bana,	Nephew of those who ambushed wayfarers and forced them to retreat,
Nyukuŋkogilli bırımı hayaara gbuwoni nıyɛla,	Nephew of those whose unkempt wives used human skulls as gourds,
Naasolli bırımı ba ŋmıra nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who used human tibia as flutes,
Ba naga ɛɛrɛ ı vıya yoho ta?	How come you are not taking an active part in the execution of dirges?
Bayoŋ waa! Bayoŋ waa!	Attention Bayoŋ! Attention Bayoŋ!
l mɛ tırıŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your own appellation?
Kyaŋdɔmɔ kyʋwalıya Bakɔɔ nıyɛla,	Nephew of Kyaŋdɔmɔ who paid his respects to Bɔkɔɔ,
Purı pıma ba na kpanɛ nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who value the truth above anything else,
Ba vıya nyıwa balıya nıyɛla,	Nephew of those whose totem is the crocodile,
Gyaaŋ gyaaŋ dı ı wuwolı ı dıgıma nıı wıı.	Please, please, listen attentively.

In the first part of the appellations where the bard chants the *gaŋdaa feni* of Bayoŋ's father, it implies that the latter is from a village called Kuluŋ, or his father, or his mother is from that village. Though the name of the village has not been mentioned in the above segment of the dirge, poet-cantors know the appellation of each clan or village offhand. Kuluŋ is found in the Wa East District and it is situated close to a major road that links some communities in the district to Wa. Dalaa, and Kagyiya are the founding fathers of this village. Besides this, Kagyiya is the elder brother of Dalaa and this explains why the latter has to pay his respects to the former as chanted in the appellation. In consequence, gates of the village have been named as "the home

of Kagyiya" (*Kagyiyabɛyi*) and "the home of Dalaa" (*Dalaabɛyi*) and these names have survived to this day.

The founding fathers were also warriors who were prepared to protect their village against any foreign intrusion. Most of the time, innocent wayfarers were taken to be invaders or spies and were either forced to retreat or they were simply killed. Due to the constant warring activities against invaders and wayfarers, it was possible to find pieces of human skeletons in some parts of the village. This is the situation that manifests in the appellation as women using human skulls as gourds and men using human tibia as flutes. Hyperbole has been employed in this instance to capture the awesome historical context involved.

In the second part of the appellations, the performer addresses Bayoŋ directly. This again tells the audience that either Bayoŋ, or his mother, or his father is from Bawiyesibɛyi, a village in the Sısaala East District. From the appellation, the implication is that both Kyaŋdɔmɔ and Bakɔɔ are founding fathers of the village. Parts of the village have therefore been named after them. In this instance, the hierarchy of the two founding fathers in terms of age has also been specificied. It is Kyaŋdɔmɔ who used to pay his respects to Bakɔɔ and this means that the latter was older than Kyaŋdɔmɔ. The totem of the descendants of these two heroes is the crocodile and this further buttresses the point that Bakɔɔ and Kyaŋdɔmɔ are brothers. One characteristic feature about these founding fathers is that they are known to have valued truth above any other thing. Though there are different gates constituting the village, the entire community is regarded as one and whatever concerns an individual member is of consequence to the whole village. As a result of this, members of the community are encouraged to be truthful in all their dealings with one another

through the institution of customary laws that promote this value. This philosophy is embedded in the line "*Purı pına ba na kpanɛ* " which literally means that one can only ascertain whether there are rashes on a person's buttocks or not by stripping him naked.

The second theme that is reflected in the Sısaala dirge is that of social commentary. In most instances, dirge performance is often used as a platform to comment on issues and events in the community, or on a particular attitude. In fact, all the four structural types of dirges are used to comment on issues that are of relevance to the Sısaala community and, by extension, on issues that are of national concern. Structural types three and four are considerd more suitable for social criticism due to their considerable length. Their length enables artists to comment fully on topical issues in the various communities. In these commentaries, the main objective of the bard is to draw the community's attention to some of the weaknesses in the comportment of its members in order to allow the audience to reflect on the issues that constitute the subject of criticism. The lessons to be drawn from the criticism are not specified for the audience. It is up to members of the community to decipher the import of such criticism and make the necessary adjustments to their way of life. Consequently, the issues usually covered by dirges in this regard are varied. For example, a song which goes with the lines, "Modern values have/ Enslaved traditional values" (*Wıı falıya kaŋ wıı bınıya/ Kaŋ we kpıyası*) criticises the manner in which modern values have rendered the traditional ones completely ineffective in contemporary societies.

To the artist, traditional values have not only become ineffective today but they have been "enslaved" by modernity making it impossible for anyone who depends on such values alone to

survive in contemporary society. The artist does not try, in this instance, to advise the audience to go back for the traditional values, to hold on to modern values, or even to blend the two kinds of values. He only limits himself to commenting on what goes on in the community. The artist's comments here are descriptive and not prescriptive.

In the same context, the following lines from structural type four of the dirges under discussion constitute a commentary on the absence of deep kinship ties and good neighbourliness in Ghanaian traditional societies today.

Haal wʋla laa nɔŋ bɪɪ bɪra minaa?	Which woman will defend another woman's child nowadays?
Baal wʋla laa nɔŋ bɪɪ bɪra mina?	Which man will defend another man's child nowadays?
Sɪsaŋ nyɛ bɪra wʋla laa ɪ nɔŋ bɪɪ bɪra tuwo.	Nobody defends another person's child nowadays.
Sɪsaŋ nyɛ nɪhɪyawʋ bɪra wʋla laa nɔŋ bii nyɛ bɪra tuwo.	No elder defends another person's child nowadays.

According to Mbiti, in the African traditional set-up, when someone "gets married, he is not alone, neither does the wife 'belong' to him alone. So also the children belong to the corporate body of kinsmen, even if they bear only their father's name." (Mbiti, 1976:108) This explains why children in the traditional context are often made to understand that every elderly person is a surrogate parent to the child. It is therefore within the confines of custom for an elder to defend or reprimand a child, depending on the circumstance. The absence of direct biological affinity between the child and the elder is of no consequence in this context. It is this dimension of African kinship which has become almost non-existent in the traditional set-up that has been highlighted by the poet-cantor in this segment of the dirge. Again in this instance, the performer

only comments on what goes on in the community; he does not provide a panacea to the problem.

Reflections on life also constitute another area that is usually covered by dirge performers. These reflections usually exhibit philosophical lessons and values that are pertinent to life. As a result of this, cultural, moral, and religious lessons or values are often incorporated into reflections. Through them, bards and mourners seek to philosophise on life. Thus unlike the thematic setting of social commemtary in which oral poets and mourners content themselves with describing what goes on in their communities, allowing the audience to digest the criticism for the appropriate response, reflections have more to do with the artist prescribing to the community some of the lessons and values of life. In consequence, these reflections serve a simple, direct didactic purpose. Apart from the fact that these reflections are often heavily influenced by everyday life, they also contain practical lessons which can be very useful to the community and society at large when they are properly digested. In most of the communities in the Wa East and Sısaala East Districts, structural type one which consists of short lyrical dirges, is normally used for reflections. In structural type four where commentaries, reflections, and appellations are usually mixed together, reflections normally follow the criticism and try to sum up the essence of the commentary in one or two lines.

In the lines "The aged are/ The gods of the youth" (*Nɪhɪyawʊ yaa/ Haŋbiye daalɪlii rɛ*), the artist is clearly promoting a value that is common to all cultures across the world. This value is expressed in the form of absolute respect for the elderly. To the poet, the aged are not simply ordinary human beings that deserve unequivocal respect from the youth but they are the "gods"

of the youth. Simply put, the kind of veneration that is given to the ancestors and other divinities in the traditional context is what should be accorded the elderly in our societies.

Indeed, both Sarpong and Okleme are clear on the question of respect for old age in traditional Ghanaian society. While the former is of the view that old age is venerated because it exudes an aura of sacredness (Sarpong, 1974:65), the latter espouses the idea that old age constitutes a fountain of wisdom which cannot be overlooked by the youth. In fact, Okleme observes that:

> In traditional Ghanaian society, the aged are accorded unqualified respect because they are regarded as repositories of wisdom. Indeed, many Ghanaian proverbs attest to this fact. For example, a Dangme proverb which affirms this notion states, literally, that "once a person is older than you, his mouth emits a richer odour than yours." (Okleme, 2005:260)

In the same vein, the song "Let your good deeds speak for you/ For what is the value of a long life without such good deeds?" (*Yaa wɪya dɪ dɔnɪya gyɪmɪɪ/ Mɪɪbol deŋ deŋ maa yeyi rɛ ?)* seeks to teach a lesson about life. This lesson is that one does not need to live centuries on this earth in order to make a positive impact on the lives of other people. It is the determination to live an upright life that will enable one to leave good memories behind him once he is no more, and not the number of years spent on this earth. Many of the dirges under discussion therefore reflect lessons and values which are of relevance to everyday life.

Religion and spirituality is also given adequate expression in dirges. In fact, in his collection of essays entitled *The African Predicament: Collected Essays*, Awoonor observes that, "The African experience is a religious experience; being an African means you are a religious person." (Awoonor, 2006: 215) Writing on the religious nature of the life of the African, Mbiti also

observes that, "It is religion, more than anything else, which colours their understanding of the universe and their empirical participation in that universe, making life a profoundly religious phenomenon. To be is to be religious in a religious world." (Mbiti, 1976: 262) Among the Sɪsaala, religion and spirituality go hand in hand. Also, despite the impact that both Christianity and the Moslem religion have had on the lives of the people, many of them are still unable to distance themselves completely from traditional African beliefs and practices. In some instances, members of the community who are Christians or Moslems but still worship ancestral gods are criticised by oral artists. To the bards, such an attitude constitutes a form of hypocrisy which does not become a true Christian or Moslem. Most of the time too, the activities of individual members of the community which are contrary to the principles of both foreign and African traditional religions are often satirised by using religious tenets as the basis for such criticism. In fact, names of ancestors, divinities venerated by the various clans and villages as well as different titles used to designate God also form an integral part of the appellations and anecdotes.

In the anecdote cited under structural types of dirges which involves God, sparrow and the chief's family, the moral that is learnt from the tale is that we must seek the blessing of God in whatever enterprise we want to undertake. It is because the chief's children failed on the first two occasions to ask for the blessing of God in demolishing their mother's room that they could not succeed on both of them. This indicates the people's recognition of the influence of God and other divinities in their lives and the need to acknowledge them in whatever they do. On the other hand, a segment of structural four cited below constitutes direct criticism on the false religious attitude of Christians, Moslems and traditionalists in the dirge singer's community.

Karimʋ ba lɪɪ kyeyi la sɪsɔ, The advent of Moslem clerics has led to

	the destruction of Sɪsaala values,
Karimʋ ba lɪɪ kyeyi la sɪsɔ wuŋ.	The advent of Moslem clerics has led to the destruction of all Sɪsaala values.
l tɪɪ haa mɪŋ maŋyalɪ la kaa vʋvʋg punni,	How come a follower of the Moslem faith still dabbles in soothsaying?
l tɪɪ haa mɪŋ maŋyalɪ la kaa kpɪkparɪ vʋga,	How come a follower of the Moslem faith still worships gods?
l tɪɪ haa mɪŋ maŋyalɪ la kaa gɪ gaa nɪya bʋʋna.	How come a follower of the Moslem faith still steals people's goats?
Allahʋ akbarʋ, allahʋ akbarʋ, allahʋ akbarʋ	Allahu akbaru, allahu akbaru,allahu akbaru
Ba nɪɪ vʋga, ba nɪɪ mɪŋ gaarɪ mɛ la.	Yet they are into soothsaying and they are into stealing too.
A mɪŋ gaarɪ la kaa mɪŋ vʋga mɛ la?	How can one worship the gods and steal at the same time?

The spiritual aspect of the execution of dirges comes from the belief that some deaths are caused by the Supreme Being while others are caused by angry divinities, ancestors, witches, or medicine men. It is the general belief of the people that good spiritual preparation of the poet-cantor should enable him or her to uncover some of the causes of death in the course of executing dirges. In the lines "If you run until you are tired/ You give up for your pursuers to catch you" (*l faa lɔlɔ waa/ Yaa sɪŋ ba kanɪɪ rɛ*), the bard is suggesting that the deceased might not have died a natural death. The pursuers in this context refers to those who might be interested in using sorcery or whatever powers they have at their disposal to ensure that the deceased meets an untimely death. What is even more important is that there is a belief that the bard may be in a position to prevent some imminent deaths which are deemed "unnatural" by communicating, in very subtle ways, messages from the ancestral and spiritual worlds in their dirges. These messages give warnings about future deaths which are preventable and "unnatural."

Though this researcher did not witness an example, accounts were obtained from some of the elders interviewed on how some poet-cantors are able to save lives by communicating messages which indicate that the deceased were not happy with some of their relatives at the time of their demise. Such angry spirits are sometimes determined to exact revenge on their relatives who offended them by taking the offenders to the next world with them. Indeed, a deceased parent might decide to take revenge on a son or a daughter who wilfully neglects the parent at the time that he needed their support while on his sick bed. This usually happens when the parent in question has had to fight all sorts of childhood diseases in an attempt to nurture the person who finally neglects him during his own illness. In other instances, the son or daughter might have offended the parent in a very serious manner and might have wilfully refused to render an apology to the parent when he or she was still alive. In the case where a mother feels that her only child, who is still too young, will not be able to survive in a hostile environment, the deceased mother might decide to take her child along with her. It is believed that all these deaths can be prevented through the rendering of appropriate apology to the aggrieved side. In consequence, some dirges are purposefully composed to either explain the cause of a death or to give warning about preventable ones that are likely to occur if the appropriate steps are not taken to avert their occurrence.

It must be observed here that it is not all the poet-cantors who can understand and communicate messages of this nature to their audiences. Everything really depends on how well the artist has been prepared by his mentor for the dual role of an artist and a spiritualist or priest.

Finally, reference to the deceased is the last theme that is often expressed by Sısaala dirges. Such references are usually given enough elaboration through the dedications that mourners often make at funeral grounds. As observed earlier, these dedications normally revolve around the genealogical relationship that existed between the mourner and the deceased, the benevolent acts of the deceased in this world, and the vacuum that has been created through the demise of the deceased. Apart from such speeches, some of the dirges which are often composed in honour of the dead usually make direct references to peculiar characteristics of the deceased that have endeared him or her to the hearts of many people. In the dirge "Our protector, Agyiye, is no more/ Who will protect us again?" (*Agyiye bʊrı laara tuwo/ Aŋ sı bʊrı laara?*), the mourner is certainly extolling the protective qualities of the dead relative. The deceased was their defender in every sense of the word; and now that he is no more, the mourner is at loss as to who can step into the shoes of Agyiye. Again, in the lines "The enterprising child is an enemy/ That they intentionally give birth to" (*Bii nyaŋa yaa dɔŋ nɛ/ Ba paalı aŋ lʊla*), the mourner is simply eulogising the deceased's attitude to life. Perhaps, the enterprising attitude of the deceased might have made him successful in life, thus incurring the enmity of those who do not like to see him succeed in life. Reference to the deceased is a theme that manifests itself in all the types of Sısaala dirges.

Functions of the Sısaala Dirge

Indeed, some functions of the dirges under discussion can be elucidated based on available information on how they are executed and some of the poetic messages that are incorporated within them. This part of the study is useful since it enables this researcher to explain the direct bearing that dirges in Ghana have on everyday life, using Sısaala dirges as a case study.

The Dirge as a Repository of Historical Knowledge

From themes that are based on the past, which have been examined early on, it is evident that history constitutes an integral part of the dirges under study. This historical dimension of the dirges has significant relevance to the communities in the research field.

First, most of the appellations used on funeral grounds do not only reflect the exploits of the heroes of various clans and villages but they also trace the geneological lines of the founding fathers of those villages and towns. Politically, this aspect of the appellations is very relevant to contemporary communities because the appellations often serve as reference points and could be of immense help in chieftaincy disputes and other conflicts over ownership of land in the area. In most of the appellations, it is only the names of the founding fathers of clans and villages which are mentioned. When one traces such information to the system of chieftaincy in most of the communities, it would be realised that though such communities have grown in size and now comprise several gates, it is only sections of the community which bear the names of the founding fathers' names that are entitled to nominate people to be installed as chiefs or to occupy the office of custodian of the land (*bɛyitɪna*).

Further investigations reveal that the other gates of the community are not entitled to nominate people to these two offices because they are "strangers." These outsiders may have the right to other offices but not to the office of chief (*kuworu*) and custodian of the land (*bɛyitɪna*). In instances where the youth have arguments over who should be regarded as the true founders of a clan, village or town, reference is often made to the appellation of the community in question. Those regarded as "strangers" in a given community might have split from their mother clan to

go and settle elsewhere. Therefore, if such a split group should go back to its original place of settlement, members might be regarded as the true founders of that settlement and would be entitled to offices like that of the chief and the custodian of the land. The constant recitation and memorisation of these appellations at funeral grounds have enabled the people to keep a vital part of their history alive. This could help most Sısaala communities to accept, to some extent, the systems of succession to offices that have been put in place without protest and to live in peace. This would spare the entire country from the spillover effects of disputes associated with problems of succession to traditional political offices.

In fact, in the appellation that follows, the names of only three founding fathers have been mentioned.

Abu waa! Abu waa! Abu waa!	Attention Abu! Attention Abu! Attention Abu!
l tırıŋ gaŋdaa feni rı yaŋ bee?	What is your own appellation?
Gyaŋ gyaŋ baa saa balıya nıyɛla,	Nephew of those noted for rapid development,
Daŋsɔɔ bee v Kallı,	Nephew of Daŋsɔɔ and Kallı,
Aa kyvwalı v Waalı gaŋdaara nıyɛla,	Who paid their respects to Waalı,
Batiŋ baga gaŋdaara nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who settled on Batiŋ's farm,
Ba naga ɛɛrɛ ı vıya yoho ta?	How come you are not participating in the the performance of dirges?

The names mentioned in the appellation are *Daŋsɔɔ, Kallı* and *Waalı.* These are the fallen heroes who might have founded the village called Kundungu in the Wa East District. The village now has about six gates bearing the names of the founders of each section. Despite these divisions, only three gates of the village have the mandate to nominate people to the office of chief (*kuworu*) and four gates can do so with regard to the office of the custodian of the land

(*bɛyitɪma*). The three gates are those that carry the names of *Dansɔɔ, Kallɪ* and *Waalɪ.* A fourth gate, known as *Sɪkparebɛyi,* is recognised as one of the true founders of the village though it is not entitled to the office of chief due to some historical circumstances. This gate, however, can nominate candidates for the office of the custodian of the land (*bɛyitɪma*), an indication that its founding father is a member of the family that founded the village. All the four gates also have the turtle as their totem which is a further indication that it was one family that founded the village.

The other implication of information from the appellation is that the other two gates (*Tiniyabɛyi* and *Namuwaribɛyi*) are descendants of "strangers" who settled at the village. Consequently, names of their founding fathers have not been mentioned in the appellation. Furthermore, these two gates also have different totems altogether. Thus while the residents of *Namuwaribɛyi* have the python as their totem, those of *Tiniyabɛyi* have the lion as their totem.

The performance of dirges also involves a practice that helps bereaved families in the traditional set-up to minimise cost when it comes to the issue of giving customary "water" to mourners at the end of the funeral. This is because sister clans are usually identified and grouped together and some quantity of food grains including meat is given to them as a form of "water" to drink after mourning with the bereaved family. The sister clans may come from different distant villages and towns and may have to be given the customary "water" separately if the rule on directly related clans is not applied to cut down cost.

But beyond the issue of cutting down cost during traditional funerals, appellations also encapsulate elements that allow not only sister clans to identify themselves but they also enable various individuals whose appellations are chanted to know whether they are related through their fathers' or mothers' genealogical lines. For instance, a mourner whose background is traced through his father's or mother's appellation becomes better known to the audience. Through this exposure, other members of the audience are able to know whether they are related to the mourner through their mothers' genealogical lines because their mothers also come from the same village as that of the mourner or they are related through their fathers' genealogical lines because their grandmothers are from the same community. This brings people who are related through their parents and grandparents but reside in different communities closer, thus further deepening the sense of kinship among them. This also ensures that people have relatives to count on even in towns and villages where they are not necesaarily natives.

With regard to sister clans which are usually grouped together on the issue of the bereaved family offering "water" to mourners, such clans are able to pass on information on the fact that they are related to other sister clans to their members. In most instances, because of the fact that sister clans are usually related through the sharing of the same totem, and the possibility that they may be split groups of the same clan, they may enter into pacts not to inter-marry. This further strengthens the relationship between sister clans, and elders from the two clans can then give the hands of girls from either clan in marriage without necessarily referring the parents of the prospective husband to the biological parents of the young woman. In the same context, members of sister clans can arrange, bury, and bear the cost of burial of one another without prior consultation with the biological parents of the deceased or his parent clan. This usually

happens in situations where a member of a clan travels to another community where there is a sister clan, and passes away. In some instances, members of both sister clans may travel outside their own communities to different parts of the country and one may pass away. The deceased may not have members of his parent clan or people directly related to him also domiciled in this new place of his demise. In this context, the biological parents and the true clan of the deceased will be officially informed of the death of their member after all the funeral and burial arrangements have been carried out by members of the other sister clan. In fact, these genealogical relations between sister clans and among individuals usually have a lot of impact on the lives of people in different ways. This explains why in *Africa and Orality*, Liz Gunner observes that "…one of the roles of oral forms in many parts of the continent has been to give verbal expression to the ordering of societies through the public recitation of genealogies and praises of rulers…" (Gunner, 2007: 69)

The Dirge as a Tool for Social Criticism

Commentary on social attitudes, values, and events is necessary for every society. Through the rendering of dirges, communities are able to engage in useful self-criticism which allows members of the community to expose attitudes, principles, and events that do not conform to the norms of the community, and to values of the country as a whole. In this context, social criticism becomes relevant to the individual, the community, and the country for several reasons.

First, social criticism enables bards to single out attitudes of individuals or groups of individuals and to comment fully on them. Names of individuals may be mentioned in such commentaries or not. What is significant is that those individuals who constitute the object of the artists' criticism

or other members of the community are able to relate the import of such criticism to the reality that exists in the community. The pragmatic aspect of such commentaries encourages people to reflect on the effects of their actions and attitudes on other members of the community. This either brings about a positive change in behaviour of the one at the centre of the criticism; or it deters other people from putting up the same attitude. On the other hand, if the commentary is on a positive attitude or action, it would inspire individuals to nurture such attitudes. In short, social commentary is necessary because it regulates individual behaviour in the community. In the segment of the dirge cited below, the performer puts aside the death of person being mourned completely and rather delivers a sermon on the negative aspects of abortion. It is apparent that the poet-cantor does not subscribe to the concept of voluntary abortion and therefore uses the medium of the dirge to comment on a topical issue in his or her community.

Haweera kaŋ puwosɪ kyaara taa,	Women now abort their pregnancies,
Haweera kaŋ puwosɪ kyaara taa,	Women now abort their pregnancies,
l maa dɪya faa tʋŋ ɛɛ ɪ naa dɪ ɪ minaa?	If your mother had aborted her own, would she have given birth to you?
l maa dɪya ha mina ʋ faa tʋŋ ɛɛrɛ?	When your mother was alive, did she do that?
l maa dɪya faa tʋŋ ɛɛ ɪ na dɪ ɪ minaa?	If your mother had done the same, would she have given birth to you?
Ka ɪ ba sɪya kaŋ bala kyaara taa?	And yet, you now abort your pregnancies.
La sɪya sɪ mʋ Wɪɪsɪ nya dɪ wʋlɪ ba.	We will go to the Lord and resolve these issues.

For the entire community, social criticism is necessary for its survival and development. This is simply because the community cannot survive or develop when its members are eternally engaged in internal conflicts due to the absence of tolerance, goodwill, and trust among them. Peace and unity are essential ingredients for the survival of every community. These factors

which are necessary for the existence and development of individual communities can only be achieved when each member of the society learns to respect, trust, and tolerate other members of the community. This is part of the mission that professional dirge performers seek to achieve through social criticism in their dirges. The following song clearly carries a piece of advice that is intended for members of the entire community. It is a message which can help develop the community if members should adhere to it.

A bɔyɩ ra kyogu	There is no unity in our community
Kɩ bʊrɩ lɔnɩ we ra kyogɩmo.	Due to the unguided statements often made by us.
A bɔyɩ ra kyogu	There is no unity in our community
Kɩ bʊrɩ lɔnɩ we ra kyogɩmo.	Due to the unguided statements often made by us.
A bɔyɩ ra kyogu	There is no unity in our community
Kɩ bʊrɩ lɔnɩ we ra kyogɩmo.	Due to the unguided statements often made by us.
A bɔyɩ ra kyogu	There is no unity in our community
Kɩ bʊrɩ lɔnɩ we ra kyogɩmo.	Due to the unguided statements often made by us.
A bɔyɩ ra kyogu	There is no unity in our community
Kɩ bʊrɩ lɔnɩ we ra kyogɩmo.	Due to the unguided statements often made by us.
A bɔyɩ ra kyogu	There is no unity in our community
Kɩ bʊrɩ lɔnɩ we ra kyogɩmo.	Due to the unguided statements often made by us.

In this song, the performer is certainly admonishing his kinsmen to be circumspect in their utterances towards one another. It is the utterance of unguided statements that causes division among members of the community and such division does not augur well for the development of the community. In order to achieve true unity, residents of the community need to be guided by mutual respect, trust, good neighbourliness and other values in their interactions with one another.

It is also evident that the true development of the entirety of Ghana is dependent, to some extent, on the peaceful development of its individual communities. Once each Ghanaian is taught the basic tenets of peaceful co-existence, the need to conform to the norms of society and the importance of trusting one another, the whole nation can enjoy the benefits thereof and make better progress in terms of real development. The ability to properly regulate individual behaviour through constructive criticism is a sure way of making a positive impact on the individual, the community, and the entire nation.

The Dirge as a Tool for Didacticism

In traditional Africa, knowledge does not exist in books. It is stored in the mind and is then passed on from one generation to another in the oral form. Several platforms are often used to transmit this knowledge. They include storytelling, initiation and puberty rites, the performance of maiden songs, and traditional games in forms such as wrestling and hunting competitions. The rendering of dirges in their formal context also constitutes a reliable medium through which a lot of instruction is carried out on a myriad of issues.

The first form of instruction that comes with the execution of dirges is the development and appreciation of artistic skills in the area of the performance of funeral songs. The kind of training that apprentices of dirge performance undergo, and the onus that the culture of the people places on men, women and children as regards their participation in the execution of dirges at funeral grounds, go a long way in helping individuals to develop their artistic skills in the area of dirge performance. They are also better equipped to appreciate the skill of others in this domain. For the apprentice, he or she is able to learn that the performance of dirges is an art that has to be

learnt. It involves more than the mere possession of a melodious voice or the abilty to memorise appellations offhand. In fact, it has more to do with facing different audiences and trying to connect with their emotions through dirges, gestures, facial expressions, and dance. This must be done amidst all the distractions that go with most oral performances. Indeed, the artist has no choice but to be a master of the content of his dirges, and more especially, that of his stage craft. The audience, through its constant participation in the materialisation of oral texts, does not only develop its skill in the rendering of dirges, but it is also able to appreciate all the subtle differences that go with the execution of dirges in terms of talent, skill, professionalism, and experience.

It is equally important to note that the rendering of dirges in their formal setting also constitutes another form of instruction with regard to ritual activities. In fact, the execution of dirges is an entire mourning process that is not limited to lamentation and audience participation in such an enterprise. It involves a faithful repetition of all ritual activities that are associated with the handling of the corpse on the funeral grounds if it is to be displayed; how mourners from other communities should be handled after the funeral; what should be displayed on the funeral grounds to indicate whether the deceased is a farmer, a hunter, or a successful cattle farmer. In most instances, contributions from the husbands of the deceased's daughters in the form of live goats and sheep are also displayed on the funeral grounds. These are all activities that constitute an integral part of the rendering of dirges. Their constant repetition is a good forum through which the skill associated with the rendering of dirges alone is not only passed on to the younger generations but the very ancillary activities that go into organising and rendering dirges are also learnt by the youth.

Apart from these two forms of instruction, it must be observed that dirges also encapsulate very vital lessons and values about life. They are delivered as direct instruction that has to be taken as such by anyone that is interested in them. It is also important to note that most of the values embedded in these dirges are of national appeal. For instance, values such as respect for the aged, the need to serve one's parents with absolute devotion, or the importance of living an upright life so as to make the right impact on society as shown in discussions associated with reflections, are common in most communities in Ghana. These are values that unite Ghanaians. The ability to pass these values and instruction to succeeding generations constitutes a giant step towards uniting Ghana in the moral sense. In reaction to a question on the didactic function of dirges put to him by this researcher, Jebuni Sumani, an artist from Sombisi puts it in a figurative sense that, "It is for the sake of the fool and the orphan that dirges are performed," (*Ganıı bee bʊsʊlʊŋbiye wıya rɛ ba kı ta haŋyiye*). In the bard's view, the orphan has no parents to school him on the lessons and values of life. The fool, on the other hand, is so called because he is ill equipped with the kind of knowledge and values that he needs to go through life.

Finally, it must be admitted that the appellations that come with the dirges also constitute a form of historical instruction that has several benefits for the people. First, people are able to learn about the history of their individual clans and villages, knowledge that does not exist in books; and which, even if it existed in books, could not be accessed by many of them due to their inability to read and write. Individual mourners are also able to learn about their own genealogies and those of other people that form members of their extended family systems. This instruction has several implications for the individual, the community, and the society at large as explained earlier.

The Dirge as a Platform for Spiritual Nurturing

"The poet is the ultimate visionary, and like the priest (he is at times the same person) takes ideas from the known and unknown world and thrusts them back to his people, his chorus, who in turn translates them into comprehensible and worldly dimensions." (Awoonor, 1974:24) Indeed, it is partly as a result of the dual role of the dirge performer as an artist and as a link between the audience and the world of the dead that necessitates the nurturing of his spiritual qualities. This way, the artist does not only lead the community in mourning the dead but he also leads it in the search for solutions to some of the deaths that are avoidable. Though this quality of the artist is a desirable one, it is not all the dirge performers who are able to develop their skill and spiritual powers to the level that permits them to interpret messages from the world of death. Spiritual fortification usually comes in the form of herbal preparations which are used for bathing. In some instances, it may come in the form of an amulet or a flywhisk which the bard can easily use as a shield against "missiles" directed at him or her. Better still, it could come in the form of the bard's mentor who may be at the funeral grounds himself.

The Dirge as a Medium for Mourning and Celebrating the Life of the Deceased

As pointed out in chapter one, dirges constitute the appropriate medium in the traditional context for bidding farewell to our departed ones. This role of dirges is important since it does not only give us the opportunity to honour the dead both socially and culturally, but it also gives mourners the opportunity to express themselves emotionally. This dimension of the role of dirges provides some form of psychic and emotional healing to mourners, thus enabling them to deal with the pain of their loss in a better manner.

It is important to note that in the context where the deceased is very old and has lived an upright life, the performance of dirges on his death tends to be celebratory. For instance, dirges A, B, and C which are presented as follows are simply celebratory.

A

Gandaala tiga daasɩ	Noble people have come from far and near
Ko na aŋwuwoŋ.	To see the lion.
Gandaala tiga daasɩ	Noble people have come from far and near
Ko na aŋwuwoŋ.	To see the lion.
Gandaala tiga daasɩ	Noble people have come from far and near
Ko na aŋwuwoŋ.	To see the lion.
Gandaala tiga daasɩ	Noble people have come from far and near
Ko na aŋwuwoŋ.	To see the lion.
Gandaala tiga daasɩ	Noble people have come from far and near
Ko na aŋwuwoŋ.	To see the lion.
Gandaala tiga daasɩ	Noble people have come from far and near
Ko na aŋwuwoŋ waaaaa.	To see the lion.

B

I ko nɪɪ naagime gɪŋ, gɪŋ	When you hear the stampede of feet
Nala tɪɪna ra ko.	Know that it is somebody who is rich in terms of people who is coming.
I ko nɪɪ naagɪme gɪŋ, gɪŋ	When you hear the stampede of feet
Nala tɪɪna ra ko.	Know that it is somebody who is rich in terms of people who is coming.
I ko nɪɪ naagɪme gɪŋ, gɪŋ	When you hear the stampede of feet
Nala tɪɪna ra ko.	Know that it is somebody who is rich in terms of people who is coming.
I ko nɪɪ naagɪme gɪŋ, gɪŋ	When you hear the stampede of feet
Nala tɪɪna ra ko.	Know that it is somebody who is rich in terms of people who is coming.
I ko nɪɪ naagɪme gɪŋ, gɪŋ	When you hear the stampede of feet

Nala tɩɩna ra ko yeeeee.	Know that it is somebody who is rich in terms of people who is coming.

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C

Tʋŋ bala tuwo tʋŋ	One task is never enough
A tʋŋ aŋ daagɩ.	He would always accomplish one and more tasks.
Tʋŋ bala tuwo tʋŋ	One task is never enough
A tʋŋ aŋ daagɩ.	He would always accomplish one and more tasks.
Tʋŋ bala tuwo tʋŋ	One task is never enough
A tʋŋ aŋ daagɩ.	He would always accomplish one and more tasks.
Tʋŋ bala tuwo tʋŋ	One task is never enough
A tʋŋ aŋ daagɩ.	He would always accomplish one and more tasks.
Tʋŋ bala tuwo tʋŋ	One task is never enough
A tʋŋ aŋ daagɩ.	He would always accomplish one and more tasks.
Tʋŋ bala tuwo tʋŋ	One task is never enough
A tʋŋ aŋ daagɩ waaaaaa.	He would always accomplish one and more tasks.

In the first dirge, the celebration comes from the description of the deceased as a lion which is known for its strength, hunting skills, bravery, and the respect that other animals accord it. In the second dirge, it is made clear that the deceased is wealthy in terms of human resource and this is why he or she never moves alone. Human resource is a valuable asset in the traditional set-up; and this is why anyone who is endowed with it is automatically given the needed respect. The demise of such a person is a celebration because he or she has been able to achieve one of the ultimate goals in life in the traditional context. The third dirge is not a lamentation but it rather celebrates the industriousness of the deceased who was never satisfied with the accomplishment of just one assignment.

In this context, the rendering of dirges is often used as an opportunity to highlight the achievements of the deceased in life. This is the instance in which items that reflect the success of the deceased in farming, hunting, or whatever occupation he or she was engaged in are usually displayed. Thus the life of the person is normally celebrated in this context not only to demonstrate that the deceased deserves it, but it is also done to illustrate to the entire community that there is reward in living an upright life and working hard to develop one's family, community, and the society at large. This therefore encourages other members of the community to try and live decent and acceptable lives even if they cannot live long.

In short, the rendering of dirges is an art that has has several utilitarian values. Dirges do not only encapsulate useful moral lessons and values for the individual, the community, and the society at large but they also contain vital instructions in the areas of history, ritual activities, the development of artistic skills, and in the area of spiritual nurturing. These lessons, values, beliefs, and ritual practices which are often poetically reiterated in dirges cut across Ghanaian cultures and therefore serve as a rallying point for the Ghanaian populace. For instance, the custom of laying corpses in state by placing them on seats raised a few metres above the ground is not practiced by the Sɪsaala alone. The Dagaaba also observe the same custom and the practice has not yet disappeared completely in some of the Dagaaba communities. As a result, the Ghanaian belief about life, death, destiny, and life after death is expressed through the execution of dirges.

On the issue of values, it is not only the Sɪsaala dirge that celebrates qualities such as industriousness, courage, moral uprightness, or responsibility. In the following segment of a

dirge taken from Nketia's collection, the mourner does not only lament the demise of Owusu but he or she also celebrates the deceased's courage, generosity, and his protective instincts.

> Valiant Owusu
> The stranger on whom the citizen of the town depend,
> Father, allow my children and me to depend on you
> So that we may all of us get something to eat,
> Father on whom I wholly depend. (Nketia, 1955:71)

Owusu could not have protected and supported others if he himself had not been a responsible person in life. Responsibility is therefore an important quality that has endeared the late Owusu to the heart of his mourners and it is also a value that is being celebrated in this segmement of the dirge.

Responsibility as a social value is equally celebrated in the line, "Awetse Tete, our only prop" which is taken from *Multiplying Agonies.* This is a poem that has been composed by Okleme and it is inspired by motifs from the traditional Krobo dirge. In this context, much as the mourner laments the vacuum created by the demise of Awetse Tete, the value of responsibility which is a quality that enabled the deceased to act as the prop of the mourner is equally extolled. In the Sısaala context, the celebration of responsibility as a positive character trait is made manifest in the lines "Agyiye, our protector is no more /Who will protect us?" (*Agyiye bvrı laara tuwo/ Aŋ sı bvrı laara?*). Again in this instance, the dirge performer does not only make it clear that the deceased was a reliable prop and therefore responsible, but the mourner is also at loss as to who can fill the the shoes of Agyiye now that he is no more. In the same vein, the Sısaala dirge, "One task is never enough/ He would always accomplish one and more tasks" (*Tvŋ bala tuwo tvŋ/ A tvŋ aŋ daagı*) celebrates industriousness just as the way Owusu's diligence is eulogised in the line, "Father, the Rover whose footprints are on all paths." (Nketia, 1955:71)

The execution of dirges does not, therefore, need to be considered as a mere routine that must be followed on funeral grounds. The whole process should be viewed as a forum that provides useful lessons on culture and on life.

CHAPTER FIVE

CURRENT STATUS OF THE SIsAALA DIRGE

Introduction

Many literary critics, including anthropologists, have all agreed with the observation that culture is a dynamic phenomenon. Thus Mathew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* (1966:6), Ngugi Wa Thiongo in *Towards a National Culture* (1972:4), Mbiti in *African Religions and Philosophy* (1976:216) as well as Peter Sarpong in *Ghana in Retrospect* (1974:vii) have all referred to the dynamic dimension of life and culture in their works. Indeed, Sarpong observes that:

> As can very well be understood, the force of social change in Africa in general and Ghana in particular is such that no institutions or patterns of ideas can remain the same for all the people in one society or for different communities of that society… For culture is dynamic, never static, and it would be a mistake to suggest or hope that there has not been any deviation from the *status quo*. (1974: vii)

The intention, in this chapter, is to discuss the Sısaala dirge as a dynamic cultural phenomenon. The focus will therefore be on current attitudes towards the execution of the Sısaala dirge with appropriate reference to some of the forces or considerations that have affected its execution over the years or are likely to do so in future.

The Unique Position of the Sısaala Dirge Performer

The Sısaala professional dirge performer enjoys a unique position in the cultural set-up of the people. This is not solely as a result of the texture of his or her voice on funeral grounds but it is mainly as a result of the nature of his training which moulds him or her into a social critic, a

chronicler, a spiritual leader, and an artist. The professional dirge performer is, indeed, a reflection of all these skills and capabilities.

Dirge performers are true social critics and they take this responsibility seriously. This explains why every opportunity is often taken on funeral grounds to offer constructive criticism to members of the communities or to condemn negative tendencies that have the potential of causing divisions within such communities. Indeed, as indicated in the previous chapter, social criticism often dominates the execution of dirges in the context where the deceased is an elderly fellow. It is even more apparent in the course of a second funeral celebration in which there is usually a clear effort made at celebrating the life of the deceased, and life in the community in general. This celebration does not simply take the form of praises but it also involves philosophising on life and offering functional criticism on life in general. Members of the community could use the occasion of the death of one of their kinsmen to promote unity and positive moral values that would help the community in its quest for unity and moral uprightness. Life on this earth is only temporary and once we are no more, we can only be remembered in the hearts of people due to the positive impact we made on their lives by nurturing, and living by some of the principles that most of the dirges poetically reiterate. This is why members of the community are often reminded of their duty to live responsibly while they are still alive.

In the anecdote that follows, the storyline of the tale has nothing to do with death though the narrative has been used to clarify the meaning of a dirge.

Nyaawɔ rɪ sii, a lɔla ɔ biye. A lɔla bagyoŋbiye. A deŋ biye hɔ ɛɛ ɔ kɔ mɔ gyɪŋ wɪya. Biye hɔ mɔ gyɪŋ wɪya a ko kɪ tɪɪ haa, dɪ ɔ baa dɪ ɔ kuwo yaa nyaawɔ rɛ. Ɛɛ wɪya haa, nyawɔ biibaal sii haa,

a fa mʊ gyʊʊ kuworu bee ʊ balɪya tɪyaŋ. Ʊ mʊ pɛ kuworu bee ʊ balɪya tɪyaŋ haa, a tʊma gɪ tɪya ba.

Ɛɛrɛ haa, kyɛ kɪrɪgɪ, nyaawʊ biibaal sii haa, a mʊ ɔhʊ. Ʊ kpa gɪ mʊ haa, dɪ kantoŋ hɔnɔɔ tɪya memɪɪ tɪyaŋ. Ɛɛrɛ haa, dɪ kantoŋ baa bee dɪ nyaawʊ biibaal ko fʊma ʊ nyuu tɪyawʊ. Ɛɛrɛ haa, nyaawʊ biibaal mʊ kpa kantoŋ nyuu haa, dɪ ʊ fʊma. Biye fʊma nyuu ko gɪ tɪɪ haa, dɪ kantoŋ baa dɪ nyaawʊ biye tɪyaŋ dɪ ʊ paa ʊ nyupʊna mal tɪyawʊ. Ɛɛrɛ nyaawʊ biibaal baa haa, "Ɔ kyana kantoŋ, bakɪnee wɪya mɛ rɛ ɪ gɪ basɪ ɛɛ? ɪ laa baa dɪ ŋ fʊma ɪ nyupʊna a tɪyaɪ?"

Ɛɛrɛ kantoŋ baa dɪ ʊ rɛ basa amɛ waa kyɛ ʊ nyupʊna rɛ. Nyaawʊ biye kpa ʊ naaŋ dɪ ʊ bɪŋ daha haa, kantoŋ tɪŋʊ tɪyaŋ. Nyawʊ biye bila lɔlɔ haa, aŋ luŋ gyʊʊ. Ɛɛrɛ kantoŋ tɪŋʊ tɪyaŋ patɪpatɪ. Nyaawʊ biye fa ko haa, a ko gyʊʊ kuworu. A baa kuworu laaŋ, kantoŋ nɪ baa dɪ ŋ fʊma ʊ nyuu tɪyawʊ. Ɔ fʊma nyuu ko gɪ tɪɪ haa, dɪ kantoŋ baa dɪ ŋ paa ʊ nyupʊna mal tɪyawʊ. Ɛɛrɛ kuworu baa nyawʊ biye tɪyaŋ dɪ ʊ sii kaŋ ʊ wɪya mʊ aŋkawʊ kɛ. Dɪ ʊ kuworu rɪ yaa ʊ nyɪmaa?

Biye kpa sii haa, ɛɛrɛ kantoŋ bila kpa tɪŋa ʊ tɪyaŋ. Ba kpa gɪ mʊ haa, dɪ baa kyeŋ nyaawʊ. Ɛɛrɛ nyaawʊ pɪyasɪ, bafɪyala? Ɛɛre haa, nyaawʊ biye kpa duwoso a we. Ɛɛrɛ nyaawʊ baa dɪ kantoŋ leŋ dɪ ba baŋ ʊ baga a hɔŋ wiyesi a wuwo basɪ wɪɪ hʊ. Ba pelee nyaawu baga ko gɪ tɪɪ haa, dɪ nyaawʊ baa dɪ kantoŋ ko gɪ kyɛ dɪ ʊ biye paa ʊ nyupʊna mal tɪyawʊ, ɛɛ kɛ kantoŋ mɛ paa ʊ naasɪ lɪɪ ʊ baga tɪyaŋ. Kantoŋ a baa ʊ paa ʊ naasɪ haa, a bila marɪ nʊwasɪ baga ʊ naasɪ pɪŋ leebuloŋ a mʊ. Kantoŋ paa paa ʊ naasɪ lɔlɔɔ haa, aŋ fa vɪya nyaawʊ biye ta. Nyaawʊ biye nyaŋ baa dɪ ʊ kuwo, dɪ waa kyʊwalʊ kɪŋkaŋ. Dɪ ʊ laa sɪya mʊ kuworu lee rɛ dɪ ɛɛrɛ kuworu kɪlʊʊ ta.

"There lived a poor man who had a son. He took care of the son till he grew up. When the son grew up, he told his father that the father was poor. Consequently, the son abandoned the poor man and went and lived with the chief and his family. The poor man's son went and lived with

the chief and his family and worked for them. Then one day, the poor man's son got up and went to the bush to hunt.

After walking for some time, the poor man's son came across a dwarf sitting under a tree. And what did the dwarf have to say? The dwarf told the poor man's son to shave his head for him. The poor man's son heeded to the dwarf's request and shaved the dwarf's head for him. After the poor man's son had finished shaving the dwarf's head, the dwarf asked the poor man's son to stick back his hair unto his head for him. Then the poor man's son enquired, "My friend dwarf, what are you saying? Were you not the one who asked me to shave your head for you?" Then dwarf said he asked the poor man's son to shave his hair for him but then, he wanted his hair back on his head. When the poor man's son took a step, the dwarf followed him. When the poor man's son realised that he could not stick back dwarf's hair, he took to his heels. Then dwarf followed him at close heels. The poor man's son ran to the chief. The poor man's son asked the chief to save him and that it was dwarf who asked him to shave his head for him. After he had shaved the head, dwarf demanded that he stick back the hair unto his head for him. Then the chief told the poor man's son to get lost from his sight. After all, was he, the chief, the true father of the poor man's son?

The young man got up and dwarf followed him again. Just a short distance away from the chief's palace, the poor man's son and the dwarf met the poor man himself. Then the poor man asked what the problem was. The poor man's son told his story. Then the poor man asked dwarf and his son to follow him to his farm so that they could sit down and discuss the problem in a relaxed manner. When they got to the farm, the poor man told dwarf that if dwarf wanted his son to stick

back his hair unto his head for him, then dwarf should also make his footprints disappear from his farm. Dwarf tried to clean his footprints to no avail. When dwarf could not satisfy the condition of the poor man, he ran away leaving the poor man's son in peace. Then the poor man's son thanked his father. The son told his father that he first went to the chief and was turned away."

Nyaawɔ wara	The poor man's brick
Sii mɔ bɪrɪmɪ kuworu wara.	Cannot turn itself into a rich man's own.
Nyaawɔ wara	The poor man's brick
Sii mɔ bɪrɪmɪ kuworu wara.	Cannot turn itself into a rich man's own.
Nyaawɔ wara	The poor man's brick
Sii mɔ bɪrɪmɪ kuworu wara.	Cannot turn itself into a rich man's own.
Nyaawɔ wara	The poor man's brick
Sii mɔ bɪrɪmɪ kuworu wara.	Cannot turn itself into a rich man's own.
Nyawɔ wara	The poor man's brick
Sii mɔ bɪrɪmɪ kuworu wara yeyi, yeyi yeyi.	Cannot turn itself into a rich man's own.

The narrative seeks to teach the poor man's son that blood is thicker than water. It is therefore important to accept and respect one's background no matter how poor it may be. Apart from this, the tale seeks to teach the moral that instead of running away from our problems, we should accept the challenge and work towards finding solutions to such problems. The poor man's son could have helped his father to get out of poverty if he had stayed and worked together with him instead of using those precious years to labour for the chief who finally rejects him as his own son. The tale also reinforces the idea that poverty alone should not prevent one from being a good parent to his or her children. The parent may not be able to provide enough for the family due to financial constraints but this should not be an excuse for such a parent to neglect his obligations towards his children. The poor man in the narrative does not reject his son because

the latter misbehaved. In the same context, the poor man does not run away from the responsibility of protecting his son against the unreasonable dwarf simply because he is poor. These are lessons that have more to do with life than death and this clearly brings out the social role of dirge performers.

Sısaala professional dirge performers are also chroniclers of the history of their various communities and clans. As it has already been pointed out in the preceding chapter, history features prominently in Sısaala dirges. This is mainly as a result of the elements constituting the appellations of the different clans, village, and towns. These appellations usually reflect historical highlights of the clans and villages. In fact, some of the bards do not know the detailed historical contexts that might have contributed to the composition of such appellations. They simply content themselves with memorising and reciting such appellations during the execution of dirges. Some poet-cantors, on the other hand, have a fair knowledge on the historical dimension of these appellations. Thus apart from the fact that such performers can recite the appellations, they are also able to situate other people in the historical background that might have constituted the highlights of these appellations. Even in the context where the performer lacks knowledge about the past that constitutes the reference point of some of these appellations, the role of such bards cannot be relegated to the background. This is because the ability to keep the highlights of the past of different clans and villages in mind, and the ability to pass such information from one generation to another, are important. Detailed information about the past of the clans can be obtained from the leaders of such clans. What is essential is that the researcher is able to ascertain, to some extent, which detailed information is true or otherwise by referring to

the highlights that constitute the appellations. Things could get muddier if there were no such reference points in the form of appellations to guide researchers in this area.

The other important role that professional dirge performers play in their respective communities is their ability to double as spiritual leaders. It is the general contention of the people that one does not need only sheer brilliance and might to win traditional competitions. In addition to such qualities as experience and intelligence, one also requires spiritual support to emerge victorious in the face of stiff competition from other participants. This spiritual support could come from personal or family divinities; it could come from herbal preparations; or, better still, it could come from the mentor of a professional dirge performer. It is in the attempt to prepare themselves spiritually enough for keen competition from other bards that dirge performers end up, it is believed, being able to occasionally trace the cause of a death or being able to foresee certain "unnatural" deaths. To the local people, this role is equally important since it is believed that innocent lives could be saved through such warnings that the performer is able to communicate to them from the spiritual world.

The dirge performer is not only the epitome of verbal creativity among the Sısaala but he equally personifies the dirge itself. Thus through verbal creativity, the poet-cantor is able to provide some emotional relief to the community for the loss that it has endured. The bard does this by creating dirges that seek to let the community understand that as painful as death may be, it is an integral part of life and its occurrence should be exploited to further exhort members of the community to respect human life, their elders, gods, forebears, and the Supreme Being. Through verbal creativity, the dirge performer is able to comment on sensitive issues in a less offensive

manner for audience to draw useful morals thereof. Quite apart from the ingenuity with which bards are able to teach and provide comic relief to mourners, it must also be observed that the Sɪsaala dirge performer personifies the dirge itself. This is as a result of the manner in which dirges are executed in Sɪsaala communities. On formal occasions of mourning, dirges cannot be executed without a professional dirge performer. He or she is needed to lead the community in the entire performance of dirges. It is true that the poet-cantor alone cannot render dirges in the formal context but it is equally true that the community needs the performer to enable it mourn its departed souls properly.

Despite this unique position that is enjoyed by bards, there are certain factors militating against the survival of their art in contemporary Sɪsaala communities. These hindrances are both traditional and modern in nature. First, traditionally, it is expected that poet-cantors do not charge any specific amount of money before they go to perform at funeral grounds. The belief is that the profession is not a money making venture and even if someone intends making money out of it, the individual is not likely to go far in his or her professional career. It is also believed that the professional poet-cantor must rely on what the community is able to offer him or her out of its own will during the rendering of dirges. The wisdom in this belief and practice is that it makes it possible for every Sɪsaala man or woman to be honoured with dirge performance on the occasion of their death. There is no situation whereby families are unable to afford the services of bards as a result of financial constraints.

The problem with this custom is that the bard who decides to devote all his or her time to professional dirge performance cannot support his family based on the earnings that he is able to

make out of singing dirges alone. This is simply because donations are often not enough to take care of the drummers and the many dirge performers that may parade themselves during the execution of dirges. In consequence, every dirge performer would have to, in addition to the singing of dirges, engage in a more reliable occupation that would enable him provide adequately for the family. Those who are not able to successfully combine their art with serious farming, for instance, are labelled as "lazy bones" not as a result of their unwillingness to be industrious but as a result of the kind of occupation that they are engaged in. For instance, out of the four professional dirge performers who have been interviewed by this researcher, one is a woman and three are men. Out of the three men, one is a successful farmer, hunter, and a bard. The two other men are successful in their artistic pursuits but they live from hand to mouth. This suspicion about the art of dirge singing being the preserve of indolent men and women, or its ability to turn an individual into a bunch of lazy bones discourages the youth from going into it. This suspicion is further evidenced by the fact that out of the four dirge performers, it is only Halukı, the woman from Pulma and Maani who have apprentices. Awoonor reports of a similar suspicion which the Ewe poet has to deal with in his community. Awoonor observes that:

> But there is also a traditional suspicion that it is men who are very lazy, who shun work and are stunningly handsome that make good poets. They are thus, unless crowned with success like Akpalu, not considered as very serious-minded people who can be relied upon in moments of great crisis. Most poet-cantors are therefore plagued by ennui and a deep feeling that they are not in the mainstream of the human family. (1974:19)

The second problem militating against the work of bards is the disintegration of traditional extended family values. In the past, there were stronger family bonds among individual members making up extended families. Entire extended families had heads who ensured that nuclear families never separated from the extended one but stayed within it and shared in its work, food,

pain, and joy. Thus men from the same extended family could have individual farms but all the women from the family did the sowing and harvesting on all the farms. At the end of the harvesting season, all the crop that is produced is brought together and given to the family head to feed the entire extended family till the next harvesting season. This ensured that even individual nuclear families who had bad harvest during a particular season could still rely on good harvest from other members of the extended family to feed their wives and children. It also made it possible for extended families to have members who devoted their time to hunting, dirge singing, blacksmithing, and soothsaying and still rely on the extended family to feed their wives and children with whatever contribution that they were able to make towards the sustenance of the larger unit. Extended families, and values associated with them, are now disintegrating and nuclear families consisting of a husband, a wife, and children are emerging in most communities. This implies that each nuclear family has to rely on its own resources to feed itself. A problem arises where one is engaged in an occupation like dirge performance alone in which the bard has to depend on the goodwill of the mourners to survive.

In addition to these factors, there also seems to be no internal structures that organise and regulate the activities of dirge performers. The formation of associations could help poet-cantors to formulate rules and regulations that could ensure better co-ordination and unity among them. For example, the existence of professional associations could help bards to allocate zones to members to perform any time there are funerals in such zones. They could even draw up duty rosters for members. This may help them maximise earnings since they will not have to crowd themselves on each funeral grounds, making earnings from such performances quite inadequate for them. Formation of associations could also ensure that performers institute rules that would

make it mandatory for mourners who record their dirge singing for personal use to pay some form of copyright duty that is quite appreciable. Again, they could also regulate that people who are not professional dirge singers but usually hang around poet-cantors during the execution of dirges in order to share in the earnings are discouraged from such a practice. In fact, unity among dirge performers would go a long way towards solving some of the problems that they face as individual bards.

In contemporary times, some dealers in audio-cassettes record dirge performances on funeral grounds which they later copy and sell to the public. Unfortunately, however, the poet-cantor does not earn a penny from such sales. All the money that accrues from such sales goes to the dealers in audio-cassettes. For instance, this researcher, in the course of gathering primary data from the research field was able to buy audio recorded performances of both Maani and Halukɩ from a cassette seller in Tumu at the price of one cedi, fifty pesewas each. This took place before the researcher even met the bards to interview them individually. In the course of the interview, it was found out that the two dirge singers did not even know that some of their performances could be obtained in audio form in Tumu. This is a phenomenon that does not benefit dirge performers at all and it partly contributes to their low earnings.

Finally, poet-cantors who are engaged in dirge performance and the entire Sɪsaala community also face an uphill task in an attempt to convince the youth about the value of dirges and the need for them to generate interest in their rendition. Christianity and the Moslem religion are also making significant impact in the religious life of the Sɪsaala. Both religions are antagonistic, to some extent, to the practices and the form of training that are associated with apprenticeship in

the art of professional dirge performance. It is possible that some aspects of the training that apprentices are suspected to go through may not go hand in hand with the beliefs and practices of the two religions. For example, the belief that bards need spiritual fortification and therefore have to take or bath herbal preparations, or even wear amulets for that purpose, is against the tenets of the two religions. This does not, however, imply that professional dirge performance is a heathenised art through and through and therefore has nothing good to offer society. Indeed, some of the values that bards reiterate in their poetic messages such as respect for the aged, motherliness, industriousness, generosity, and kindness are not antagonistic to the teachings of both Christianity and the Moslem religion.

In short, this constitutes the description of the nature of the work of a professional dirge performer in contemporary Sısaala communities. Some of the problems that are pertinent to the survival of the art of dirge singing have also been raised. Most of the problems that currently confront the progress of the art could be solved if dirge performers are able to come together and form associations to regulate activities of their members. This could even help them weed out the unprofessional ones among them; and also enable them present a united opinion in their attempt to ask for copyright fees from people who record their performances for personal use. They could also enter into agreements with cassette dealers to enable them enjoy part of the earnings that may accrue from sales made on their recorded dirges.

With regard to the form of training that apprentices receive, the spiritual dimension remains a stumbling block for the youth who are enthusiastic in taking up dirge performance as a form of part-time occupation. It remains a problem because it makes the apprenticeship more exacting in

terms of discipline, and is longer in duration. It also imbues the art with a lot of secrecy and mystery. Luckily enough, modern dirge performers are beginning to decouple the spiritual dimension from the art itself. In other words, modern bards are not so steeped in spiritual fortification practices themselves. This makes the training of younger bards much easier.

Nonetheless, a lot of work still has to be accomplished in order to educate the youth on the utilitarian dimension of dirge performance to enable them appreciate its worth. Indeed, the majority of the youth regard dirge performances as a routine cultural practice whose functionality is limited to the mourning of the dead.

In consequence, this researcher is of the view that ignorance about Ghanaian cultural values and practices is a reality. This reality may not be limited to the Sısaala youth alone. It seems to be a lacuna that cuts across cultures in the country. Conscious effort would therefore have to be made at the national, regional, and district levels to educate the youth on their cultural heritage.

In fact, research work of this nature is a step in the right direction though it remains inadequate. Ghanaians who are able to educate themselves to the tertiary level and are interested in our culture can access documents of this nature. However, there remain a good number of the youth who are not educated at all or who are educated but not up to the level that makes them culturally conscious so as to look out for documents of this nature to read. It therefore remains the responsibility of government agencies and ministries in charge of cultural education to ensure that proper measures are put in place to give constructive education to Ghanaian youth on important aspects of their culture.

For instance, the Ministry of Education could introduce cultural studies as a separate subject at the basic education level or at the Senior High School level. This would allow students to focus on learning aspects of different cultures in Ghana as against the current system where students learn more about only the culture of the language that they study as Ghanaian Language or where they glean few aspects of Ghanaian culture from their Religious and Moral Education lessons.

Apart from the channel of formal education, efforts could be made to encourage the frequency modulation stations of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation in all the ten regions to devote part of their programmes to educating the local people in each region on their own culture. This could be done in vernacular to encourage wide audience participation. For example, in the course of this research, it was found out that Radio Upper West in Wa organises a music request programme for Sɪsaala, Dagaaba, and Waala in the region. It is a programme that is broadcast in Sɪsaalɪ, Dagaare, and Waalɪ and the music often requested in this programme is traditional in nature and it could be in the form of dirges, maiden's songs, or songs associated with other traditional forms of dance. This is an initiative that is laudable. The problem with the programme is that it only plays such traditional music to the people but it has no room for in-depth discussion on the occasions for the execution of such music in the traditional context, the manner in which it is performed, or the functional aspect of such oral pieces.

Professionalism in the Performance of the Sɪsaala Dirge

Professionalism in the rendering of the dirge in its formal context is manifested at three different levels. First, the execution of dirges demands that a poet-cantor or several of them lead the entire community in the mourning process. These poet-cantors are usually bards who have specialised

in the rendering of dirges. They are noted for their verbal creativity, range of thought, constructive criticism, and more especially, their ability to lessen the grief of the bereaved through their performance. Their in-depth knowledge in the appellations of different clans and villages is also a determining factor. These are appellations that would be used in announcing the presence of mourners, in enticing sympathisers to donate money to performers, and in encouraging mourners to take centre stage in formulating their dedications to the deceased. In a word, the manner in which dirges are organised and executed as well as the range of issues usually covered by them demands the presence of a specialist in the rendering of funeral songs. This specialist is the professional dirge performer.

Professionalism in the execution of the Sısaala dirge is also demonstrated through the kind of training that apprentices usually receive in order to graduate as accomplished performers. In the traditional set-up, knowledge or specialisation in some occupations can be acquired by simply observing and practicing what others do in that field. This trend can also be applied, to some extent, in acquiring skills in the performance of dirges as well. It is believed, however, that one needs more than simple observation and practice in order to graduate as a professional dirge performer. It is mandatory that one gets himself or herself attached to an experienced performer to enable an individual learn about the ethics and secrets of the art. It is the general perception that ethics embedded in the execution of dirges have been jealously guarded and kept secret among dirge performers over the years. One can only get a better picture of the ethics that pertain to the art once he or she decides to become a specialist in that field.

Finally, professionalism is equally exhibited on the funeral grounds once poet-cantors take centre stage to perform. Apart from some of the formulae that performers use in introducing themselves as discussed earlier, there are other implicit rules that professional dirge performers usually observe whenever they are executing dirges. For instance, professionalism demands that every professional performer should, as much as possible, try and give his colleagues the opportunity to also sing once they are so intended. It is also professionally unacceptable for one performer to barge in on another poet-cantor who has the floor when the one chanting the appellations has not reached a stage that can allow another bard to take over without distorting or mutilating an appellation that has been started. In consequence, dirge singers would take over from their colleagues at the end of an appellation, for instance, or at the end of an entire dirge. Besides these implicit rules, professionalism in the art makes it necessary for bards to stay away from alcohol or drugs that are likely to negatively affect their ability to sing or the clarity of their thought. In contemporary Sɪsaala communities, alcoholism has been the bane of some young dirge performers who are not able to travel the full length of their professional career.

Attitude of the Youth towards Dirge Performance

Funeral attendance is a communal duty among the Sɪsaala youth just as it pertains in most other Ghanaian communities. Parents who are too old to travel to distant villages and towns to attend funerals would usually delegate the youth to go and represent them on such occasions. The youth are stronger and they can ride bicycles and motor cycles to cover long distances. It is believed among the Sɪsaala that one who does not attend funerals may not have people trooping to his funeral on his death. This partly explains why both the aged and the youth continue to patronise funeral attendance in the traditional set-up.

Quite apart from the issue of communal duty that makes it essential to patronise funeral attendance, the youth are also attracted to the musical quality of the dirge and its ability to create a congenial mood for sober reflections on life anytime one listens to such performance. In consequence, the youth would go to the length of recording dirge performances on their audio-cassette players which they could listen to afterwards. For this reason, one can surmise that the youth are interested in the performance of dirges, to some extent, in the traditional set-up.

There are, however, two other factors which go a long way in illustrating that participation of the youth in the rendering of dirges is not without hindrance. First, despite the fact that the youth are much aware of the meditative quality of dirges and their smooth musical rhythms which they obviously enjoy, they do not demonstrate enough enthusiasm in contributing towards the materialisation of oral texts on the funeral grounds. Even in some of the communities where the audience accompanies dirge performers in executing entire segments of dirges and where the youth could obviously participate in singing such dirges, they show complete reluctance in carrying out this role. They are interested in listening to dirges but they do not show the same level of enthusiam in the performance of oral pieces. The simple explanation to this attitude is that most young men and women do not practice how to sing funeral songs at the personal level when they are alone. They are expected by custom to learn how to execute the simplest forms of these dirges at the individual level to facilitate their ability to participate in the formal execution of dirges. Due to the fact that most young men and women do not practice the execution of dirges at the personal level, it becomes difficult for them to sing in unison with mourners on funeral grounds. They sing out of tune with the rest of the mourners since they are unable to

determine when they should lower the pitch of their voice, when to raise it, or when to mark a hiatus in the performance.

The second factor that makes participation of the youth in the rendering of dirges incomplete is their reluctance to undergo training so as to become professional dirge performers in future. This attitude is attributed to the suspicion that dirge performers are lazy men and women who want to escape work on the farm. Besides this, there is the belief that because poet-cantors are lazy, they live from hand to mouth and are hardly able to support their families. The influence of Christianity, Islam, and Western lifestyle also tend to make the youth believe that dirge performance is the preserve of elderly men and women who are still steeped in pre- Christian practices. All these perceptions about the art could be laid to rest if the youth are educated on all aspects of it. For instance, Jebuni Sumani who is from Sombisi is a successful farmer and hunter though he is a dirge performer. Ghawadumah Baforgor, one of the elders interviewed by this researcher is not only a successful farmer and hunter but he is also the chief of his village, Sombisi. Kuri Baŋmɔ, a young man in his early thirties, is a successful dirge singer just as Halukı, the lady from Pulma who is hardly thirty. It is equally interesting to note that all the four dirge performers interviewed by this researcher are Moslems.

In fact, when this researcher asked the four poet-cantors about the future of dirge performance in Sısaala communities in the next two decades to come, they all admitted that the art would survive those two decades and beyond. They believed, however, that the quality of dirges, the manner of executing dirges as well as the number of days involved in performing funeral songs are likely to change in those years to come.

Attitude of the Elderly towards Dirge Performance

To the aged, the death of a kinsman is an opportunity to mourn, instruct, and philosophise on life. They have learnt the skill of contributing towards the materialisatoin of oral pieces on funeral grounds without singing out of tune. They have not acquired this alone, but they are also able to compose simple structural types of dirges using their experiences in life as the inspiration for such compositions. They are therefore not only able to participate effectively in the execution of dirges in the formal contexts, but they are also able to create new simple forms of dirges which add a lot of freshness to the repertoire of songs that are performed during funerals. They understand and appreciate the artistic, cultural, and moral values of the dirge.

The only problem with the aged is that most of them are able to participate in the rendering of dirges if a death occurs in their own community. This way, they do not have to travel over long distances either on foot or on a bicycle. Even in the situation where death occurs in their own community, most elderly people may still not be able to stay at the village open square during the night if the weather is very cold. Fire built with firewood may be able to provide them with warmth up to a certain extent. Some of them, especially those suffering from ailments associated with old age, may have to leave the funeral grounds after midnight.

In consequence, despite the problems of old age and other ailments that may prevent the elderly from taking full participation in the performance of dirges during funerals, the elderly people still have a very positive attitude towards the execution of dirges. To them, a mourning process in the traditional set-up cannot be regarded as complete without the singing of dirges. They are responsible for keeping the art of dirge performance alive.

External Influence on the Appreciation of Sɪsaala Dirges

External influence in the form of Christianity, Islam, and Western lifestyle has both positive and negative impact on the execution and appreciation of the dirge. First, on the positive side, these three forces have contributed to putting an end to some of the practices associated with traditional mourning which are deemed hazardous to the life of the people. For instance, as it has been explained in chapter two, Western education and the two religions have contributed positively towards an end to the custom where corpses used to be buried in residential compounds. This used to happen when the deceased was head of a family or a woman who members of the family would want to remember for a long time. In such cases, the tomb of the deceased was usually constructed in such a way that people could sit or even lie on it to relax in the evening time and to show their emotional attachment to the departed. The practice whereby a grave was dug with many tunnels in it such that it could serve the community for several years has also been discontinued in most commmunities. Such permanent graves could be used to bury many corpses over the years. It is equally important to note that such permanent graves were usually dug in residential compounds. It is the combined efforts of Christian and Moslem leaders as well as those from the Ministry of Health that have led to an end to this practice. There could be contamination from graves in residential compounds especially if such graves happen to cave in under the pressure of torrential rains.

Again, the custom whereby corpses had to be laid in state on a seat raised some few metres above the ground without a coffin for three days and beyond is disappearing in most communities due to the influence of Christianity, Islam, and Western education. The risk of contracting contagious diseases that might have contributed to the demise of the deceased is high

and hence the need to discontinue with the practice. These are some of the positive impact that Western education and the two major religions have made on the Sısaala custom of handling the corpse and mourning the deceased.

On the other hand, Western education and the two religions are also opposed, to some extent, to the traditional way of mourning the deceased. Christianity and the Moslem religion have their own ways of mourning the dead. Western education also seems to lean towards the Christian way of mourning the departed where there are often church services and the performance of Christian hymns to bid farewell to the deceased. For the Moslems, they usually prefer prayers and the one week, forty days, and one year celebrations during which prayers are said to Allah, pleading with Him to accept the soul of the deceased into His Kingdom. Both religions would prefer that their followers are mourned according to the prescription of the religion with little or no traditional dirge performance.

The reality is that the two religions as well as Western education have come to meet the culture of the people. And though majority of the local people have joined either of the two religions, they still find no problem in mourning the dead in the traditional way alongside Christian and Moslem practices. The new development here is that it is the followers of the two religions who prepare, handle, and bury the corpse in the Christian or Moslem context. Dirge performance is, however, done the traditional way with the whole community participating in the rendering of such oral pieces. It would therefore appear that in contemporary Sısaala communities, there is some blend between Christian, Moslem, and traditional practices when it comes to the area of preparing, handling, burying, and mourning the deceased. The growth of the two religions, for

the time being, is not a serious threat to the survival of dirge performance just as its practice is not a threat to the growth of the two religions.

In short, traditional dirge performance among the Sɪsaala is still very much alive in most communities. The religious calling of a Sɪsaala man or woman does not prevent the community from mourning the deceased the traditional way, especially when the deceased is a community leader. Christianity and the Moslem religion as well as Western education have the potential, however, of demystifying the art of dirge performance and developing it in a different direction altogether.

CONCLUSION

Dirges are a common phenomenon to all cultures in the world. While some of them are obtained in the written form, especially in highly chirographic societies such as that of the West, some of the dirges also thrive in the oral form, particularly in Africa. In whatever society that dirges are perfomed and in whatever manner that they are rendered, their execution is usually triggered by the occurrence of death in that society. The primary role of all dirges is to, first of all, provide a medium for mourning the deceased and to enable the living to emotionally express themselves. This usually leads to a better canalisation of the pain associated with the loss of a dear one. These are functions of the dirge that seem to cut across cultures in the world.

Dirges that are obtained in the oral form manifest peculiar stylistics due to the manner in which they are rendered. The fact that they are executed extempore makes delivery and spontaneous creation a blend that the dirge performer cannot run away from. The manner of rendering these oral pieces also makes histrionics an integral part of the dirge performer's art. Audience participation in the materialisation and delivery of these oral pieces is quite significant. Thus the audience does not only listen to the execution of these dirges but it is also able to act as chorus that accompanies the bard in the rendering of segments of dirges. Due to the oral nature of dirges in Africa, and particularly in Ghana, they are imbued with stylitics such as repetition, parallelism, ideophones, digressions, allusions, imagery, and the skillful use of tone to achieve rhythm in situations where it may not be apparent in the words of the song alone. Musical accompaniment in the form of drums, ululation, rattles, xylophone, and castanet further accentuates both the poetic and musical content of dirges in Africa.

The qualities and functions of dirges referred to in the first two paragraphs of this conclusion are an integral part of funeral songs in Ghana. In addition to this, due to the organised manner in which dirges are sung among the Sısaala, elements of drama in the form of audience which doubles as the chorus, actors, theme, dialogue, and special scenery feature prominently in the rendering of these dirges. The use of repetition, parallelism, tone, and narrative form is of utmost importance in the materialisation of Sısaala dirges. These are devices and narrative forms that are used to create poetry as well as drama in the dirge. Like many other Ghanaian dirges, the Sısaala dirge is also employed to give instruction in the form of moral and social values, cultural practices, verbal creativity, history, practical lessons about life ,and above all, to comment on sensitive issues that need redress.

In spite of these functional values of the dirge among the Sısaala, appreciation of this art and its utilitarian aspect is not encouraging among the youth. This is simply as a result of the perception that dirge performance is the preserve of lazy people; the suspicion that dirges reflect a pre-Christian world view; the absence of cultural awareness on the part of the youth and, to some extent, the influence of Moslem religion and Western lifestyle. The absence of internal organisational structures which could unite dirge performers and empower them to demand for their rights from individuals who use their products for commercial and personal purposes further deepens the predicaments faced by dirge singers.

In consequence, dirge singing as an art could be maintained and improved upon in the years to come if the government and local authorities at the national, regional, and district levels are able to make conscious effort aimed at instructing the youth to appreciate the positive values of

Ghanaian culture. This could be done through formal education and through radio and television programmes which can be broadcast in the local languages to encourage wide audience participation. Oral artists in the various ethnic groups also need to organise themselves better so that they can demand what is due them from society. Their abilty to organise themselves could also facilitate the delivery of services to such identifiable groups by the government or other private organisations that may be interested in promoting their art.

The primary objective of this researcher is not to write an encyclopaedia on the performance of Sɪsaala dirges. In consequence, there are other areas pertaining to the art that need further attention. One of such areas is how to indicate tone in the transcription of oral pieces. Though there is a symbol for indicating stress, there seems to be none that could be used to represent high, low, or flat tone.

Apart from this problem, the evolution of the Sɪsaala dirge and the impact of internal as well as external forces on such an evolution also needs further probing. This is an aspect of the dirge that has not been given adequate expression in this dissertation. Detailed research into this domain could help determine whether the development of dirges over the years has been positive or negative and the additional measures that need to be taken or avoided in order to improve upon the image and appreciation of the art.

In conclusion, this researcher is of the view that Africans, and Ghanaians in particular, need to take the following observation from Levi-Strauss into serious consideration in our approach toward cultural education. In his own words, Levi-Strauss observes that:

In order for a culture to be really itself and to produce something, the culture and its members must be convinced of their originality and even, to some extent, of their superiority over others; it is only under conditions of under-communication that it can produce anything. We are now threatened with the prospect of our being only consumers, able to consume anything from any point in the world and from every culture, but of losing all originality. (2006: 15-16)

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire for Professional Dirge Performers

Personal Data

1) Name_____
2) Hometown _____
3) Age_____
4) Number of years spent in executing dirges_____
5) Any other occupation apart from the performance of dirges_____
6) Gender_____

Apprenticeship

1) Did you undergo any form of apprenticeship before you started performing dirges?

   Yes/ No
2) If yes, under whose tutelage?
3) If no, how did you learn the art of rendering dirges?
4) Did you receive any form of spiritual preparation before you started performing dirges professionally?
5) If yes, what are the reasons for this dimension of the training?
6) If no, have you ever heard from your fellow professionals that they have received such form of preparation?
7) Do you regret having received some spiritual preparation and fortification, if any?
8) How did you master the different appellations of the various clans?
9) How long did it take you to undergo your apprenticeship?

10) Did you encounter any peculiar problems during the period of apprenticeship?

11) Do you have an apprentice now?

Professional Performance

1) How is the execution of dirges on the funeral grounds different from that of apprenticeship?
2) Do you usually charge any amount of money before you perform dirges at funerals?
3) If yes, how much and if no, how are you compensated for your time and skill?
4) Normally, are you invited to go and perform dirges at funeral grounds or you normally go on your own accord?
5) Apart from the financial reward that you earn on the funeral grounds, what other benefits do you derive from your profession?
6) What does the community gain from the performance of dirges during funerals?
7) What does one stand to gain from listening to, or participating in the performance of dirges?
8) Do you have professional female dirge performers among you?
9) Have you ever performed alongside any of the female professionals on the funeral grounds?
10) Some of the dirges are repeated, others are re-created, and some are entirely new. What is your source of inspiration for creating entirely new dirges?
11) What accounts for some of the variations in details when it comes to narratives which are used to illustrate the meaning of dirges?

Appreciation of the Dirge

1) What is the community's attitude towards the attendance and participation in the rendering of dirges? Positive or discouraging?
2) What are some of the reasons for such an attitude?
3) Do the youth express interest in becoming professional dirge performers in future?
4) Does Christianity or the Moslem religion have any influence on the attendance and participation in the performance of dirges in the community?
5) What about Western education?
6) How do you assess the future of the Sısaala dirge in some twenty years to come?
7) In your opinion, what can be done to keep alive the tradition of dirge performance among the Sısaala people?
8) Do you have any regrets for choosing the profession of dirge performance?
9) Do you have associations of professional dirge performers?
10) Do you have any recommendations to make on the way dirges are rendered these days?
11) Any other comments that you would like to make on the rendering of dirges?

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire for Community Leaders on the Performance of Dirges among the Sɪsaala

1) Name _____
2) Hometown _____
3) Title, if any _____
4) Why does the community perform dirges on the death of its members?
5) Does the community perform dirges on the death of every individual that belongs to it?
6) Is there any difference between the way dirges are rendered these days and the manner in which they used to be performed some twenty years ago?
7) Is there any difference in terms of professionalism between artists of today and those of some thirty or forty years ago?
8) If yes, what accounts for some of the differences?
9) What does members of the community stand to benefit from listening to or participating in the rendering of dirges?
10) What do you think can be done to preserve the tradition of dirge performance in your community?
11) How would you describe the attitude of the youth of today towards the performance of dirges in your community?
12) How do you assess the future of the Sɪsaala dirge in some twenty years to come?
13) Are there any changes you would like to make on the manner dirges are executed these days?
14) Do you have any additional comments that you would like to make on the performance of dirges in your community?

APPENDIX C: RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE BY POET-CANTORS

(1) Response to questionnaire by Kuri Baŋmɔ.

- What is your name?

Ɔ feni rɪ yaa Kuri Baŋmɔ. My name is Kuri Baŋmɔ.

- Where do you come from?

Ɔ bɔyi yaa Haliŋbɔyi, Sombisi. I am from Haliŋbɔyi, Sombisi.

- How old are you?

Lɛɛ lɛɛ, ŋ naa bɪsɪ maraha bee fi rɛ. I am thirty years old.

- For how long have you been engaged in professional dirge singing?

Naa piiliye a gɪ yɪɪ haŋyiye ŋ naa bɪsɪ fi rɛ. I have been performing dirges for ten years.

- Are you engaged in any other occupation apart from dirge singing?

A laha haŋyiye yɪɪna, ŋ bɪ kaŋ tʋmɪ kʋwala buroŋ seyi dee parʋ. Apart from dirge performance, I am engaged in farming as well.

- Did you undergo any form of apprenticeship before you started performing dirges? If yes, under whose tutelage?

Haŋyiye, ŋ naabaarʋ faa taa a kɪ mʋ tuwo aŋ ka ŋ kuwo mɛ kɪ ta. Taŋ ŋ kuwo aa taa ŋ kuwo mʋ nyʋrɪmɪ gba. Mɛɛ ra kana ŋ kuwo daa lee buroŋ doŋ a kanaʋ mʋ a kɪ ta. Ɛɛrɛ ŋ kuwo dagaŋ ɛɛ aa mɛ kɪ mʋ tuwo aŋ ka dɪ ŋ mɛ gyɪma wɪɪ.

It was my grandfather who started singing dirges until he passsed on to the next world and my father himself also took over the art. When my father started performing dirges, it got to a time when he became blind. I used to lead my father to wherever he was to go. Then my father taught me the art of singing dirges until he died, by which time I had

also learnt enough from him.

- What is your father's name?

Ɔ kuwo feni yaa Saŋgara Baŋmɔ. My father is called Sanŋgara Baŋmɔ.

- Did you receive any form of spiritual preparation before you started performing dirges? If yes, what is the purpose for such spiritual preparation?

Ɔ kuwo wuwo dagaŋ wombiye aa naga nɪɪ gyamaa tʋwa, dɪ ɪnɪ mʋ sɪna dɪɪ ta haŋyiye dɪ nɪwe kʋwala bɪnaɪ bɪna kʋwala, ʋ dagaŋ wɔmbiye ŋ mɛ aa sɪ wuwo kpa pɔ ŋ tɪrɪ rɛ.

My father has taught me some fortification measures that a poet-cantor can use to protect himself against anyone who intends hurting the bard spiritually on the funeral grounds. My father has taught me such protective measures that I can use under the context of dirge singing.

- Do poet-cantors try to outdo one another spiritually when they meet to perform dirges?

Yes, haŋyiyetaara, dɪ ma kɪ mʋ lagɪmɪ yʋga, baa wuwo kɪ magɪsɪ dɔmɔŋ nɛ. Kɪɪ haŋ aa kɪ kyɛ dɪɪ ʋ magɪsɛyɪ rɛ dɪɪ yaa kuso anɪ wee wuwo yaa.

Yes, when several dirge performers come together to perform, some often try to out-perform others through spiritual means. A performer may wish that another bard is not able to sing so that he alone could perform.

- How did you master the different appellations of the various clans and villages?

Tɔɔ, ʋ yaa kɪ gʋnnɪ rɛ. Nara aa piiliye a laha aa naabaara taŋ buroŋ, ba wuwo leŋ a wuwo a gyɪma nɪɪ nɪwee haŋ danna rɪ nyɛ, nɪwee haŋ danna rɪ nyɛ.

Well, we consciously learn the appellations. Those who started chanting these appellations right from the time of our forefathers have enabled us to know that this is this person's appellation, and this is that person's appellation.

- Do you have an apprentice of your own?

Tɔɔ, ŋ kɛ haa piiliye, ŋ haa bɪ kaŋ nɪwee v gɪ to ŋ hari a naga taŋ ŋ faa muro aa gɪ to ŋ kuwo hari aa gɪ gʋunnɪ haŋyiye tana.

Well, since I started perfoming dirges, I have not yet had an apprentice to learn from me like the way I learnt the art from my father when I was young.

- How is the execution of dirges on the funeral grounds different from that of apprenticeship?

Gʋnnɪnaa, ansana ɪ sɪ gʋnnɪ a kpa mʋ gʋgonu sɪya, a naga nɪɪ baga tʋwa, ɪ dʋŋ a kɪ mʋ kari he baga tʋwa, yaa wuwo gɪ yɪɪ rɛ, a gɪ gʋnnɪ, koo dɪɪ dʋŋ kariya aa he yɔhʋ tʋwa, dɪɪ nara bɪ kpaga, yaa wuwo a gɪ yɪɪ rɛ. Na dɪɪ sʋʋ bɪ sʋwa ɪ bee yɪɪ haŋyiye bɔyi tʋwa waasʋ waasʋ. Ɔ faa wuwo kɪ vala lee kʋwala tʋwa ŋ dʋŋ nɛ, aa kɪ gʋnnɪ ɛɛ naa sɪ yaa mʋ sɪna gʋgonu sɪya a wuwo yɪɪ yɪɪrɪ dɪ yɪɪrɪ ʋ kyallɪ. Ɛɛrɛ ŋ yaa ɛɛ a kɪ mʋ kpa mʋ gʋgonu sɪya.

Regarding apprenticeship, before one goes to sing in front of the drums, when one is alone on the farm, he can be practising how to sing dirges; or when he is alone in the bush, the person can practise how to perform dirges. After all, unless there is a funeral, one cannot perform dirges at home just for the pleasure of it. I used to practise how I could perform a dirge in front of the drums so that there could be both rhythm and meaning in such a performance. That was how I practised for a long time before I finally started performing on funeral grounds.

- Do you usually ask for any specific amount of money before you go to perform dirges at funerals?

Ba ko kɪ bʋrɪ ŋ ko ta haŋyiye, baa bee tunoŋ moribii kʋwala buroŋ. A nɪɪ dɪɪ yoho kɪ ko pɪna, ba bʋrɪ baa ta haŋyiye rɛ, baa bee pɛɛ moribii kʋwala buroŋ.

Whenever they ask me to come and perform dirges, they do not pay me any amount of money before I go to do it. Anytime there is a funeral and they say they are singing dirges, they do not pay any form of money before the bards go to perform.

- How are you often compensated for your time and skill when you sing dirges?

Tɔɔ, dɪ ɪ ko mʋ a kɪ ta dɪ yoho tiŋma tenu

Well, whenever the poet-cantor goes to sing

kɪ fɪyalɪ kɛ, ba sɪ wuwo kaŋ moribii mʊwa mʊwa a kaŋ ko kɪ pɛɛ anaga nɪɪ yaa yaa kokeri rɛ. Amɛ ba ko kaŋ haŋ moribii ko a kɪ pɛɛ, ma nara buroŋ aa sɪna doŋ a gɪ ŋmɔ gʊgonu bee kɪya, ma kaŋ kataha kʊwala rɛ maa kpa haŋ moribiye a kɪ he. Tɔɔ kɪ pʊllɪ ma sii, ba mʊ dɪɪsɪ a naa moribii maga ɛɛ maa yɪɪ haŋyiye na. Ba yaŋ kaŋ kpaa kpaa ma nara aa yɪɪ haŋyiye bee ma kɪŋmɔrɔ.

and the bereaved family as well as mourners appreciate the performance, they would give the bard various little sums of money to indicate their appreciation for the cantor's performance. But when they start giving such monies to the bard, there is a bowl that belongs to all the bards and the drummers alike into which such monies are put. At day break, the bards and drummers would go and count the money to find out how much they made from the previous night's performance. They then share the money among all the drummers and the poet-cantors.

- Normally, are you invited to go and perform dirges at the funeral grounds or you go there on your own accord?

Tɔɔ, daha kɛ, dɪ yoho tɪɪna aa kyɛ, ʊ sɪ wuwo kɪ bʊrɪ pɛɛ nɪɪ ŋ naa rɪ sʊwa, kɪ yɪɪ haŋyiye paŋ koo dɪ ʊ bɪ pɛɛ duwoso mɛ aŋ kɛ dɪ yoho pɪna, ɪnɪ haŋyiyetaarʊ kɛ sɪ wuwo mʊ.

Well, in this area, the bereaved can formally ask you to come and perform dirges at his mother's funeral; but if he does not formally request for your services as a cantor, you can still attend the funeral.

- Apart from the money that you earn from your performance on the funeral grounds, what other benefits do you derive from your profession?

A laha moribii harɪ, haŋyiye yɪɪna aa wuwo leŋ nara gyɪmɛɛ rɪ paa. Ʊ ɛɛ waa, dɪ ɪnɪ mʊ lee kʊwala dɪ wɪɪ puuɪ, baa wuwo bʊrɪ nɪwee haŋ a gyɪmaʊ rɛ, ʊ yaa haŋyiye taarʊ rɛ, leŋ dɪ a kyiyelo.

Apart from financial benefit, dirge singing can make one popular. When it happens this way and a popular dirge performer finds himself or herself in trouble somewhere, people would easily recognise such a person

and they would readily come to his or her aid.

- What does the community stand to gain from singing dirges during funerals?

Haŋyiye yɪɪna, ʋ yaa a naabaarʋ wɪɪ rɛ, a bɪ sɪ wuwo kpaʋ a ta. Haŋyiye yɪɪna mɛ tɔnɔ kʋwala rɪ yaa dɪ yoho pɪɪna, dɪ ɪnɪ haŋyiye taarʋ bɪ mʋ sɪɪna a kɪ yaa ɛɛ, ɪ sɪ na dɪ nara aa bee kyɛ dɪ ba ko yoho. Amɛ dɪ haŋyiye taarʋ mʋ sɪɪna, ɪ sɪ na dɪ nara aa ko yoho.

We inherited dirge singing from our forebears and so we cannot just abandon it. Another function of dirges is that if there is a funeral and the dirge performer does not go to sing dirges, people do not usually want to visit the funeral grounds. But if the bard goes to perform, you would realise that a lot of people would come to the funeral grounds.

- What does an individual stand to gain from listening to, or participating in the rendering of dirges?

Kɪŋkaŋ! Yɪɪra bee namagɪsɪ badɔsɪ, dɪ ɪnɪ nɪwee vala kɪ mʋ haŋyiye pɪŋbʋwa, yaa wuwo nɪɪ namaga kʋwala rɛ, ʋ kaŋ tɔnɔ a pɛɛ ɪ kpa hee ɪ hakilaŋ.

A lot! If you visit the funeral grounds on a regular basis and listen to some of the songs and anecdotes being performed, you can learn a lot of useful lessons from them and keep the lessons in your mind.

- Do you have female professional dirge performers among you?

A kaŋ haara mɛ a yaa haŋyiye taara, ba sɪ wuwo laa yɪɪra pɛɛ dɪɪ ʋ sɪɪma.

We have women dirge performers as well. They act as supporting performers and they contribute to the successful rendering of dirges.

- Are mourners usually addressed by only the appellation of their mother's clan or they are addressed by the appellation of their father's clan as well?

Tɔɔ, ɪ nyɪna ma danna, ɪ naa a laha lee a kɪ lvlɛyi, doŋ nɛ ɪ sɪ mv danni ba gyɪma kutɪ haŋ yaa yɪrɪya, doŋ nɛ ɪ naa laha. Amɛ ɪ sɪ wuwo danni nɪwee nɪɪna danna, a danni v kuwo danna, ba gyɪma bvrɪ tɪɪna nɪɪna, daha v laha, tɪɪna nyɪna, daha rɛ v laha. Naabaarv mɛ gba, ɪ sɪ wuwo danni.

Well, the appellation of one's mother's clan or village, the place where one's mother hails from, it is the appellation of that community that you must chant so that the audience would know that this person's mother is from this place. The bard can chant the father's appellation of a mourner so that the audience would know the origin of the person's mother and father. At times, the bard can even add the appellation of a mourner's grandfather.

- Some of the dirges are repeated, others are re-created, and some are completely new creations. What is your source of inspiration for creating entirely new dirges?

Wɪɪ tiri rɛ, waa laha ɪ hakɪlaŋ nɛ. Yaa wuwo pɪna rɛ, a na wɪɪ a kanav bɪrimɪ yɪɪri. Ɛɛrɛ aa tɪɪ yɪɪra badɔsɪ yaa yɪɪ falɪya. ɪ ko yaa haŋyiye taarv, v maga bee ɪ kana hakila, a kɪ kyɛkɪ dvnɪya wɪɪ valɪya a kaŋ ba bɪrimɪ yɪɪra.

Yes, it all comes from the cantor's mind. A cantor may turn an observation into a dirge after giving it careful thought. This explains why some of the songs are often new while others are taken from old stock. When you are a dirge performer, you need to be observant, you need to analyse what goes on in the world and turn some of your observations into dirges.

- What is your community's attitude towards the attendance and participation in the rendering of dirges.

Baa yɪɪ haŋyiye nara aa ko rɛ.

People still patronise dirge performance.

- What is the attitude of the youth towards the rendering of dirges in your community?

Nara ha kyo haŋyiye wɪya rɛ, amɛ lɛɛ lɛɛ haŋbiisi, a maa kpa naga nɪɪ sɛyi haŋyiye bɪrɪbɪ yaa sɪɪ fiyaŋ wɪɪ. Lɛɛ lɛɛ haŋbiisi kɛ, ba kpa nɪɪ sɛyi dɪ wɪɪ tɔɔ rɛ a kc yaa, dɪ wɪɪ bɪ kaŋ tɔnɔ aŋ kɛ a kɪ yaa. Aŋ kɛ v mɛ yaa a naabaarv wɪɪ.

People still appreciate dirge performance; it is just that we the youth, we are of the view that dirge singing should no longer engage our attention. The present youth think that dirges are of no use and yet they engage the bard's attention. However, the art is part of our culture.

- What do you think is the cause of the lukewarm attitude of the youth towards the attendance and participation in the rendering of dirges?

A lɛɛ lɛɛ haŋbiisi, dɪ ba paalɪya rɪ bɪ kyo haŋyiye, dɪ wɪɪ kvwala rɪ tɪɪ, we kɛ rɛ ŋ bɪ sɪ wuwo gyɪma.

I cannot tell whether the lukewarm attitude of the present youth towards dirge singing is as a result of external influences or that they just do not like it.

- How would you assess the future of the Sɪsaala dirge in some twenty years to come?

Amɛ haŋyiye kɛ, ŋ kɛ naa nɪɪ v paalɪya bɪ sɪ wuwo a maakyiye togo da. Dɪ amaa rɛ bɪ sɪ wuwo yaav naga a naabaara ma faa yaa ɛɛ, a ha sɪ kɪ yaa mvwa mvwa. Amɛ v yaŋ paalɪ bɪ sɪ wuwo togo.

As for dirge performance, I am of the view that it will never disappear from our culture. Even if the quality cannot be compared to that of our founding fathers, people will still continue to practice the art little by little. Dirge singing cannot just be forgotten or dropped completely.

- In your opinion, what can be done to keep alive the tradition of dirge performance in your community?

Tɔɔ, ɛɛ be ɛɛ aa sɪ to a wuwo yaa a kɪ pere ɛɛ a naabaara bee a nyɪma ma faa yaa, wee rɪ yaa anaga nɪɪ a haŋyiye taara a he a paalv haŋ tvwa, dɪ a maa rɪ fa wuwo a kɪ hɔnɔ meetiŋsɪ anaga a naabaarv wɪɪ aa

Well, what can be done to improve upon the quality of dirge performance so that it could be compared to that of our forefathers and and our fathers is that if we could organise regular meetings on the art of rendering dirges,

yaa, ʋ fa sɪ kyiyeli. Ʊ ɛɛ nyʋbala fa sɪ he a tʋwa. Dɪ niwee mɛ fa ra kyɛ ʋ gʋnnɪ haŋyiye tanna, a fa sɪ wuwo dagaʋ. Ɛɛ mɛ bɪra waa, haŋyiye tanna mɛ paalɪya kana ʋ sɪnsɪ, sɪnsɪ rɛ a maga bee haŋyiye taarʋ buro gyɪma. Badɔsɪ mɛ a piili nyɪɪna waa, baa bee gʋnnɪ haŋ sɪnsɪ aŋ kaŋ haŋyiye kɪ kyogɪ.

it would help. If we had regular meetings, there would have been unity among us. Apart from unity, if somebody wants to learn the art of dirge singing, we could easily help the person. Furthermore, there are some dos and don'ts inherent in the art that every professional must know. Those who do not receive training have no knowledge about the ethics of the art and they keep exhibiting unprofessionalism.

- Do you have any regrets for going into dirge performance?

Ɔ kɛ fuhu bɪ kyogiye naga nɪɪ naa gyɪma haŋyiye yɪɪna. Ba sɪ ʋ bɪ kaŋ tɔnɔ, amɛ ŋ kɛ naa dɪ ʋ kaŋ tɔnɔ paŋ nɛ, ŋ hakila tʋwa.

I have no regrets for being a dirge performer. Some people are of the view that the rendering of dirges is of no use, but in my opinion, it has a lot of benefits.

- Do you have any recommendations to make on the manner in which dirges are rendered these days?

Tɔɔ, wee rɛ ŋ bʋrɪ ɛɛ, a haŋyiye taara dɪ a maa rɪ fa kaŋ meetiŋsɪ, aa wuwo a na wɪɪ bee wɪɪ aa kyogɪ haŋyiye tanna, dɪ a kanaʋ lɪɪsɪ, wɪɪ bee wɪɪ a faa sɪ wuwo kaŋ pɛ, dɪ aa kaŋ pɛ. Fɛsɪɪ, a naabaara fa kaŋ nyʋbala rɛ, ɛɛ tɪɪ ba wɪɪ fa sɪma. Amɛ lɛɛ lɛɛ, yoho yaŋ kɪ pɪna, buri, buri, buri, baa bee nara a bɪ yaa haŋyiye taara buroŋ a mʋ kaŋ haŋyiye kɪ kyogɪ.

Well, if we the poet-cantors were to have regular meetings, we could discuss what is hindering the progress of the art of singing dirges and find solutions to such hindrances, and what could be done to further the progress of the art could have been done. In the past, our forebears had unity; and that explained why there was beauty and progress in the art. In modern times, whenever there is a funeral, all sorts of people, including those who are charlatans, usually rush to the funeral grounds only to mar the beauty of the performance.

(2) Response to questionnaire by Sumani Jebuni.

- What is your name?

Ɔ feni yaa Sumani Jebuni. My name is Sumani Jebuni.

What is your age?

Ɔ bɪ sɪ wuwo gyɪma bɪsɪ maga ɛɛ ŋaa naa. I do not know my exact age.

- Where do you come from?

Ɔ kuwo laha Kundungu rɛ. My father hails from Kundungu.

- For how long have you been engaged in professional dirge singing?

Naa taa haŋyiye ʋ te bɪsɪ fi rɛ. I have been performing dirges for more than ten years now.

- Are you engaged in any other occupation apart from dirge singing?

Naa parʋ rɛ, a gɪ bagɪlɪ, a gɪ ta haŋyiye. I am a farmer, a hunter, and a dirge performer.

- Did you undergo any form of apprenticeship before you started performing dirges? If yes, under whose tutelage?

Ɔ kuwo taa haŋyiye kɪŋkaŋ, ʋ bee Biipʋwa Gyollunyaawa ma, a bee Ntagidiye ma. Baa rɪ ɛɛ. Ʊ ha he doŋ nɛ aŋ kɛ ŋ mɛ kɪ ta. Amɛ saŋa naa piiliye a kɪ ta, dɪ ŋ ko bɪ gyɪma danna, ŋaa pɪyasɪ rɛ, ba dagaŋ. My father performed a lot of dirges with Biipʋwa Gyollunyaawa and Ntagidiye and their group. They were dirge performers of the same period. I started singing dirges when my father was still alive. But at the beginning, whenever I did not know the appellation of a particular group or community, I would ask the experienced bards and they would teach me.

- Did you receive any form of spiritual preparation before you started performing dirges? If yes, what is the purpose for such spiritual preparation?

Ba kaŋ ɛɛ luriye rɛ. Haŋyiye taara waa, ba kaŋ ɛɛ luriye. Amɛ a haŋyiye haŋ kɛ They have forms of spiritual protection that they they often use. Dirge performers have forms

a taa waa, ʋ bɪ naga nɪɪ luriye rɛ ŋ di, ʋ yaa wɪɪsɪbɔyi wɪɪ yaarɪ rɛ.

of such spiritual protection. But with regard to the kind of dirge singing that we are engaged in, I do not rely on spiritual forces to enable me perform; dirge singing is my God given talent.

- Do you have an apprentice of your own?

Aayɪ, baa ko ba wɪya aa bɪ kaŋ wɪɪ tɪrɪ. Haŋbiisi wɪya aa bɪ kaŋ wɪɪ tɪrɪ. Haŋyiye mɛ, ansana ɪ sɪ gʋnnaʋ, seyi dɪ ɪ wɪya kaŋ wɪɪ tiri. Ʋ moribiye mɛ, dɪ ɪnɪ pɪɪlev, ɪ bee di ba basa basa. Ʋ kaŋ moribiye badɔsɪ waa dɪ ɪ dii ba waa, ɪ bɪrɪ bɪ sɪ wuwo kɪ ta.

No, I do not have an apprentice. They usually come but they are not often trustworthy. The youth are not reliable. However, before one can go through a successful apprenticeship in the art of dirge singing, the person must be disciplined. When you start performing dirges, you do not just spend money earned from it anyhow. There are certain monies earned from dirge singing which, if you spend them at your free will, you would not be able to continue with your career.

- Do you usually ask for any specific amount of money before you go to perform dirges at funerals?

Aa mʋ a kɪ yɪɪ yɪɪra, sʋʋ tɪɪna a kɪ lannɪ ma rɛ. Yaa yɪɪ yɪɪ weriye, nara aa pɛɛ moribiye rɛ.

Whenever we go to perform at the funeral grounds, the bereaved normally express their appreciation for our performance by donating various sums of monies to us. When you put up a good performance, members of the audience would give you various sums of monies.

- Apart from the money that you earn from your performance on the funeral grounds, what other benefits do you derive from your profession?

Ʊ ɛɛ he doŋ. Lɛɛ lɛɛ dɪ ɪ feni wɪya daa, yaa kɪ taa haŋyiye ɛɛrɛ ka nɪ waasʊ ma mɪɪrɪ sɪna doŋ a mɪɪrɪ yaa moribiye tɪma, a kɪ gaa moribiye. Dɪ ɪ feni kɛ wɪya daa, anɪɪ ʊ moribiye kɛ wɪya rɛ, yaa vɪya rɛ.

It is the quest for good name that motivates dirge performers to continue rendering dirges. Indeed, this is the incentive for singing dirges because sometimes you would be performing dirges on the funeral grounds and people who are not bards would be enriching themselves at the expense of the cantors. Some even steal some of the money meant for dirge performers. But for good name and popularity, many professional dirge performers would have abandoned the art.

- Normally, are you invited to go and perform dirges at the funeral grounds or you go there on your own accord?

Nara badɔsɪ aa pɛɛ duwoso rɛ. Nɪwee kʊwala aa kana ʊ yoho rɛ, a pɛɛ duwoso aŋ mɛ ta gyɪma nɪɪ dɪ we rɪ bɪ pɛɛ duwoso, yaa wuwo ɪ mʊ rɛ. Amɛ badɔsɪ aa ta kɪ kyɛ naga ɪ yelli sɪfɪyama tɔɔ mʊ pʊlli, ɛɛrɛ aa tɪɪ baa paali a kɪ he duwoso.

Some bereaved families can formally invite the dirge performer knowing very well that without such invitation, the bard could still go to the funeral. However, some bereaved families would want the cantor to attach some urgency to the entire performance and sing throughout the night. This is why some of the bereaved sometimes give invitation to the artist.

- Does one stand to gain anything from listening to, or participating in the rendering of dirges?

Ɛɛ he doŋ. Doŋ waa yɪɪra ɛɛ, a naga niwee aa yaa bʊsʊlʊŋbiye koo ganɪɪ, dɪ ʊ kɪ sɪna doŋ, ʊ sɪ wuwo gʊnnɪ kɪgyɪma kʊwala a kpa he ʊ nyuhu tʊwa. Yɪɪra wɪya ra tɪɪ nara gyesu buroŋ kɪ laha haŋyiye lee. Nara aa laha a kɪ nɪɪ namagɪsɪ.

Yes. This is because if you are performing dirges and an orphan or a fool comes to listen to the performance, the person can learn some useful lessons for himself or herself. It is this utilitarian aspect of the songs that draws most people to the grounds. People come to the funeral grounds to listen to the anecdotes.

- Do you have female professional dirge performers among you?

Hara haŋyiye taara he doŋ. Bawiyesibɔyi tʊwa, kʊwala he doŋ, Funsi mɛ tʊwa, kʊwala he doŋ. Yɪɪra kɛ, baa kɪ yɪɪ rɛ, amɛ danna rɛ baa bɪ wuwo a dɪɪsɪ nara a kɪ danni. A baara mɛ tɪrɪ, badɔsɪ he doŋ ba bɪ gyɪma danna. Ɛɛ wɪya tɪɪ haŋyiye tana hayɛ ɛɛ.

We have women dirge performers. One is at Bawiyesibɔyi, and another is at Funsi. They can perform the songs; it is the appellations which they are not able to master enough and use them to address mourners. Even among male dirge performers, there are some who cannot chant the appellations because they have not mastered them. It is the chanting of the appellations that renders dirge performance difficult.

- Some of the dirges are repeated, others are re-created, and some are completely new creations. What is your source of inspiration for creating entirely new dirges?

Aa yɪɪ yɪɪrɪ v yaa yɪɪ fallɪ ɛɛ, v naga nɪɪ wɪɪ kʊwala rɛ yaa na, a kpa v bee wɪɪ kʊwala magɪsɪ ɪ kʊnta tʊwa. Dʊnɪya aa vala ɛɛ, dʊnɪya wɪya tʊwa, yaa wuwo lɪɪsaʊ v yaa yɪɪri. l sɪ wuwo kpa kɪbɪla gba a maga namaga. Ʊ naga nɪɪ a nyuhu hakɪla aa kpa kɪ tʊma, v bɪ naga nɪɪ ba yɪɪ yɪɪra. Nara kɛ dʊŋ yɪɪra kɛ, ɪ bɪ sɪ wuwo kaŋ ba dʊŋ a mʊ laa gyaaŋbiye lee kʊwala tʊwa; bee wɪya nara laasɪya yɪɪ nara ma nɪɪba nɪɪba rɛ.

When we cmpose completely new dirges, it means that we have made an observation and we turn it into a dirge through our creative minds. You observe the world, you observe what goes on in the world, and you can create a song from your observation. You can even create an anecdote based on your observation. This implies that we use creativity, for dirge performance is not all about repeating old repertoire of songs. A professional dirge performer cannot achieve success in his or her career by relying on other cantor's songs because other people might have heard them before.

- What is your community's attitude towards the attendance and participation in the rendering of dirges?

Nara aa gɪ ko rɛ. Baa paalɪ kɪ su doŋ, baa kɛ

People attend dirge performance. So many

gba ra kyogɪ haŋyiye. Baa yaŋ yaa burugo, burugo, haara bee sɪnyʋwara buroŋ a bee nara aa kyɛ moribiye. Kʋwala aa tɪma moribii wɪya a bɪ gyɪma haŋyiye tana, aŋ laha a kɪ gɪrɪgɪ doŋ.

people often attend dirge performance and they sometimes mar the beauty of the art. They usually come in droves, including women, drunks and those looking for money. Some are not always professional dirge performers but due to their love for money, they would strive to parade themselves as professionals.

- Do you have young poet-cantors among you?

Biibiisi maa taa rɛ. Na Baŋmɔ Kuri abee Bawiyesibɛlɪya biye kʋwala mɛ ba kɪ yɪrɪ Lumba. Feni tɪrɪ rɪ yaa Bayoŋ, amɛ a laha haŋyiye tana tʋwa rɛ ba kɪ yɪraʋ Lumba.

We have some of the young ones who are into dirge performance. For instance, there is Kuri Baŋmɔ, and there is another young man from Bawiyesibɔyi. He is called Lumba though his real name is Bayoŋ. It is through dirge singing that he came to be known as Lumba.

- Does your community perform dirges on the death of Chritians and Moslems as well or they are rendered on the death of only those who are traditional believers?

Tɔɔ, nɪweyi ha bɪ sʋwa ba kuu ʋ wɪɪkyʋwaliha wɪya a vɪya haŋyiye tana. Dɪ ɪ yaa yalɔ mɛ aŋ yaa kɪ kɪhɪyawʋ, baa yɪɪ yɪɪra rɛ.

Well, I have not come across a situation where they failed to perform dirges on the death of a person because of his or her religious affiliation. Even if you are a Moslem and you are an elderly person and you die, they still perform dirges.

- Do you have certain age groups whose demise demands dirge performance or any member of the community that dies must be mourned with dirges regardless of the person's age?

A kaŋ nara aa yaa ba ta haŋyiye rɛ. l yaa nɪwe a yaa haŋbiye, aŋ sʋwa, ʋ bɪ yaa haŋyiye tana. Habiye sʋwa, ba bee taa haŋyiye, bapʋwasi sʋwa, baa kɪ yelli rɛ,tɔɔ

We have certain categories of people whose death deserves the formal performance of dirges. If you are a child or an adolescent and you die, they do not perform dirges. If you are

kɪ pʋlli, dɪ ʋ bɪ kaŋ haarʋ bee balɪya, ba kaŋ gʋgonu kpa. Amɛ dɪ ɪ hɪyasa waa, a kaŋ balɪya bee nɪhɪye, baa taa haŋyiye rɛ. I yaa haarʋ mɛ, ɛɛrɛ.

a young man or woman and you die, they mourn for one night, especially if the dead does not have a wife, husband, or children. But if you are an elderly man who has children and grandchildren, they perform dirges. If you are an elderly woman too and you die, they perform dirges.

- Why are dirges not performed on the death of children and adolescents?

Dɪ nɪwe ko yaa haŋbiye koo nɪduwo, fuu kyogu ra tɪɪ baa bɪ wuwo a gɪ taa haŋyiye. Haŋyiye lɔɔ mɛ bɪ daga naga nɪɪ dɪɪ ɪ fuu kyogɪ aŋ nɪɪ taʋ.

If the deceased is a child, an adolescent, or a young adult, it is grief that prevents people from performing dirges. The ethics of dirge singing demand that one should not perform dirges when his or her heart is aching.

- What can be done to improve upon the quality of rendering dirges in your community?

Tɔɔ, dɪ yoho tɪɪna yaa sɪfiyama nɪwe, a kɪ kire nara naga nɪɪ ba sɪ kyogo haŋyiye, waa kyɛ dɪ ʋ nɪɪ haŋyiye rɛ, waa vɪya aŋ kyo kpɪya mʋwa rɛ. Aŋ kɛ dɪ nɪwe kɪ bee tɔgɪmɪ, nara aa nyʋwa sɪnʋ aa gyʋʋ he doŋ kɪ yaa mɪna, ɪnɪ haŋyiye taarʋ ɪ yaa yaa lɔlɔ aŋ fa vɪya ta.

Well, if the bereaved are serious and they are able to chase the charlatans away, and they insist that they want to listen to dirges, it is always possible to perform dirges under such circumstances. But if no one cares, a lot of people will get drunk and take over the dirge performance though they are not professionals; and the bards in such situations would flee the funeral grounds.

- Do you have any regrets for going into dirge performance?

Ɔ fuhu bɪ kyogiye naga nɪɪ naa yaa haŋyiye taarʋ. Ɔ kyo haŋyiye tana rɛ.

I have no regrets for being a dirge performer. I love the art.

(3) Response to questionnaire by Maani Banʊʊ.

- What is your name?

Ɔ yɪrɪ nɪɪ Maanɪɪ Banʊʊ. My name is Maani Banʊʊ.

- Where do you come from?

Ɔ laha Kandɪya rɛ. I am from Kandɪya

- How old are you?

Sɪsaŋ, ŋ sɪ naa gɪsɪ muwa peri mara arɪ fi arɪ banɔŋ. I am about thirty- five years old.

- For how long have you been engaged in professional dirge singing?

Ɔ haa pulli ba yɪna, nantee wan rɪ ŋ pulli ba yɪna. I started singing dirges in ninety one.

- Are you engaged in any other occupation apart from dirge singing?

Ɔ kaŋ tʊtʊmɪ. Ɔ tʊtʊmaa nya paala gyesu nɛ. Ɔ parɪ nɛ, kaa gɪ aa Sɪsaala daalusɪ mɛ. I have another occupation apart from dirge singing. I am engaged in farming and I practise herbal medicine as well.

- Are you able to treat people with various kinds of ailments due to your knowledge in herbal medicine?

Ntɪ dɪ kʊnyaŋwɪɪ bɪ kaŋ laaŋfɪya, ŋ sɪ wuwolo pɛ ʊ mɪ. Due to my knowledge in herbal medicine, if someone is sick, I can help him or her.

- How did you acquire knowledge in all these areas?

Kɪya ma ŋ haa gʊnnɪ ba, ba wuŋ ŋ nyɪna tʊtʊmaa rɛ. Ɔ nyɪna mɪ la ŋ gyegɪli a maa yɪɪba. Ɔ nyɪna aa danni pire nɛ. Ba wuŋ, ŋ gʊnni daŋa a lɪɪ ʊ dɪɪ, ʊ mɛ tʊtʊ dagaŋ daŋa. All these occupations that I learnt, I learnt them from my father. I listened to my father's performances over the years and I finally learnt the art of singing dirges. My father specialised in the composition of poetry for farming. I learnt some of the skill in all these arts from my father,

and he also consciously taught me some.

- Did you receive any form of spiritual preparation before you started performing dirges? If yes, what is the purpose for such spiritual preparation?

Ɛɛ mɪna. Ʊ dagaŋ ɔŋmiye a muwa peri batori, a mv aa tɪyabɪ ɛɛ la. Ɛɛ haa sɪ pɛɛ la dɪ ɪ yɪɪ kɪyama dɪ ba sɪma, koo dɪ ɪ nɪɪ kɪyama sɪmmɪ, arɪ ɛɛ haa sɪ pɛɛ la dɪ nɪbɔmi mɪŋ sankari dɪ v sɪ wuwolo walɪmɪɪ ari kɪya ba nyɪna. Ɔ nyɪna wuwolo dagaŋ ba wuŋ nɛ.

There is spiritual fortification in the art of dirge singing. There is fortification that would enable the bard to perform well or to derive satisfaction from the performance, and there is fortification to protect the cantor against anybody from the audience who may have evil intentions towards the bard. My father has taught me all the methods involved in all these kinds of fortifications.

- How did you master the different appellations of the various clans and villages?

Ʊ kaa taŋa, ɪ pɪyasɪ wɪya ŋ nɪɪ woroŋ. Ba wuŋ kaa kɪ gvnna ra. Ʊ haa naga ɛɛ, Sɪsaalɪ gɔkɪɪ, v naga foli a, b, c, d ba rɛ. l baa wuwo kanɪɪ ɪ tvtvv kɪ gyɪmmɪ aa taa gɔkɪɪ. Seyi ɪ haa pɪyasa, a bɪra gyegɪli a suuri. Danna, v nɛ ba sɪ gandaa yɪrɪ, ɪ nɪ ko bɪv gvnna yaa, ɪ bɪ wuwo danni.

Indeed, you asked a good question and I understood it. In fact, the Sɪsaala dirge is like the English alphabet. You cannot master how to perform dirges on your own. You need to ask for help from the experienced bards and you have to listen to various dirge performances as well. The appellations are what they term '*gandaa yɪrɪ*'; if you have not mastered them you cannot chant them.

- Do you have an apprentice of your own?

Ooo, ŋ kaŋ haŋbiisi baa gvnnɪ gyensi a mɪŋ la gyɔhv taa.

Yes, I have young apprentices from this village who are learning how to perform dirges from me.

- Normally, are you invited to go and perform dirges at the funeral grounds or you go there on your own accord?

Yoho nya, la kaŋ nɪyaba naŋa, ʋ mɛ aa taŋa mʋ yoho dɪ ʋ mɛ yɪɪ ʋ taŋfɪyalɪ, dɪ ʋ mɛ yɪɪ ʋ tɔtɔri, ka naŋa mɛ he doŋ, baa wuwolo tʋŋ yoho pɛɛ, a nɪɪ ɪ ko tʋŋ aŋ nɪɪ aŋ. La ba nyɪnaba ba haa tʋŋ ɛɛ, ba kaŋ yoho, baa tʋma pa gɔkaa rɛ, gɔkaa ba sɪsaŋ sɪya mʋ. Dɪ ba nɪ mʋwa, ʋ kaŋ hʋwaraa ɪ haa sɪ hʋwariba, dɪ ba nɪ danna tiirɪ, ʋ kaŋ kɪya ɪ haa sɪ lɪɪsɪ pa ba. Amɛ la baa kyaagyi merɪbii kaa na mʋwa danni.

With regard to dirge performance at funerals, we have poet-cantors who usually go there to perform without formal invitation from the bereaved. Such bards often perform for the love of doing it. But there are some of the bards who are usually given invitation by the bereaved. According to our custom,when there is a funeral, the bereaved family would formally invite the bards and they would go and sing dirges. When such an invitation is given, it means that the bereaved family would have to take care of the bards during the funeral. After the funeral, there may be certain items that the bereaved family would have to give to the cantors as a way of indicating their gratitude. But poet-cantors do not charge any specific amount of money before they go to sing dirges.

- Apart from the money that you earn from your performance on the funeral grounds, what other benefits do you derive from your profession?

Ʊ ɛɛ mɪŋ doŋ. Nala wuwo a mɪŋ doŋ, a lɪɪ gɔkɪɪ ŋ yɪɪ la, baa wuwo pɛ ŋ mɪ la. Amɛ ŋ haa bɪ naa nari ʋ sɪ pɛ ŋ mɪ a nɪɪ yɪɪla ŋ haa yɪɪ, dɪ ba wuwo a peri Gaana dɪ dɪ wuŋ dɪ nala wuwo gyegɪli.

Yes, people are able to help you in diverse ways because you are are a dirge performer. People help me in different ways because they know I sing dirges. But I have not yet come across someone who can help me so that the dirges I sing can go to all parts of Ghana so that people can listen to them.

- What does an individual stand to gain from listening to, or participating in the rendering of dirges?

Ɛɛ mɪŋ doŋ. Yɪɪla ma yɪɪna koo gɔkɪɪ,

Yes, one can benefit a lot by listening to dirges.

ʋ mʋwa naga skuu nɛ. Yɪɪli kʋwala he doŋ, ɪ haa bɪ nɪɪ saa yɪɪla dɪɪ wuŋ kɛ ɪ mʋwa kyɪŋ gɔkɪɪ gamʋwa ba yɪɪw ɪ nɪɪ, ʋ kaa kɪ gyɪma rɛ a suuri ɪ ki gyɪmɪ la. Koo kʋŋ orɪ mɪŋ deŋ, ɪ bɪ gyɪŋ ʋ Sɪsaalɪ yɪrɪ kɛ ɪ mʋwa kyɪŋ doŋ ba yɪɪ yɪɪli a yɪrɪ ʋ feni, ɪ gyɪmʋ. Koo mala orɪ mɪŋ doŋ a bɪ maga dɪ ɪ kaa to ɪ lʋlla la kɛ ɪ kaa to ba la, yɪɪla daŋa mɪŋ doŋ a mʋwa aa yɪɪ magɪlɪ, ɪ gyegɪlu a pii malaŋ ta.

Listening to dirges is like schooling. There may be a dirge that you have never listened to before, but if you go to the funeral grounds, you may listen to new dirges all together. Also, there may be a a specific thing whose name you do not know in Sɪsaalɪ, but if you go to the funeral grounds, they may perform a dirge in which the name of that item may be included. Furthermore, there may be an attitude that you have developed towards your relatives that is not good. Some of the dirges are are didactic in nature and they would help you change that attitude towards your kith and kin.

- Do you have female professional dirge performers among you?

Ba minna. Ba minna a mɪgɪsɪ mɪgɪsɪ la taa. Taŋ dɔŋɔ la wuŋ a wuwo muwa kyiŋ a mɪgɪsɪ mɪgʋsɪ dɔŋɔ la a yɪ yɪɪ.

There are women who are professional dirge performers among us. Some of us are men while others are women. Sometimes when we go to the funeral grounds, we all sing dirges together.

- Some of the dirges are repeated, others are re-created, and some are completely new creations. What is your source of inspiration for creating entirely new dirges?

Yɪɪ falaa mɪna, ʋ naga ɪ wuwolo na wɪɪ nɔŋɔ dabaŋ ʋ aa wɪɪ magɪlɪ, ɪ sɪ wuwo kanaʋ kɪ taa yɪɪli. Dʋnɪya haa vala ɛɛ, ʋ nɛ ɪ haa kyɛkɪ a kaa bɪrɪmɪ yɪɪla. Dɪ Wɪɪsɪ saa bɪ gɔkɪɪ aŋ kpa pɛɛ, koo dɪ ɪ baa gyegɪli paa, ɪ baa wuwo yɪɪ yɪɪla.

With regard to the creation of new dirges, you may go somewhere and observe something unique and you can turn it into a dirge. What goes on in the world, that is what you analyse and create new songs out of such observations. If you are not naturally gifted as a poet-cantor, or if you are not observant, you cannot create new dirges.

- Do members of the community come to listen to you and participate in the materialisation of dirges when you go to sing on funeral grounds?

Paa! Paaa! Dɪ ɪnɪ mʊ yɪɪla dɪ yɪɪlɪ, koo dɪ danni, dɪ wɪya ma rɪ were nya, ɪ sɪ na nɪbiina ba kyɪna a kyaasɪ gyegɪlɪbe a yʊga, naŋa paalɪ lɪllɔlɪ, naŋa sɪ siili kɪya deŋ. Koo ɪ aa mʊ tɪɪri, naŋa paalɪ pɪyasɪ ɪ naasɪ, a gyaa ɪ haa mɪŋ doŋ. Amɛ dɪ ɪnɪ yɪya ɪ bɪ woroŋ yɪya, daŋa a paalɪ mʊwa kyɪŋ de a tʊʊsɪ.

A lot! A lot! If you go to perform dirges, if you are creative, a lot of people will come and listen to you, some members of the audience would praise you and some would even reward you with various sums of money. Even after your performance, people would make further enquiries about where you came from. But if you are not good in the art, some members of the audience would even go and stand somewhere and insult you.

- Are the youth interested in learning the art of dirge singing?

Ba ɛɛ ba mɪna, amaa kʊwala kʊwala rɛ. Amɛ dɪ kʊŋ kʊwala ko kʊ lɪ, ba sɪ maŋyali ra koo bee, la bɪra bɪ saya gʊnnɪ. Ʊ nɪ ŋmira la naŋa, la naŋa bɪra bɪ saya a gʊnnɪ.

There are some of the youth who have interest in learning the art of dirge singing, but such young ones are few. But there is the advent of something they refer to as Moslem religion, that is what prevents the young ones from learning traditional verbal arts.

- How would you assess the future of the Sɪsaala dirge in some twenty years to come?

Ɔ haa benuu, ʊ kpa bʊlla rɪ ŋ sɪya taa. Ʊ sɪ wuwolo nyʊsa koo ʊ baa nyʊsa. Nya bɪsɪ mara nya, nara ha sɪ kɪ yɪɪ, amɛ ʊ bee naka anɪɪ ɛɛ la haa yɪɪ sɪsaŋ. Dɪ gɔmɪntɪ rɪ bɪ sii pa la nya, nara haa vɪya ʊ gʊnna, banɪ gyensi kɪ nara haa gʊnna ʊ nyɪɪna. Ʊ ɛɛ, gɔkɪɪ nyɪɪna sɪ tuu tɪŋte.

In my opinion, there are two scenarios of which one is likely to occur in twenty years to come. In twenty years time, people would still be singing dirges but the quality might be inferior to what we have now. If the government does not help us to keep the art alive, those who are refusing to go into apprenticeship in dirge singing are more than those who are willing to learn the art. In this context, the quality of the art and the interest in it would go down.

- What do you think can be done to get the youth interested in the art of rendering dirges?

Tɔɔ, ʋ nya nɪ ŋ wʋllɪ ɛɛ, dɪ la fa naa nara ba para la, dɪ la nyuhu nyaasɪ, la fa sɪ wuwo aa dɪ biibiisi dɪ ba pa la nya taa. Amɛ dɪ pana nya tuwo, ɪ sɪ naa dɪ biibiisi ba lɪɪsɪ ba sɪya.

Well, as I observed earlier, if we could get people to help us promote the art and create good incentive for dirge performers, we would be in a position to attract the youth to the art. But if there is no help or incentive coming from anywhere, the young ones would not be motivated to join the profession.

- Do you have a union of professional dirge performers in your community?

Ooo, la kanʋ ɛɛ. La kaŋ group.

Yes, we have a union of dirge performers.

- Do you have any regrets for going into dirge performance?

Ʊ aaŋ tatɔrʋ nɛ. Wɪɪ aa tɪɪ ʋ aaŋ tatɔrʋ nɪ bee, wɪɪ rɛ ɪ mʋ aa, nɪya kʋ yʋga faasa lɔllɪ, koo dɪ ɪ na kʋŋ a didi ɛɛ hari la, ʋ naga nɪɪ dɪ ɪnɪ sɪ ʋ aa tɔkyiye a pɛɛ, ɪ nyaara.

I have no regrets for being a dirge performer. This is because if you are engaged in any occupation and a lot of people appreciate your services, or you are able to earn a living from that occupation, you cannot have any regrets for engaging in it.

- In your opinion, what can be done to keep alive the tradition of dirge performance in your community?

La Sɪsaalɪ, la naabaara wɪɪ, dɪ la wuwo kanʋ dɪ ʋ mʋ sɪya, ʋ wera. La Sɪsaalɪ wɪya, dɪ la fa bɪ pii ba tɪta yaa, folli mɛ fa sɪ wuwo ko a gʋnnɪ kɪgyɪma a lɪɪ la dɪɪ.

If we could keep the Sɪsaalɪ culture alive, the culture of our forefathers, it would be good for us. If we had not abandoned aspects of our culture, the white man could have come to learn some wisdom from us.

- What can be done to improve upon the quality of rendering dirges in your community?

Dɪ gɔmintɪ rɛ fa wuwo pa la nya, la fa sɪ wuwo aa wɪyaŋ ba ba deeni.

If the government could help us, we could sustain the art of dirge singing for a long time.

Response to questionnaire by Halukɪ

- What is your name?

Ŋ yɪrɪ nɪ Halukɪ. My name is Halukɪ.

- Where do you come from?

Ŋ laha Tumu. I am from Tumu.

- What is your age?

Ŋ naa bɪsɪ mara arɪ nɪwi. I am twenty-nine years old.

- For how long have you been engaged in professional dirge singing?

Ŋ haa suwomo ŋ sɪ naa five years. I started singing dirges about five years ago.

- Are you engaged in any other occupation apart from dirge singing?

Tɔɔ, a laha gɔkɪɪ hari, baga rɛ ŋ diye mʊ mʊ. Apart from the rendering of dirges, I am engaged in farming.

- Did you undergo any form of apprenticeship before you started performing dirges? If yes, under whose tutelage?

Ʊ nya yaa la nyɪna wɪɪ nɛ. Ooo, ʊ dɪhɪ la gʊnnɪ lɪɪ. We inherited the art of dirge performance from our father. We learnt the art from him.

- What is the name of your father ?

La nyɪna yɪrɪ rɪ kaa Batiye Bʊdʊwaŋ. Our father is called Batiye Bʊdʊwaŋ.

- Did you receive any form of spiritual preparation before you started performing dirges? If yes, what is the purpose for such spiritual preparation?

Ok, ŋ nyɪna bɪŋ ɛɛ daga, amɛ a laha ŋ dɪbaalʊ lahɔrimɔ, Lukɪ lahɔrimɔ. Alright, my father did not teach me any spiritual protection but thanks to my elder brother, Lukɪ, who is also a dirge performer, I got to know something about spiritual fortification in the art of rendering dirges.

- Do poet-cantors try to outdo one another spiritually when they meet to perform dirges?

Ʊ mɪna, ʋ ɛɛ mɪna. Yes, sometimes there is competition among dirge performers on the funeral grounds and some would try to outdo others spiritually.

- Do the male bards usually give you the opportunity to perform when you meet as a group at the funeral grounds?

Ɔŋmii mɪna paŋ nɛ dɪ ŋ danni, dɪ la maa mʋ laŋŋɪ yoho taa. The male poet-cantors do not crowd me out when we perform on the funeral grounds. They give me the opportunity to sing.

- How did you master the different appellations of the various clans and villages?

Ba wuŋ kaa wɪɪ gʋnna ra. Dɪ ɪmɪ gyɪŋ tɪɪna naabaalʋ haa laha doŋ, a kʋ kpa ʋ nyɪna, a kpa ʋ tʋtʋʋ, ɪ sɪ na dɪ ɪ wuwo danni ʋ danna. All the appellations are learnt. If the bard knows the background of a mourner's grandfather, that of the father, and the mourner himself, the bard can chant their appellations on the funeral grounds.

- Do you have an apprentice of your own?

Ɛɛ nɛ. Ɔ maala tollu, ʋ nɪ nyɛ. Ʊ mɛ yɪrɪ nɪ Halukɪ. I have an apprentice. She is my elder sister's daughter. There she is, she is also called Halukɪ.

- Do you render dirges alone in different communities apart from your own?

Tɔɔ, dɪ la bee Lukɪ daa bɪ mʋwa nya amɛ ŋ dʋŋ dʋŋ nya ŋaa fɪfaa habiŋ nɛ. Amɛ nya baa kyaagyi, amɛ nari piye paŋ, ŋ sɪ laa. Well unless I am with my brother, Lukɪ, but if I am to perform alone somewhere else, I am always afraid. I do not charge any specific amount before I go to sing. However, if someone rewards me with money, I do accept.

- What benefits do you derive from rendering dirges on funeral grounds?

Ɛɛ nɛ. Nara a wuwo a gyɪmɛɛ a laha gɔkɪɪ dannɪ nyuhu a yaa dɪɪ ɪ mʋ ɪ yaa Yes, a lot of people get to know you through dirge singing and they are able to help you in diverse ways

wɪɪ, ba wuwo pɛ ɪ mɪ. when you need their services.

- Are you compensated financially for your time and skill when you sing dirges?

A laha ɛɛ pɛnɛ harɪ, la mʊwa dannɪ, nara aa wuwo a kyɛɛ moribiye rɛ. Apart from other services that people render to you free of charge by virtue of the fact that you are a cantor, members of the audience also give you various sums of money when you perform.

- What does an individual stand to gain from listening to, or participating in the rendering of dirges?

Tɔɔ, dɪ ɪmɪ aa gyegɪli gɔkɪɪ, ɪ sɪ wuwo a gʊnnɪ kɪ gyɪma kʊwala ɪrɪŋ ɪ haa sɪ wuwo kpa pa ɪ mɪ dɪ ʊ kyiyelee. Well, if you listen to dirges, you can learn some wisdom from them which can be useful to you in your life.

- Apart from you, do you have other female professional dirge performers among you?

Ooo, ŋ gyɪŋ dɔŋɔ rɛ. Dɔŋɔ mɪŋ Kusaali daha la tasɛɛ, Hawa. Yes, I know of other women who are into professional dirge singing. There is one at Kusaali which is not far from this place, she is called Hawa.

- Some of the dirges are repeated, others are re-created, and some are completely new creations. What is your source of inspiration for creating entirely new dirges?

Ʊ ɛɛ, yaa na dʊnɪya wɪya a gyɪma ɪ haa sɪ kaa bɪrɪsɪ ɛɛ nɛ ʊ aa yɪlɪ. The creation of new dirges is always based on observations that are taken from everyday life and turned into dirges.

- Do some of the young women express interest in becoming professional dirge singers?

Ɛɛ nɛ. Dɪ ɪmɪ aa, waa sɪma a pa ba mɪ, ɪ sɪ na dɪ ba ma fa kyo dɪ ba aa anaga nɪɪ ɪ haa aaʊ. Yes, some females express interest in becoming professional dirge singers. When a bard sings, they admire the performance and they would want to be like the poet-cantor.

- Do members of the community come to listen to you and participate in the materialisation of dirges when you go to sing on funeral grounds?

Ɛɛ nɛ. Habɪŋ paala a bɪra kanɪɪ ɪ tvtvv nɛ, ɛɛ nɛ ba haa kyɪgɪ la.

Yes, a lot of people come to listen to dirges. Sometimes the bard could even be intimidated by the crowd.

- How would you assess the future of the Sɪsaala dirge in some twenty years to come?

Sɪsaalɪ nya, ɪ bɪv wuwo kpav tɪta, ɪ sɪya bɪra bɪv wuwo kpav hɪrɪndiŋ anɪ first la.

We cannot abandon the Sɪsaala culture completely but we cannot also follow it faithfully like the way it was done in the past. In consequence, dirge performance will be alive in twenty years to come, but it might not be done with the same enthusiasm in twenty years to come.

- Do you have a union of professional dirge performers in your community?

Ooo, a kana ɛɛ meetin nɛ.

Yes, we have a dirge singers' union.

- Do you know how to play the xylophone?

Ɔ̃ bɪv gyɪŋ nya, Lukɪ rɪ gyɪmv.

I do not know how to play the xylophone, but Lukɪ knows how to play it and sing dirges as well.

- In your opinion, what can be done to keep alive the tradition of dirge performance in your community?

Tɔɔ, v haa naga ɛɛ, wɪɪ wuŋ ɪ aa, dɪ nyu nyaasa rɪ he doŋ, ɪ sɪ na dɪ ɪ wuwo aa wɪɪ dɪ v kaŋ sɪɪ.

Well, from the look of things, motivation is needed in whatever job one engages in. If you are well motivated, you can give of your best. We as dirge singers need motivation to keep the tradition going.

- Do you have any regrets for going into dirge performance?

Ɔ̃ teŋ fɪyala. A tvma dɪ ŋ nyɪna ko tuwo, ŋ gyɪma ŋ haa sɪ to ɛɛ a wvla wɪya pav dɪ v teŋ fiyalɪ.

I have no regrets for being a dirge performer. One simple reason for this is that should my father die, I know how to mourn him through dirges so that he

would feel honoured.

- What form of spiritual preparation did you receive before you started performing dirges?

Tɔɔ ʋ nya mɪŋ doŋ. Amɛ nya tʋtʋʋ ha bɪ piye luribisi a pa nari. Dɪ nari doŋ naa gyaa haŋ saa luribisi, seyi dee la yaga nara laa ŋ haa yaga ŋ naabaala ta.

Well, there are herbal preparations that we take to either enhance our performance or to protect us against people with evil intentions. But frankly speaking, I have never personally prepared medicine or given some to anybody. If someone needs such herbal preparation for the purpose of dirge singing, I would have to lead the person to those who also prepared such concoctions for me. They are elders from my father's lineage.

- Can the herbal preparation alone enable someone to sing dirges like a professional without undergoing any form of apprenticeship?

Ooo, ɪ sɪ wuwo wʋla, amɛ ɛɛ na ʋ ha yaa la naabalma wɪɪ, ɪ bɪ doŋ wuwo peri. Dɪ ɱɪ di luribisi nya, see dee ɪ haa gʋnna pɛ, see dee ɪ haa gyegɪle gɔkɪɪ woroŋ a pɛ. Dɪ ɱɪ wuwo a yɪɪ mɛ, amɛ ɪ haa sɪ pii wɪɪ a bɪrɪsaʋ ɛɛ dɪ ʋ mʋwa bɪrɪmɪ yɪlɪ a sɪma, ɪ bɪ sɪ wuwo aa ɛɛ.

Yes, if someone should take the herbal preparation, it might enable the person to sing dirges but not like someone who has gone through training. If you take the herbal preparation, you still need to learn the art, you still need to listen to performances of experienced poet-cantors. Even if herbal preparations would enable you perform, you may only be able to sing dirges you have heard at the funeral grounds but you cannot create your own dirges.

- Do you have any comments on the influence of Christianity, the Moslem religion, or Western education on the youth in your community vis-avis their attitude towards dirge performance?

Ʊ maga dɪ ɪ gʋnnɪ Sɪsaalɪ a pɛ karatu koo skuu la mɛ rɛ. Ʊ bɪ naga dɪ ɪ pii Sɪsaalɪ ta togi togi.

Ideally, Western or Arabic education should be learnt together with Sɪsaalɪ culture. It is not wise to just throw away the Sɪsaalɪ culture.

APPENDIX D

Collected Sɩsaala Dirges

(1)

Nıhıyawʋ yaa	The aged are
Haŋbiye daalılii rɛ.	The gods of the youth.
Nıhıyawʋ yaa	The aged are
Haŋbiye daalılii rɛ.	The gods of the youth.
Nıhıyawʋ yaa	The aged are
Haŋbiye daalılii rɛ.	The gods of the youth.
Nıhıyawʋ yaa	The aged are
Haŋbiye daalılii rɛ.	The gods of the youth.
Nıhıyawʋ yaa	The aged are
Haŋbiye daalılii rɛ ŋaa ŋaa ŋaaaa.	The gods of the youth.

(2)

A gyıma dɔmɔ wıya bʋrına	We are good at criticising one another
Aŋ bı dɔmɔ gyoru aa tɔɔ.	But we are not good at helping out one another.
A gyıma dɔmɔ wıya bʋrına	We are good at criticising one another
Aŋ bı dɔmɔ gyoru aa tɔɔ.	But we are not good at helping out one another.
A gyıma dɔmɔ wıya bʋrına	We are good at criticising one another
Aŋ bı dɔmɔ gyoru aa tɔɔ.	But we are not good at helping out one another.
A gyıma dɔmɔ wıya bʋrına	We are good at criticising one another
Aŋ bı dɔmɔ gyoru aa tɔɔ.	But we are not good at helping out one another.
A gyıma dɔmɔ wıya bʋrına	We are good at criticising one another
Aŋ bı dɔmɔ gyoru aa tɔɔ.	But we are not good at helping out one another.
A gyıma dɔmɔ wıya bʋrına	We are good at criticising one another
Aŋ bı dɔmɔ gyoru aa tɔɔ yee yee yeee.	But we are not good at helping out one another.

(3)

Wıı falıya kaŋ wıı bınıya	Modern values have

Kaŋ we kpıyası.	Enslaved traditional values.
Wıı falıya kaŋ wıı bınıya	Modern values have
Kaŋ we kpıyası.	Enslaved traditional values.
Wıı falıya kaŋ wıı bınıya	Modern values have
Kaŋ we kpıyası.	Enslaved traditional values.
Wıı falıya kaŋ wıı bınıya	Modern values have
Kaŋ we kpıyası.	Enslaved traditional values.
Wıı falıya kaŋ wıı bınıya	Modern values have
Kaŋ we kpıyası.	Enslaved traditional values.
Wıı falıya kaŋ wıı bınıya	Modern values have
Kaŋ we kpıyası yeyi yeyiiiii.	Enslaved traditional values.

(4)

Bʋsʋlʋŋbiye duwoso ʋ duwoso	Who will interpret
Ʊ mɛ bʋrı pa aŋ nı rɛ?	The orphan's dreams for him?
Bʋsʋlʋŋbiye duwoso ʋ duwoso	Who will interpret
Ʊ mɛ bʋrı pa aŋ nı rɛ?	The orphan's dreams for him?
Bʋsʋlʋŋbiye duwoso ʋ duwoso	Who will interpret
Ʊ mɛ bʋrı pa aŋ nı rɛ?	The orphan's dreams for him?
Bʋsʋlʋŋbiye duwoso ʋ duwoso	Who will interpret
Ʊ mɛ bʋrı pa aŋ nı rɛ?	The orphan's dreams for him?
Bʋsʋlʋŋbiye duwoso ʋ duwoso	Who will interpret
Ʊ mɛ bʋrı pa aŋ nı rɛ?	The orphan's dreams for him?

(5)

Tıı kana tʋwa bankarı	The climbing plant that has grown among several trees
Ba kaŋ ları ları lɔlɔ.	Cannot be removed.
Tıı kana tʋwa bankarı	The climbing plant that has grown among several trees
Ba kaŋ ları ları lɔlɔ.	Cannot be removed.
Tıı kana tʋwa bankarı	The climbing plant that has grown among several trees

Ba kaŋ ları ları lɔlɔ.	Cannot be removed.
Tıı kana tʋwa bankarı	The climbing plant that has grown among several trees
Ba kaŋ ları ları lɔlɔ.	Cannot be removed
Tıı kana tʋwa bankarı	The climbing plant that has grown among several trees
Ba kaŋ ları ları lɔlɔ waaaaaaa.	Cannot be removed.

(6)

Garı bine garı nʋʋ	The beautiful black dress
Na we rı kyogo.	Has become worn out.
Garı bine garı nʋʋ	The beautiful black dress
Na we rı kyogo.	Has become worn out.
Garı bine garı nʋʋ	The beautiful black dress
Na we rı kyogo.	Has become worn out.
Garı bine garı nʋʋ	The beautiful black dress
Na we rı kyogo.	Has become worn out.
Garı bine garı nʋʋ	The beautiful black dress
Na we rı kyogo.	Has become worn out.
Garı bine garı nʋʋ	The beautiful black dress
Na we rı kyogo yee yee yeeeeee.	Has become worn out.

(7)

Sıı rı togo	When the eyeball gets destroyed
Bʋwatogu bee ları.	The socket still remains.
Sıı rı togo	When the eyeball gets destroyed
Bʋwatogu bee ları.	The socket still remains.
Sıı rı togo	When the eyeball gets destroyed
Bʋwatogu bee ları.	The socket still remains.
Sıı rı togo	When the eyeball gets destroyed
Bʋwatogu bee ları.	The socket still remains.
Sıı rı togo	When the eyeball gets destroyed

Bʊwatogu bee ları yeyi yeyi yeyiiiii.	The socket still remains.

(8)

l faa lɔlɔ waa	If you run until you are tired
Yaa sıŋ ba kanıı rɛ.	You give up for your pursuers to catch you.
l faa lɔlɔ waa	If you run until you are tired
Yaa sıŋ ba kanıı rɛ.	You give up for your pursuers to catch you.
l faa lɔlɔ waa	If you run until you are tired
Yaa sıŋ ba kanıı rɛ.	You give up for your pursuers to catch you.
l faa lɔlɔ waa	If you run until you are tired
Yaa sıŋ ba kanıı rɛ.	You give up for your pursuers to catch you.
l faa lɔlɔ waa	If you run until you are tired
Yaa sıŋ ba kanıı rɛ yeyi yeyi yeyiiiiii.	You give up for your pursuers to catch you.

(9)

Ŋ naa yɔwɔ sıŋbıısı taŋı	My mother has bought several baskets
Aŋ deŋ aŋ gʊʊnı.	And yet, she is not satisfied with her achievement.
Ŋ naa yɔwɔ sıŋbıısı taŋı	My mother has bought several baskets
Aŋ deŋ aŋ gʊʊnı.	And yet, she is not satisfied with her achievement.
Ŋ naa yɔwɔ sıŋbıısı taŋı	My mother has bought several baskets
Aŋ deŋ aŋ gʊʊnı.	And yet, she is not satisfied with her achievement.
Ŋ naa yɔwɔ sıŋbıısı taŋı	My mother has bought several baskets
Aŋ deŋ aŋ gʊʊnı.	And yet, she is not satisfied with her achievement.
Ŋ naa yɔwɔ sıŋbıısı taŋı	My mother has bought several baskets
Aŋ deŋ aŋ gʊʊnı.	And yet, she is not satisfied with her achievement.
Ŋ naa yɔwɔ sıŋbıısı taŋı	My mother has bought several baskets
Aŋ deŋ aŋ gʊʊnı yeeee.	And yet, she is not satisfied with her achievement.

(10)

A bɔyɩ ra kyogu	There is no unity in our community
Kɩ bʊrɩ lɔnɩ we ra kyogɩmo.	Due to the unguided statements often made by us.
A bɔyɩ ra kyogu	There is no unity in our community
Kɩ bʊrɩ lɔnɩ we ra kyogɩmo.	Due to the unguided statements often made by us.
A bɔyɩ ra kyogu	There is no unity in our community
Kɩ bʊrɩ lɔnɩ we ra kyogɩmo.	Due to the unguided statements often made by us.
A bɔyɩ ra kyogu	There is no unity in our community
Kɩ bʊrɩ lɔnɩ we ra kyogɩmo.	Due to the unguided statements often made by us.
A bɔyɩ ra kyogu	There is no unity in our community
Kɩ bʊrɩ lɔnɩ we ra kyogɩmo.	Due to the unguided statements often made by us.
A bɔyɩ ra kyogu	There is no unity in our community
Kɩ bʊrɩ lɔnɩ we ra kyogɩmo.	Due to the unguided statements often made by us.

(11)

Gandaala tɩga daasɩ	Noble people have come from far and near
Ko na aŋwuwoŋ.	To see the lion.
Gandaala tɩga daasɩ	Noble people have come from far and near
Ko na aŋwuwoŋ.	To see the lion.
Gandaala tɩga daasɩ	Noble people have come from far and near
Ko na aŋwuwoŋ.	To see the lion.
Gandaala tɩga daasɩ	Noble people have come from far and near
Ko na aŋwuwoŋ.	To see the lion.
Gandaala tɩga daasɩ	Noble people have come from far and near
Ko na aŋwuwoŋ.	To see the lion.
Gandaala tɩga daasɩ	Noble people have come from far and near
Ko na aŋwuwoŋ waaaaa.	To see the lion.

(12)

l ko nɩɩ naagime gɩŋ, gɩŋ	When you hear the stampede of feet
Nala tɩɩna ra ko.	Know that it is somebody who is rich in terms of people who is coming.
l ko nɩɩ naagɩme gɩŋ, gɩŋ	When you hear the stampede of feet
Nala tɩɩna ra ko.	Know that it is somebody who is rich in terms of people who is coming.
l ko nɩɩ naagɩme gɩŋ, gɩŋ	When you hear the stampede of feet
Nala tɩɩna ra ko.	Know that it is somebody who is rich in terms of people who is coming.
l ko nɩɩ naagɩme gɩŋ, gɩŋ	When you hear the stampede of feet
Nala tɩɩna ra ko.	Know that it is somebody who is rich in terms of people who is coming.
l ko nɩɩ naagɩme gɩŋ, gɩŋ	When you hear the stampede of feet
Nala tɩɩna ra ko yeeeee.	Know that it is somebody who is rich in terms of people who is coming.

(13)

Tʋŋ bala tuwo tʋŋ	One task is never enough
A tʋŋ aŋ daagɩ.	He would always accomplish one and more tasks.
Tʋŋ bala tuwo tʋŋ	One task is never enough
A tʋŋ aŋ daagɩ.	He would always accomplish one and more tasks.
Tʋŋ bala tuwo tʋŋ	One task is never enough
A tʋŋ aŋ daagɩ.	He would always accomplish one and more tasks.
Tʋŋ bala tuwo tʋŋ	One task is never enough
A tʋŋ aŋ daagɩ.	He would always accomplish one and more tasks.
Tʋŋ bala tuwo tʋŋ	One task is never enough
A tʋŋ aŋ daagɩ.	He would always accomplish one and more tasks.
Tʋŋ bala tuwo tʋŋ	One task is never enough
A tʋŋ aŋ daagɩ waaaaaa.	He would always accomplish one and more tasks.

(14)

Agyiye bʋrɪ laara tuwo	Agyiye, our protector is no more
Aŋ sɪ bʋrɪ laara?	Who will protect us?
Agyiye bʋrɪ laara tuwo	Agyiye, our protector is no more
Aŋ sɪ bʋrɪ laara?	Who will protect us?
Agyiye bʋrɪ laara tuwo	Agyiye, our protector is no more
Aŋ sɪ bʋrɪ laara?	Who will protect us?
Agyiye bʋrɪ laara tuwo	Agyiye, our protector is no more
Aŋ sɪ bʋrɪ laara?	Who will protect us?
Agyiye bʋrɪ laara tuwo	Agyiye, our protector is no more
Aŋ sɪ bʋrɪ laara?	Who will protect us?
Agyiye bʋrɪ laara tuwo	Agyiye, our protector is no more
A*ŋ sɪ bʋrɪ laaraaaaaa?*	Who will protect us?

(15)

Wɪya rɪ suu	It is only sadness that has filled
Bii suŋ fuu.	The orphan's stomach.
Wɪya rɪ suu	It is only sadness that has filled
Bii suŋ fuu.	The orphan's stomach.
Wɪya rɪ suu	It is only sadness that has filled
Bii suŋ fuu.	The orphan's stomach.
Wɪya rɪ suu	It is only sadness that has filled
Bii suŋ fuu.	The orphan's stomach.
Wɪya rɪ suu	It is only sadness that has filled
Bii suŋ fuu.	The orphan's stomach.
Wɪya rɪ suu	It is only sadness that has filled
Bii suŋ fuu yeeeeeeeee.	The orphan's stomach.

(16)

TYPE B: APPELLATIONS AND SONGS

Baŋmɔ Kuri waa!	Attention Baŋmɔ Kuri!
Kuworo bayaga nıyɛla kana ŋ nvhv yige,	Nephew of the most mysterious chief, help me push my cow forward,
Kuworo Daankogo nıyɛla kana ŋ nvhv yige,	Nephew of Chief Daankogo, help me push my cow forward,
Na wıya bvmbvwarı nıyɛla kana ŋ nvhv yige,	Nephew of those noted for nagging, help me push my cow forward.
Aŋwuwomi kiya dı v gyvv lıgv,	The lion has stealthily entered the forest.
Wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı.	Listen attentively.
Weye tennu aa biyeru rɛ	The living are in pain
Svv tennu ka fiyala rɛ.	While the deceased is at peace.
Weye tennu aa biyeru rɛ	The living are in pain
Svv tennu ka fiyala rɛ.	While the deceased is at peace.
Weye tennu aa biyeru rɛ	The living are in pain
Svv tennu ka fiyala rɛ.	While the deceased is at peace.
Weye tennu aa biyeru rɛ	The living are in pain
Svv tennu ka fiyala rɛ.	While the deceased is at peace.
Weye tennu aa biyeru rɛ	The living are in pain
Svv tennu ka fiyala rɛ waaaaaaaaa.	While the deceased is at peace.

(17)

Bayoŋ waa! Bayoŋ waa!	Please Bayong! Please Bayong!
l nyınaŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your father's appellation?
Dalaa kyvwalıya Kagyiya nıyɛla,	Nephew of Dalaa who paid his respects to Kagyiya,
Ɗmaŋ tɔɔrɔ nıyɛla fira bana,	Nephew of those who ambushed wayfarers and forced them to retreat,
Nyukuŋkogilli bırımı hayaara gbuwoni nıyɛla,	Nephew of those whose unkempt wives used human skulls as gourds,
Naasolli bırımı ba ŋmıra nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who used human tibia as flutes,
Ba naga ɛɛrɛ ı vıya yoho ta?	How come you are not taking an active part in the execution of dirges?
Bayoŋ waa! Bayoŋ waa!	Attention Bayoŋ! Attention Bayoŋ!

l mɛ tırıŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your own appellation?
Gbaŋgyaga kyʋwalıya Namaali nıyɛla,	Nephew of Gbaŋgyaga who paid his respects to Namaali,
Saalı kyʋwalı Kʋŋkɔŋ nıyɛla,	Nephew of Saali who paid his respects to Kuŋkɔŋ,
Gyagyınna gyaarıgenni nıyɛla,	Nephew of expert horse riders,
Krugu tɔɔ naanyiyere nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who wear baggy trousers to cover spindly legs,
Gawurini tɔɔ ba sawɛ nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who wear smocks to conceal their amulets,
Nyupugu tɔɔ nyukpʋrıya nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who wear hats to conceal their bumpy heads,
Agyiya baŋ kyʋwalı Saampuwo nıyɛla,	Nephew of Agyiya who paid his respects to Saampuwo,
Gyaaŋ gyaaŋ dı ı wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı.	Please, please, listen attentively.
l kaŋ kıgyıma gyʋʋ yɔwɔ	If you send wisdom to the market
Ganı ra yɔwɔɔ.	It is the fool who buys it.
l kaŋ kıgyıma gyʋʋ yɔwɔ	If you send wisdom to the market
Ganı ra yɔwɔɔ.	It is the fool who buys it.
l kaŋ kıgyıma gyʋʋ yɔwɔ	If you send wisdom to the market
Ganı ra yɔwɔɔ.	It is the fool who buys it.
l kaŋ kıgyıma gyʋʋ yɔwɔ	If you send wisdom to the market
Ganı ra yɔwɔɔ.	It is the fool who buys it.
l kaŋ kıgyıma gyʋʋ yɔwɔ	If you send wisdom to the market
Ganı ra yɔwɔɔ.	It is the fool who buys it.
l kaŋ kıgyıma gyʋʋ yɔwɔ	If you send wisdom to the market
Ganı ra yɔwɔɔ waaaaaa.	It is the fool who buys it.

(18)

Abu waa! Yaa wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı.	Attention Abu! Listen attentively.
l nyınaŋ gaŋdaa feni rı yaŋ bee?	What is your father's appellation?
Habiye Gʋŋgʋŋna nıyɛla,	Nephew of Habiye Gʊŋgʊŋna,
Dahuunʋ bayuworo nıyɛla,	Nephew of the warriors of darkness,

Yuwo di bine gaŋdaara nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who fight for fame,
Siniya kyʋwalıya Kakyugu nıyɛla,	Nephew of Siniya who paid his respects to Kakyugu,
Bıranyaŋa kyʋwalıya Bayoŋ nıyɛla,	Nephew of Bıranyaŋa who paid his respects to Bayoŋ,
Yaa wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı.	Listen attentively.
Abu waa! Abu waa! Abu waa!	Attention Abu! Attention Abu! Attention Abu!
l tırıŋ gaŋdaa feni rı yaŋ bee?	What is your own appellation?
Gyaŋ gyaŋ baa saa balıya nıyɛla,	Nephew of those noted for rapid development,
Daŋsɔɔ bee ʋ Kallı,	Nephew of Daŋsɔɔ and Kallı,
Aa kyʋwalı Waalı gaŋdaara nıyɛla,	Who paid their respects to Waalı,
Batiŋ baga gaŋdaara nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who settled on Batiŋ's farm,
Ba naga ɛɛrɛ ı vıya yoho ta?	How come you are not participating in the the performance of dirges?
Gyaaŋ gyaaŋ dı ı wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı.	Please, please, listen attentively.
Bagıla yʋga rɛ	Though there are many animals
Batuu naagbaŋsı yaa dabaŋ nɛ.	The feet of the elephant are distinct.
Bagıla yʋga rɛ	Though there are many animals
Batuu naagbaŋsı yaa dabaŋ nɛ.	The feet of the elephant are distinct.
Bagıla yʋga rɛ	Though there are many animals
Batuu naagbaŋsı yaa dabaŋ nɛ.	The feet of the elephant are distinct.
Bagıla yʋga rɛ	Though there are many animals
Batuu naagbaŋsı yaa dabaŋ nɛ.	The feet of the elephant are distinct.
Bagıla yʋga rɛ	Though there are many animals
Batuu naagbaŋsı yaa dabaŋ nɛ yeeeee.	The feet of the elephant are distinct.

TYPE C : APPELLATIONS, TALES, AND SONGS

(19)

Bayoŋ waa! Bayoŋ waa!	Please Bayoŋ! Please Bayoŋ!
l nyınaŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your father's appellation?
Dalaa kyʋwalıya Kagyiya nıyɛla,	Nephew of Dalaa who paid his respects

	to Kagyiya,
Ŋmaŋ tɔɔrɔ nıyɛla fira bana,	Nephew of those who ambushed wayfarers and forced them to retreat,
Nyukuŋkogilli bırımı hayaara gbuwoni nıyɛla,	Nephew of those whose unkempt wives used human skulls as gourds,
Naasolli bırımı ba ŋmıra nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who used human tibia as flutes,
Ba naga ɛɛrɛ ı vıya yoho ta?	How come you are not taking an active part in the execution of dirges?
Bayoŋ waa! Bayoŋ waa!	Attention Bayoŋ! Attention Bayoŋ!
l mɛ tırıŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your own appellation?
Gbaŋgyaga kyʋwalıya Namaali nıyɛla,	Nephew of Gbaŋgyaga who paid his respects to Namaali,
Saalı kyʋwalı Kʋŋkɔŋ nıyɛla,	Nephew of Saali who paid his respects to Kuŋkɔŋ,
Gyagyınna gyaarıgenni nıyɛla,	Nephew of expert horse riders,
Krugu tɔɔ naanyiyere nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who wear baggy trousers to cover spindly legs,
Gawurini tɔɔ ba sawɛ nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who wear smocks to conceal their amulets,
Nyupugu tɔɔ nyukpʋrıya nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who wear hats to conceal their bumpy heads,
Agyiya baŋ kyʋwalı Saampuwo nıyɛla,	Nephew of Agyiya who paid his respects to Saampuwo,
Gyaaŋ gyaaŋ dı ı wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı.	Please, please, listen attentively.

Kpʋŋkpalıyɛrıya rı sii, a mʋ saa ʋ dıya kuworu haŋ dıya tıyaŋ, a nyɛ ʋ hala. Ɛɛrɛ haa, kuworu balıya sii dı ba ŋmaa ba nıına dıya, a tıya ba nyına dıwoso, "A kyiye sı ŋmaa a nıına dıya a mari saa." Ba bı tıya Wıısı gaaafura. Ɛɛrɛ haa, kpʋŋkpalıyɛrıya sii, a kaŋ Wıısı gyıŋ. A gyıŋ bası tıya Wıısı, " Na ŋ hala rɛ ŋ nyɛ kuworu haaŋ dıya tıyaŋ aŋkɛ kuworu balıya baa ba kyiye sı ŋmaa ba nıına dıya. Amɛ ba bı tıya ı Wıısı gaaafura." Ɛɛrɛ Wıısı baa nyɛ rɛ, dı kpʋŋkpalıyɛrıya tıyaŋ haa, dı ʋ sii a kı mʋ dıya. Dı ʋ ta kı faa kambıŋ ʋ hala hʋ wıya.

Sıya gballa haa, kuworu balıya sii yaa dı ba ŋmaa ba nıma dıya haa, dı kuworu bapuwası lıı yaga gimem. Kuworu balıya sıı fıyɛsı kuworu biibal loho wıya aŋ yeŋŋı ba nıma dıya ŋmayi wıya. Ba we loho tıyaŋ kuloŋ, kuloŋ, kuloŋ yɔbɔ sıı balıya. Loho baŋ mʊ kı tı haa, dı kuworu balıya bila tıya ba nyına duwoso dı ba kyiye sı ŋmaa ba nıma dıya hʊ. Ɛɛrɛ haa, kpʊŋkpalıyɛrıya bila sii kaŋ Wıʊsı gyıŋ. A bila gyıŋ tıya Wıʊsı duwoso, "Kuworu balıya baa ba kyiye sı ŋmaa ba nıma dıya amɛ ba bı tıya ı Wıʊsı duwoso. Ɔ hala mɛ ŋ tiyese rɛ amɛ biisii ha yaa bii mulsi rɛ." Ɛɛrɛ Wıʊsı bila bası tıya kpʊŋkpalıyɛrıya dı ʊ ta gyıya aŋ sii kı mʊ dıya. Dı ka kpʊŋkpalıyɛrıya baa kuworu balıya bı tıya ʊ Wıʊsı gaafura? Ɛɛrɛ kpʊŋkpalıyɛrıya baa waa.

Sıya gballa haa, dı kuworu haana kırıgı aa sii haa, dı ʊ sıba. Kuworu balıya bila sii haa, a bila we loho tıyaŋ kuloŋ, kuloŋ, kuloŋ. Yɔbɔ sıı boto aŋ kɛ bana tı loho hʊ. Ɛɛrɛ haa loho baŋ mʊ haa, kuworu balıya bila tıya ba nyına duwoso dı kyiye kɛ, dı Wıʊsı laa nyʊwa, ba kyiye sı ŋmaa ba nıma dıya hʊ. Ɛɛrɛ kpʊŋkpalıyɛrıya bila sii a kaŋ wıʊsı nyu gyıŋ. A gyıŋ bası tıya Wıʊsı, "Wıʊsı, kuworu balıya baa ba kyiye sı ŋmaa ba nıma dıya hʊ. Amɛ nyɛ kɛ, ba tıya ı Wıʊsı gaafura rɛ. Ɔ balıya mɛ, ba mɛ waa rɛ."

Ɛɛrɛ Wıʊsı baa nyɛ rɛ, kpʊŋkpalıyɛrıya, ı kyiye sii kyıkyʊwala pipipi, kyiye paa ı balıya lıı kuworu haaŋ dıya tıyaŋ. Kuworu balıya a yırı mıyaŋ Wıʊsı feŋ nyɛ kɛ, ŋ kyiye sı tıya ba ŋmanıı dı ba kyiye ŋmaa ba nıma dıya hʊ. Nyɛ rɛ haa, sıya gballi kyıkyʊwala, kpʊŋkpalıyɛrıya paa ʊ balıya lıı aŋ kɛ kuworu balıya ŋmaa ba nıma dıya. Kpʊŋkpalıyɛrıya paa ʊ balıya a kaŋ mʊ fuwo bal a fo ba nıı. Ɛɛrɛ kpʊŋkpalıyɛrıya balıya pıyɛsı ba nıma, "A nıma, aŋ kɛ ɛɛrɛ a sı yaa a nyʊwa

nɪɪ?" Ɛɛrɛ ba nɪɪna basɪ tɪya ba, "A sɪ gyare aŋ kɪ nyɔwa nɪɪ." Ɛɛ wɪya, ɪ mɔ fuwo bal, kpɔŋkpalɪyɛrɪya a gyare aŋ kɪ nyɔwa nɪɪ rɛ.

"There lived a sparrow who built her nest in a room that belonged to the chief's wife. The sparrow then laid her eggs in the nest. One day, the chief's children decided to demolish and reconstruct their mother's room and said to their father, "We will pull down and rebuild our mother's room tomorrow." They did not ask for God's permission. Then the sparrow got up and went up to God. She went and said to God, "I have laid my eggs in a room that belongs to the chief's wife, and his children have decided to demolish and rebuild their mother's room tomorrow. The chief's children have, however, not asked for permission from you, God." Then God told sparrow to get up and go home and not entertain fears about the safety of her eggs.

The following day, just as the chief's children were getting ready to demolish their mother's room, one of the younger sons of the chief suddenly died. Then the chief and his children became completely absorbed in the funeral of the young man and they forgot about the demolition of their mother's room. They got busy with the funeral for two weeks. After the funeral, the chief's children again informed their father that the following day, they would demolish and reconstruct their mother's room. Then the sparrow got up and went to God again. She again went and said to God, "The chief's children have decided to demolish and rebuild their mother's room; and this time again, they have not sought permission from you. I have also hatched my eggs but the chicks are still too young to fly." Then God again told sparrow not to worry and that she should go back home. God, however, enquired from sparrow whether she had

not just confirmed that the chief's children had failed to ask for His permission again. Then the sparrow said yes.

The following day, one of the wives of the chief passed away. The chief's children again became engrossed in the funeral of one of their mothers for three weeks. After the funeral, the chief's children again informed their father that the following day, God willing, they would pull down and rebuild their mother's room. Then the sparrow again went up to God and said to Him, "God, the chief's children said they would demolish and rebuild their mother's room tomorrow. This time round, they have mentioned your name. My chicks are also grown and they can fly." Then God said that if that was the case, then the sparrow should evacuate her chicks from the room of the chief's wife the following day at dawn. Since the chief's children had sought His permission in their enterprise, He would give them the go ahead the following day. The next day, the sparrow evacuated her chicks from the room early in the morning and the chief's children also pulled down their mother's room. The sparrow sent her chicks to a big river and gave them a bath. Then the children asked, "Mother, how do we drink water when we are thirsty?" Then their mother replied, "We shall fly and drink water at the same time." In consequence, when you go to the river, you find sparrows trying to drink water as they fly.

Ta kyɛ koro	We do not fight for grace
Leŋ dɪ Wɪɪsɪ pɛɛ koro.	It is God that blesses us with His grace.
Ta kyɛ koro	We do not fight for grace
Leŋ dɪ Wɪɪsɪ pɛɛ koro.	It is God that blesses us with His grace.
Ta kyɛ koro	We do not fight for grace
Leŋ dɪ Wɪɪsɪ pɛɛ koro.	It is God that blesses us with His grace.
Ta kyɛ koro	We do not fight for grace
Leŋ dɪ Wɪɪsɪ pɛɛ koro.	It is God that blesses us with His grace.

Ta kyɛ koro	We do not fight for grace
Leŋ dı Wuısı pɛɛ koro waaaaaa.	It is God that blesses us with His grace.

(20)

Bayoŋ waa! Bayoŋ waa!	Please Bayoŋ! Please Bayoŋ!
l nyınaŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your father's appellation?
Dalaa kyʋwalıya Kagyiya nıyɛla,	Nephew of Dalaa who paid his respects to Kagyiya,
Ɗmaŋ tɔɔrɔ nıyɛla fira bana,	Nephew of those who ambushed wayfarers and forced them to retreat,
Nyukuŋkogilli bırımı hayaara gbuwoni nıyɛla,	Nephew of those whose unkempt wives used human skulls as gourds,
Naasolli bırımı ba ŋmıra nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who used human tibia as flutes,
Ba naga ɛɛrɛ ı vıya yoho ta?	How come you are not taking an active part in the execution of dirges?
Bayoŋ waa! Bayoŋ waa!	Attention Bayoŋ! Attention Bayoŋ!
l mɛ tırıŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your own appellation?
Kyaŋdɔmɔ kyʋwalıya Bakɔɔ nıyɛla,	Nephew of Kyaŋdɔmɔ who paid his respects to Bɔkɔɔ,
Puri pına ba na kpanɛ nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who value the truth above anything else,
Ba vıya nyıwa balıya nıyɛla,	Nephew of those whose totem is the crocodile,
Gyaaŋ gyaaŋ dı ı wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı.	Please, please, listen attentively.

Banıhıyawʋ rı sii, a kanı ʋ haarʋ aŋ nyʋrımı. Wuısı a yaa wıya, banıhıyawʋ sıya dʋŋ daa nyʋrımıya amɛ ʋ penni mɛ sʋwa rɛ. Kyiye buro banıhıyawʋ bee ʋ haarʋ kı gyvv dıya, banıhıyawʋ a pına a bagısı, bagısı haarʋ rɛ aŋ sii. Waa bı wuwo a kı kyɛ haarʋ kıpınıı tʋwa.

Ɛɛrɛ kyɛ kʋwala, banıhıyawʋ sii a laha pına gyaŋı tʋwa. Ʊ pına gyaŋı tʋwa a kı mʋ kı maga ɛɛ dı piinıhe kiire geri ʋ fa a kı kaŋ banıhıyawʋ garʋ tʋwa gyvv. Ɛɛrɛ geri bʋrı pa

banıhıyawv,"Banıhıyawv, dı ını kı wuwo laa ŋ mıibori ta paŋ, ŋ sı kyısı ı penni a pɛɛ." Ɛɛrɛ piinihe mɛ bvrı pa banıhıyawv a bvrı, "Banıhıyawv, dı ını kı leŋ dı ŋ kaŋ geri a dii a fiyalı ŋ losuu haŋ nyɛ, ŋ sı suri ı sıya pɛɛ. Lɛɛlɛɛ nyɛ waa, banıhıyawv aa kyɛ v sıya rɛ, a bıra kı kyɛ penni mɛ kyusıno. Bakıbee rɛ waa lıısı aŋ leŋ bakıbee?

Ɛɛrɛ banıhıyawv sii a gyvv dıya a gyvv kana gyımıı kı pa piinihe. Piinihe laa gyımıı haa, a di. Lɛɛlɛɛ haa, dı piinihe sıya fiyalıya rɛ. Ɛɛrɛ piinihe sii haa, a gyına Wıısı nyuu aŋ kı tuu paası banıhıyawv sıya abee v naanifila kııŋu. Lɛɛlɛɛ dı kyalu a laha banıhıyawv sıya tvwa. Banıhıyawv kana v neni gyına lanı v sıya haa, dı v sıya suriye. Ɛɛrɛ haa, gebari mɛ sii haa, nyaratatata dı v kaŋ gyee kuu nyuhu gyına. Ʊ gyına saga gyee nyuhu aŋ kana v nyuhu gyollo aŋ kaŋ tuu bını. Lɛɛlɛ dı banıhıyawv penni ka sii rɛ kpogu, kpogu, kpogu anı gyaagu penni. Ɛɛrɛ tɔɔ bırı, banıhıyawu yırı v haarv dı v kaŋ kıı bını ba pına. Ɛɛrɛ banıhıyawv haarv bvrı dı banıhıyawv mɛ tırı a bı wuwo wıı buro kı yaa aŋ aa kı walımı nara bee pına wıya. Ɛɛrɛ banıhıyawv tarı v nyvwa. Haarv kı kaŋ kıı bını haa, banıhıyawv tuu pına haa, dı v kpa haarv pına.

"There lived an old man who had a wife but was blind. In God's mysterious way, the old man was blind as well as impotent. Each day when the old man went to bed with his wife, he would only lie down and admire the wife till day break. He was not able to make love to his wife in bed.

Then one day, the old man went out and lay down under a shed. After lying down under the shed for a while, a hawk chased a male lizard and the lizard ran under the smock of the old man. Then the lizard said to the old man, "Old man! If you will save my life for me, I will make you a

potent man." Then the hawk also said to the old man, "Old man! If you will allow me to catch and eat this lizard to satisfy my hunger, I will restore your sight for you." Indeed, the old man needed his sight as badly as he needed his potency. Which of the two would he choose; which one could he let go?

The old man after listening to both the hawk and the lizard, got up and went and caught one of his own fowls for the hawk. This was to ensure that the lizard's life would be spared and the hunger of the hawk satisfied. The hawk accepted the fowl from the old man and ate it. After it had finished eating, the hawk became satisfied. The hawk then flew unto the sky and flew down again unto the face of the old man and scratched it with its claws. In no time, the old man's face was bleeding and the old man decided to wipe the blood off his face. When he did it, he gained back his sight. Then the male lizard also got up and ran unto a broken wall. The lizard lay on the broken wall and nodded its head. After the lizard nodded its head several times, in no time at all, the male organ of the old man had jumped "*kpogu, kpogu, kpogu*" like that of a male horse. When it got dark, the old man called the wife to come and lay the bed. Then the wife told the old man that though he was ineffective in bed, he worried her a lot anytime it was dark. The old man never uttered a word. Then the wife finally came and prepared the bed; and that night, the old man was able to satisfy his wife sexually in bed."

Yaa wasɪ ɪ dɔŋ nɛ
Ʊ mɛ kyiye wasɛɛ. One good turn deserves another.
Yaa wasɪ ɪ dɔŋ nɛ
Ʊ mɛ kyiye wasɛɛ. One good turn deserves another.
Yaa wasɪ ɪ dɔŋ nɛ
Ʊ mɛ kyiye wasɛɛ. One good turn deserves another.

Yaa wasɪ ɪ dɔŋ nɛ

Ʊ mɛ kyiye wasɛɛ. One good turn deserves another.

Yaa wasɪ ɪ dɔŋ nɛ

Ʊ mɛ kyiye wasɛɛ waaaaa. One good turn deserves another.

(21)

Bayoŋ waa! Bayoŋ waa! Attention Bayoŋ! Attention Bayoŋ!

l mɛ tɪrɪŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee? What is your own appellation?

Kyaŋdɔmɔ kyʋwalɪya Bakɔɔ nɪyɛla, Nephew of Kyaŋdɔmɔ who paid his respects to Bɔkɔɔ,

Puri pɪna ba na kpanɛ nɪyɛla, Nephew of those who value the truth above anything else,

Ba vɪya nyɪwa balɪya nɪyɛla, Nephew of those whose totem is the crocodile,

Gyaaŋ gyaaŋ dɪ ɪ wuwolɪ ɪ dɪgɪna nɪɪ wɪɪ. Please, please, listen attentively.

Nyaawʊ rɪ sii, a lʊla ʊ biye. A lʊla bagyoŋbiye. A deŋ biye hʊ ɛɛ ʊ kʊ mʊ gyɪŋ wɪya. Biye hʊ mʊ gyɪŋ wɪya a ko kɪ tɪɪ haa, dɪ ʊ baa dɪ ʊ kuwo yaa nyaawʊ rɛ. Ɛɛ wɪya haa, nyawʊ biibaal sii haa, a fa mʊ gyʊʊ kuworu bee ʊ balɪya tɪyaŋ. Ʊ mʊ pɛ kuworu bee ʊ balɪya tɪyaŋ haa, a tʊma gɪ tɪya ba.

Ɛɛrɛ haa, kyɛ kɪrɪgɪ, nyaawʊ biibaal sii haa, a mʊ ɔhʊ. Ʊ kpa gɪ mʊ haa, dɪ kantoŋ hɔnɔɔ tɪya memɪɪ tɪyaŋ. Ɛɛrɛ haa, dɪ kantoŋ baa bee dɪ nyaawʊ biibaal ko fʊma ʊ nyuu tɪyawʊ. Ɛɛrɛ haa, nyaawʊ biibaal mʊ kpa kantoŋ nyuu haa, dɪ ʊ fʊma. Biye fʊma nyuu ko gɪ tɪɪ haa, dɪ kantoŋ baa dɪ nyaawʊ biye tɪyaŋ dɪ ʊ paa ʊ nyupʊna mal tɪyawʊ. Ɛɛrɛ nyaawʊ biibaal baa haa, "Ɔ kyana kantoŋ, bakɪnee wɪya mɛ rɛ ɪ gɪ basɪ ɛɛ? l laa baa dɪ ŋ fʊma ɪ nyupʊna a tɪyaɪ?"

Ɛɛrɛ kantoŋ baa dɪ ʊ rɛ basa amɛ waa kyɛ ʊ nyupʊna rɛ. Nyaawʊ biye kpa ʊ naaŋ dɪ ʊ bɪŋ daha haa, kantoŋ tɪŋʊ tɪyaŋ. Nyawʊ biye bila lɔlɔ haa, aŋ luŋ gyʊʊ. Ɛɛrɛ kantoŋ tɪŋʊ tɪyaŋ patɪpatɪ. Nyaawʊ biye fa ko haa, a ko gyʊʊ kuworu. A baa kuworu laaŋ, kantoŋ nɪ baa dɪ ŋ fʊma ʊ nyuu

tɪyawʊ. Ɔ fʊma nyuu ko gɪ tɪɪ haa, dɪ kantoŋ baa dɪ ŋ paa ʊ nyupʊna mal tɪyawʊ. Ɛɛrɛ kuworu baa nyawʊ biye tɪyaŋ dɪ ʊ sii kaŋ ʊ wɪya mʊ aŋkawʊ kɛ. Dɪ ʊ kuworu rɪ yaa ʊ nyɪnaa?

Biye kpa sii haa, ɛɛrɛ kantoŋ bila kpa tɪŋa ʊ tɪyaŋ. Ba kpa gɪ mʊ haa, dɪ baa kyeŋ nyaawʊ. Ɛɛrɛ nyaawʊ pɪyasɪ, bafɪyala? Ɛɛre haa, nyaawʊ biye kpa duwoso a we. Ɛɛrɛ nyaawʊ baa dɪ kantoŋ leŋ dɪ ba baŋ ʊ baga a hɔŋ wiyesi a wuwo basɪ wɪɪ hʊ. Ba pelee nyaawu baga ko gɪ tɪɪ haa, dɪ nyaawʊ baa dɪ kantoŋ ko gɪ kyɛ dɪ ʊ biye paa ʊ nyupʊna mal tɪyawʊ, ɛɛ kɛ kantoŋ mɛ paa ʊ naasɪ lɪɪ ʊ baga tɪyaŋ. Kantoŋ a baa ʊ paa ʊ naasɪ haa, a bila marɪ nʊwasɪ baga ʊ naasɪ pɪŋ leebuloŋ a mʊ. Kantoŋ paa paa ʊ naasɪ lɔlɔɔ haa, aŋ fa vɪya nyaawʊ biye ta. Nyaawʊ biye nyaŋ baa dɪ ʊ kuwo, dɪ waa kyʊwalʊ kɪŋkaŋ. Dɪ ʊ laa sɪya mʊ kuworu lee rɛ dɪ ɛɛrɛ kuworu kɪlʊʊ ta.

"There lived a poor man who had a son. He took care of the son till he grew up. When the son grew up, he told his father that the father was poor. Consequently, the son abandoned the poor man and went and lived with the chief and his family. The poor man's son went and lived with the chief and his family and worked for them. Then one day, the poor man's son got up and went to the bush to hunt.

After walking for sometime, the poor man's son came across a dwarf sitting under a tree. And what did the dwarf have to say? The dwarf told the poor man's son to shave his head for him. The poor man's son heeded to the dwarf's request and shaved the dwarf's head for him. After the poor man's son had finished shaving the dwarf's head, dwarf asked the poor man's son to stick back his hair unto his head for him. Then the poor man's son enquired, "My friend dwarf, what are you saying? Were you not the one who asked me to shave your head for you?" Then dwarf said he asked the poor man's son to shave his hair for him, but then he wanted his hair back on

his head. When the poor man's son took a step, dwarf followed him. When the poor man's son realised that he could not stick back dwarf's hair, he took to his heels. Then dwarf followed him at close heels. The poor man's son ran to the chief. The poor man's son told the chief to save him and that it was dwarf who asked him to shave his head for him. After he had shaved the head, dwarf demanded that he stick back the hair unto his head for him. Then the chief told the poor man's son to get lost from his sight. After all, was he, the chief, the true father of the poor man's son?

The young man got up and dwarf followed him again. Just a short distance away from the chief's palace, the poor man's son and the dwarf met the poor man himself. Then the poor man asked what the problem was. The poor man's son told his story. Then the poor man asked dwarf and his son to follow him to his farm so that they could sit down and discuss the problem in a relaxed manner. When they got to the farm, the poor man told dwarf that if dwarf wanted his son to stick back his hair unto his head for him, then dwarf should also make his footprints disappear from his farm. Dwarf tried to clean his footprints to no avail. When dwarf could not satisfy the condition of the poor man, he ran away leaving the poor man's son in peace. Then the poor man's son thanked his father. The son told his father that he first went to the chief and was turned away."

Nyaawɔ wara	The poor man's brick
Sii mɔ bɪrɪmɪ kuworu wara.	Cannot turn itself into a rich man's own.
Nyaawɔ wara	The poor man's brick
Sii mɔ bɪrɪmɪ kuworu wara.	Cannot turn itself into a rich man's own.
Nyaawɔ wara	The poor man's brick
Sii mɔ bɪrɪmɪ kuworu wara.	Cannot turn itself into a rich man's own.

Nyaawʋ wara	The poor man's brick
Sii mʋ bɪrɪmɪ kuworu wara.	Cannot turn itself into a rich man's own.
Nyaawʋ wara	The poor man's brick
Sii mʋ bɪrɪmɪ kuworu wara yeyi, yeyi yeyi.	Cannot turn itself into a rich man's own.

TYPE D: CONTINUOUS CHANTING (A MIXTURE OF APPELLATIONS, COMMENTS AND REFLECTIONS)

Dʋnɪya wɪɪ wɪɪ wuŋ yaa Wɪɪsɪ wɪɪ yaala,	Everything that happens in this world is done by God.
Vvvra wɪya yaa baa pɪyasɪ ʋ wɪya,	He is sought after on issues concerning soothsaying.
Nambala hɔnɔ baa pɪyasɪ ʋ wɪya,	He is sought after on issues concerning hunting.
Bapara wɪya yaa baa yɪrɪ ʋ,	He is sought after on issues concerning farming.
Bagɪla wɪya yaa baa yɪrɪ ʋ,	He is sought after on issues concerning animals.
Tvŋtvŋ bala baa dii.	One profession alone is not enough.
Haŋbolibiye rɪ gyɪŋ gyɪŋ baa kyɔrɪ,	The life of a weakling does not befit a man,
Yaara nya, haŋbolibiye rɪ yaara sɪya a kyɔrɪ?	How then can the life of a fool befit a man?
Baa kyɛ ba gyɪma ɪ kaa svv rɪ weree yaa	Is it better for people to learn of your sudden death,
A yaa kvvŋ kvvŋ mv sɪba ʋ rɪ weree?	Or is it better to die of a protracted illness?
l ko pere ɪ wvlɪ wɪya diye wvwvl wɪɪ magɪsɪ,	Whenever you are to speak, you must raise important issues.
Leŋ ba yaa wɪɪ nyusɪ,	Let them be critical issues,
A bɪra lɪya kyɪŋ doŋ leŋ ba yaa wɪɪ wɪya.	Let them be of utmost importance.
Fagyɪma nya, nɪyaarɪ rɪ wvlɪ fagyɪma,	It is the fool who says had I known,
Hmm waa hmm na kpʋ nɪya.	And it is too much thinking that kills people.
Nɪɪna bɪ nyɪna ba diye kaŋ naŋa yaa,	Mother and father fought yesterday,
Mmaa bɪ ŋ nyina diye naŋa nangɔ	My Mother and my father fought yesterday,

l sɪya ka vʊvra ɪ vʊvri pa aŋ la?	Who would you support if you were to do so?
l maa nya luworɪ wɪya ɪ nyɪma pɪŋ doŋ nɛ?	Did your father blink an eye when your mother was in labour?
Woyi woyi woyi woyiiiiiii.	Woyi woyi woyi woyiiiiiii.
Allahʊ akbarʊ allahʊ akbarʊ *ba nɪɪ kyeyi dunɪya,*	Allahu akbaru, allahu akbaru and the world is becoming a worse place because of them.
Ɔ gyaa ŋ wʊlla gyɪŋbala wɪya mʊwa, *New Ghana,*	I want to comment a little on our youth, New Ghana.
Karimʊ ba lɪɪ kyeyi la sɪsɔ,	The advent of Moslem clerics has led to the destruction of Sɪsaala values,
Karimʊ ba lɪɪ kyeyi la sɪsɔ wuŋ.	The advent of Moslem clerics has led to the destruction of all Sɪsaala values.
l tɪɪ haa mɪŋ maŋyalɪ la kaa vʊvʊg punni,	How come a follower of the Moslem faith still dabbles in soothsaying?
l tɪɪ haa mɪŋ maŋyalɪ la kaa kpɪkparɪ vʊga,	How come a follower of the Moslem faith still worships gods?
l tɪɪ haa mɪŋ maŋyalɪ la kaa gɪ gaa nɪya bʊvna.	How come a follower of the Moslem faith still steals people's goats?
Allahʊ akbarʊ, allahʊ akbarʊ, allahʊ akbarʊ	Allahu akbaru, allahu akbaru,allahu akbaru
Ba nɪɪ vʊga, ba nɪɪ mɪŋ gaarɪ mɛ la.	Yet they are into soothsaying and they are into stealing too.
A mɪŋ gaarɪ la kaa mɪŋ vʊga mɛ la?	How can one worship the gods and steal at the same time?
l nɪ kyiye siye dɪ ɪ mʊ Wɪɪsɪ dɪ, baa *kperɪ, baa kperɪ*	Should you go to the Lord in future, you will be in trouble, you will be in trouble.
Awiyeyi yeyi yeyi yeyi yeyiiiiiiii.	Awiyeyi yeyi yeyi yeyi yeyiiiiiiii.
Wɪɪsɪ kyʊwala ʊ lɪɪ ɪ nyɪma,	The worship of God begins with the worship of your father.
Wɪɪsɪ kyʊwala seyi dɪ ʊ lɪɪ ɪ maa,	The worship of God must begin with the worship of your mother.
Naŋʊ mɛ a vɪvaŋ a wʊlɪ dɪ ʊ nyɛ vʊwa *nɪɪ rɛ,*	Some always claim they worship their God by fasting,
Ka saa kʊlɪ dɪɪ vɔmɔ ʊ nyɪma ko.	And yet they will prepare food and refuse to serve the father.
Kariŋ bɪɪ mɛ saa kʊlɪ dɪɪ vɔmɔ ʊ nyɪma,	The clerical student who prepares food and

	and refuses to serve the father,
l lɔlɪ wuŋ ɪ lɔlɔ taa rɛ.	All the student's effort in life will be in vain.
l ko bɪ kʋŋ kana ɪ maa nyɛ baa naa?	If you have nothing to cook, will your mother blame you?
l ko bɪ kʋŋ kana ɪ nyɪna nyɛ mʋ dɪ?	If you have nothing to cook, will your father blame you?
Naŋa maa bɪ wɪɪ wuwo ka maga dɪ ʋ wuwolo.	Some people always bite off more than they can chew.
Naŋa maa bɪ wɪɪ gyɪma kaa maga dɪ ʋ gyima.	Some people always claim to know more than they know.
Ba wɪɪ gyɪma ma gyɪŋbala rɛ wɪya kpɪkperɪ ba ɛɛ.	It is the ignorant youth that always find themselves in trouble.
l na wɪɪ pɪyasɪ nɪhɪyawʋ.	When you are confronted with a problem, you consult an elderly person.
l mɛ na wɪɪ pɪyasɪ nɪhɪyawʋ nɛ,	When you are confronted with a problem, consult an elderly person,
Dɪ ʋ dagɪ ɔŋmɪɪ.	So that he directs you appropriately.
Fafaala wʋla a pɪyasɪ nyɪna nya bɪ ɔŋmɪɪ a taa.	Our forebears said that the child who asks for guidance from the father never gets lost.
Pɪyasɪ ŋ nyɪna nyɛ bɪ ɔŋmɪɪ a yeŋɪ.	One who asks for direction from the father never misses his way.
Ɔ nɪ ko dɪ ŋ bɪ gyɪma ŋ pɪyasɪ nɛ.	If I do not know the way forward, I ask for direction.
l nyɪna a wʋlɪ wɪɪ ɪ kaŋ ɪ nyuu vugɪ kaa sɪya vivaŋ,	If your father talks to you and you walk out on him,
l sɪya mʋ gyʋʋ wɪɪ ʋ tali kaa dɪ deŋ,	And when you are confronted with a problem and he leaves you to your fate,
l sɪsaŋ sɪya wʋlɪ ɪ ba dɪya nɪhɪyawʋ kaa nɪhɪyawʋ bɔŋ.	You then complain that the head of your family is callous.
Gyɪŋbala new Ghana,	New Ghana for the youth,
Haŋbɪɪsɪ new Ghana,	New Ghana for the young,
Gyɪŋbala rɪ bɪra laa sɪya ka ba nyɪna baa too.	It is the youth who now lead their elders.
Haweera kaŋ puwosɪ kyaara taa,	Women now abort their pregnancies,
Haweera kaŋ puwosɪ kyaara taa,	Women now abort their pregnancies,

l maa dɪya faa tʋŋ ɛɛ ɪ naa dɪ ɪ minaa?	If your mother had aborted her own, would she have given birth to you?
l maa dɪya ha mina ʋ faa tʋŋ ɛɛrɛ?	When your mother was alive, did she do that?
l maa dɪya faa tʋŋ ɛɛ ɪ na dɪ ɪ minaa?	If your mother had done the same, would she have given birth to you?
Ka ɪ ba sɪya kaŋ bala kyaara taa?	And yet, you now abort your pregnancies.
La sɪya sɪ mʋ Wɪsɪ nya dɪ wʋlɪ ba.	We will go to the Lord and resolve these issues.
Haal wʋla laa nɔŋ bɪɪ bɪra minaa?	Which woman will defend another woman's child nowadays?
Baal wʋla laa nɔŋ bɪɪ bɪra mina?	Which man will defend another man's child nowadays?
Sɪsaŋ nyɛ bɪra wʋla laa ɪ nɔŋ bɪɪ bɪra tuwo.	Nobody defends another person's child nowadays.
Sɪsaŋ nyɛ nɪhɪyawʋ bɪra wʋla laa nɔŋ bii nyɛ bɪra tuwo	No elder defends another person's child nowadays.

APPENDIX E
Collected Dirges from Documented Sources

(1) My big son has been murdered.
I have been torn like a piece of cloth,
I feel helpless as pond.
I am not as in past years
When we were harvesting the fields,
When I was killing elephants:
Now the hyena of the tall grass devours me
Because I have no son living. (Mapanje and White, 1983: 99)

(2) Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell. (Shakespeare, 1969:413

(3) Fire rages at Layima, oh,
Fire rages in the valley of River Cumu,
Everything is utterly utterly destroyed,
If I could reach the homestead of death's mother,
My daughter, I would make a long grass touch;
If I could reach the homestead of death's mother,
I would destroy everything utterly utterly… (p'Bitek, 1974: 126)

(4) *Praa ee*,	O mother,
Menko m'anim!	the path confronting me.
Apemanim Kofi Minta	It is Apemanim Kofi Minta
Trɛtrɛtuo oo	Trɛtrɛtuo
Ogya na ɛrehye aman.	States are in flames. (Nketia, 1955:75)

(5) L.S: *wonya gbami, mba na mɛndɛ*	L.S: O my brethren, I am gone
e liya n'ewoka, e liya n'eyolɛ	Take care of my home, live in peace
wonya gbami, mba na mɛndɛ	My family members, I am gone
e liya n'eyelɛ, n'ewoka	Live in peace, take care of yourself
ehɛa ne ya	Don't weep for me (Mutia, 2003:396-397)

(6) **Siwu**	**English gloss**
mésɔ màturi pia mé	I said, 'people are with me,
sêgbe kàku kaɋè	not knowing it meant mourning
sêgbe nnɔmɛ miɋè	not knowing it meant tears
sêgbe ìsoma iɋè	not knowing it meant sadness

sêgbe àsekpe aɖè not knowing it meant graves (http://ideophone.org/a-mawu-dirge/)

(7) I am on the world's extreme corner
I am not sitting in the row with the eminent
Those who are lucky sit in the middle
Sitting and leaning against a wall
They say I came to search,
I, Vinoko, can only go beyond and forget. (Awoonor,1974:19)

APPENDIX F

Additional Sɩsaala Dirges

(1)

Gyɩnaŋ nala, dɩ ɩ ko bʊrɩ faa	One cannot survive in the world of today
Baa yɔwɔyi rɛ.	By relying on the laws of the past.
Gyɩnaŋ nala, dɩ ɩ ko bʊrɩ faa	One cannot survive in the world of today
Baa yɔwɔyi rɛ .	By relying on the laws of the past.
Gyɩnaŋ nala, dɩ ɩ ko bʊrɩ faa	One cannot survive in the world of today
Baa yɔwɔyi rɛ .	By relying on the laws of the past.
Gyɩnaŋ nala, dɩ ɩ ko bʊrɩ faa	One cannot survive in the world of today
Baa yɔwɔyi rɛ .	By relying on the laws of the past.
Gyɩnaŋ nala, dɩ ɩ ko bʊrɩ faa	One cannot survive in the world of today
Baa yɔwɔyi rɛ .	By relying on the laws of the past.
Gyɩnaŋ nala, dɩ ɩ ko bʊrɩ faa	One cannot survive in the world of today
Baa yɔwɔyi rɛ yeyi yeyi yeyi.	By relying on the laws of the past.

(2)

Haŋtolibɩɩ lʊllʊh	If you give birth to a daughter,
l lʊll balɩya daalɩyɛnɩ rɛ.	You have given birth to twins.
Haŋtolibɩɩ lʊllʊh	If you give birth to a daughter,
l lʊll balɩya daalɩyɛnɩ rɛ.	You have given birth to twins.
Haŋtolibɩɩ lʊllʊh	If you give birth to a daughter,
l lʊll balɩya daalɩyɛnɩ rɛ.	You have given birth to twins.
Haŋtolibɩɩ lʊllʊh	If you give birth to a daughter,
l lʊll balɩya daalɩyɛnɩ rɛ.	You have given birth to twins.
Haŋtolibɩɩ lʊllʊh	If you give birth to a daughter,
l lʊll balɩya daalɩyɛnɩ rɛ.	You have given birth to twins.
Haŋtolibɩɩ lʊllʊh	If you give birth to a daughter,

I lʋll balɩya daalɩyɛnɩ rɛ.	You have given birth to twins.

(3)

Balbayɩyɛla wɩya	It is for the purpose of future reference
Ba gɩ bini samboliye wa.	That people engage in benevolent deeds.
Balbayɩyɛla wɩya	It is for the purpose of future reference
Ba gɩ bini samboliye wa.	That people engage in benevolent deeds.
Balbayɩyɛla wɩya	It is for the purpose of future reference
Ba gɩ bini samboliye wa.	That people engage in benevolent deeds.
Balbayɩyɛla wɩya	It is for the purpose of future reference
Ba gɩ bini samboliye wa.	That people engage in benevolent deeds.
Balbayɩyɛla wɩya	It is for the purpose of future reference
Ba gɩ bini samboliye waaaaaaaa.	That people engage in benevolent deeds

(4)

Ŋ feni kyogo yee	If my name has been dragged in the mud
Ŋ tɩrɩŋ daa kyogiye wa.	It does not naturally make me a bad person.
Ŋ feni kyogo yee	If my name has been dragged in the mud
Ŋ tɩrɩŋ daa kyogiye wa.	It does not naturally make me a bad person.
Ŋ feni kyogo yee	If my name has been dragged in the mud
Ŋ tɩrɩŋ daa kyogiye wa.	It does not naturally make me a bad person.
Ŋ feni kyogo yee	If my name has been dragged in the mud
Ŋ tɩrɩŋ daa kyogiye wa.	It does not naturally make me a bad person.
Ŋ feni kyogo yee	If my name has been dragged in the mud
Ŋ tɩrɩŋ daa kyogiye wa.	It does not naturally make me a bad person.
Ŋ feni kyogo yee	If my name has been dragged in the mud
Ŋ tɩrɩŋ daa kyogiye waaaaaaa.	It does not naturally make me a bad person.

(5)

Yaa kyɛ dʋnɩya gyʋʋna	If you want to live in this world

Leŋ dɩ gyogu weliye laa sɩya.	Let good character be your guide.
Yaa kyɛ dʋnɩya gyʋʋna	If you want to live in this world
Leŋ dɩ gyogu weliye laa sɩya.	Let good character be your guide.
Yaa kyɛ dʋnɩya gyʋʋna	If you want to live in this world
Leŋ dɩ gyogu weliye laa sɩya.	Let good character be your guide.
Yaa kyɛ dʋnɩya gyʋʋna	If you want to live in this world
Leŋ dɩ gyogu weliye laa sɩya.	Let good character be your guide.
Yaa kyɛ dʋnɩya gyʋʋna	If you want to live in this world
Leŋ dɩ gyogu weliye laa sɩya yeyi yeyi.	Let good character be your guide.

(6)

Nɩnyaawʋ wɩya yʋga	The poor man's worries are so numerous that
Ʊ kpa bɩrɩmɩ tiŋtaala a gʋra laalɩ.	He made a warrior's gear out of them.
Nɩnyaawʋ wɩya yʋga	The poor man's worries are so numerous that
Ʊ kpa bɩrɩmɩ tiŋtaala a gʋra laalɩ..	He made a warrior's gear out of them.
Nɩnyaawʋ wɩya yʋga	The poor man's worries are so numerous that
Ʊ kpa bɩrɩmɩ tiŋtaala a gʋra laalɩ..	He made a warrior's gear out of them.
Nɩnyaawʋ wɩya yʋga	The poor man's worries are so numerous that
Ʊ kpa bɩrɩmɩ tiŋtaala a gʋra laalɩ..	He made a warrior's gear out of them.
Nɩnyaawʋ wɩya yʋga	The poor man's worries are so numerous that
Ʊ kpa bɩrɩmɩ tiŋtaala a gʋra laalɩ. waaaa.	He made a warrior's gear out of them.

(7)

Wɩ weliye bee wɩ bɔmɔ	Both good and bad things
Ba buloŋ ka we Wɩɩ sɩŋ.	Emmanate from God.
Wɩ weliye bee wɩ bɔmɔ	Both good and bad things

Ba buloŋ ka we Wɩɩ sɩŋ.	Emmanate from God.
Wɩ weliye bee wɩ bɔmɔ	Both good and bad things
Ba buloŋ ka we Wɩɩ sɩŋ.	Emmanate from God.
Wɩ weliye bee wɩ bɔmɔ	Both good and bad things
Ba buloŋ ka we Wɩɩ sɩŋ.	Emmanate from God.
Wɩ weliye bee wɩ bɔmɔ	Both good and bad things
Ba buloŋ ka we Wɩɩ sɩŋ.	Emmanate from God.
Wɩ weliye bee wɩ bɔmɔ	Both good and bad things
Ba buloŋ ka we Wɩɩ sɩŋ waaaaaa.	Emmanate from God.

(8)

Gyaŋhal nala bɩ gyʊʊ na	Outsiders pass wrong judgement on me
Ba vʊlɩya vɔmɔŋ.	Because they are not well acquainted with the source of my problem.
Gyaŋhal nala bɩ gyʊʊ na	Outsiders pass wrong judgement on me
Ba vʊlɩya vɔmɔŋ.	Because they are not well acquainted with the source of my problem.
Gyaŋhal nala bɩ gyʊʊ na	Outsiders pass wrong judgement on me
Ba vʊlɩya vɔmɔŋ.	Because they are not well acquainted with the source of my problem.
Gyaŋhal nala bɩ gyʊʊ na	Outsiders pass wrong judgement on me
Ba vʊlɩya vɔmɔŋ.	Because they are not well acquainted with the source of my problem.
Gyaŋhal nala bɩ gyʊʊ na	Outsiders pass wrong judgement on me
Ba vʊlɩya vɔmɔŋ.	Because they are not well acquainted with the source of my problem.
Gyaŋhal nala bɩ gyʊʊ na	Outsiders pass wrong judgement on me
Ba vʊlɩya vɔmɔŋ waaaaa.	Because they are not well acquainted with the source of my problem.

(9)

Sυυ aa gyυυ nala mι.	Death brings a lot of pain to people.
Sυυ aa gyυυ nala mι.	Death brings a lot of pain to people.
Sυυ aa gyυυ nala mι.	Death brings a lot of pain to people.
Sυυ aa gyυυ nala mι.	Death brings a lot of pain to people.
Sυυ aa gyυυ nala mι.	Death brings a lot of pain to people.
Sυυ aa gyυυ nala mι.	Death brings a lot of pain to people.
Sυυ aa gyυυ nala mι yeyi, yeyi, yeyiiiii.	Death brings a lot of pain to people.

(10)

l bι nyιna kana waa	If you do not have a father
Aŋ kaŋ balla ι yaa aŋwuwomi rε.	And you have a husband, you are still a lioness.
l bι nyιna kana waa	If you do not have a father
Aŋ kaŋ balla ι yaa aŋwuwomi rε.	And you have a husband, you are still a lioness.
l bι nyιna kana waa	If you do not have a father
Aŋ kaŋ balla ι yaa aŋwuwomi rε.	And you have a husband, you are still a lioness.
l bι nyιna kana waa	If you do not have a father
Aŋ kaŋ balla ι yaa aŋwuwomi rε.	And you have a husband, you are still a lioness.
l bι nyιna kana waa	If you do not have a father
Aŋ kaŋ balla ι yaa aŋwuwomi rε.	And you have a husband, you are still a lioness.
l bι nyιna kana waa	If you do not have a father
Aŋ kaŋ balla ι yaa aŋwuwomi rε.	And you have a husband, you are still a lioness.

(11)

Bakuri waa! Bakuri waa!	Attention Bakuri! Attention Bakuri!
Kuworo bayaaga nιyεla kana ŋ nυhυ yige,	Nephew of the most mysterious chief, help

	me push my cow forward,
Kuworo Daankogo nıyɛla kana ŋ nʋhʋ yige,	Nephew of Chief Daankogo, help me push my cow forward,
Na wıya bʋmbʋwarı nıyɛla kana ŋ nʋhʋ yige,	Nephew of those noted for nagging, help me push my cow forward.
Aŋwuwomi kiya dı ʋ gyʋʋ lıgʋ,	The lion has stealthily entered the forest.
Wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı.	Listen attentively.
Baakyɛ weri tıına	Which household does not have
Aŋ dıyaŋ nı nyaa wıyaŋ?	A good share of its own problems ?
Baakyɛ weri tıına	Which household does not have
Aŋ dıyaŋ nı nyaa wıyaŋ?	A good share of its own problems ?
Baakyɛ weri tıına	Which household does not have
Aŋ dıyaŋ nı nyaa wıyaŋ?	A good share of its own problems ?
Baakyɛ weri tıına	Which household does not have
Aŋ dıyaŋ nı nyaa wıyaŋ?	A good share of its own problems ?
Baakyɛ weri tıına	Which household does not have
Aŋ dıyaŋ nı nyaa wıyaŋ?	A good share of its own problems ?
Baakyɛ weri tıına	Which household does not have
Aŋ dıyaŋ nı nyaa wıyaŋ yeeeeeeeee.	A good share of its own problems ?

(12)

Adamu waa! Adamu waa!	Please Adamu! Please Adamu!
I nyıııaŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your father’s appellation?
Dalaa kyʋwal ıya Kagyiya nıyɛla,	Nephew of Dalaa who paid his respects to Kagyiya,
Ŋmaŋ tɔɔrɔ nıyɛla fira bana,	Nephew of those who ambushed wayfarers and forced them to retreat,
Nyukuŋkogilli bırımı hayaara gbuwoni nıyɛla,	Nephew of those whose unkempt wives used human skulls as gourds,
Naasolli bırımı ba ŋmıra nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who used human tibia as flutes,
Ba naga ɛɛrɛ ı vıya yoho ta?	How come you are not taking an active part in the execution of dirges?
Bayoŋ waa! Bayoŋ waa!	Attention Bayoŋ! Attention Bayoŋ!

l mɛ tırıŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your own appellation?
Gbaŋgyaga kyʋwalıya Namaali nıyɛla,	Nephew of Gbaŋgyaga who paid his respects to Namaali,
Saalı kyʋwalı Kʋŋkɔŋ nıyɛla,	Nephew of Saali who paid his respects to Kʋŋkɔŋ,
Gyagyınna gyaarıgenni nıyɛla,	Nephew of expert horse riders,
Krugu tɔɔ naanyiyere nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who wear baggy trousers to cover spindly legs,
Gawurini tɔɔ ba sawɛ nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who wear smocks to conceal their amulets,
Nyupugu tɔɔ nyukpʋrıya nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who wear hats to conceal their bumpy heads,
Agyiya baŋ kyʋwalı Saampuwo nıyɛla,	Nephew of Agyiya who paid his respects to Saampuwo,
Gyaaŋ gyaaŋ dı ı wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı.	Please, please, listen attentively.
.Adamu waa!	Attention Adamu!
l wıı tuwo a wıı mı dʋʋ?	Are you not part of us?
Adamu waa!	Attention Adamu!
l wıı tuwo a wıı mı dʋʋ?	Are you not part of us?
Adamu waa!	Attention Adamu!
l wıı tuwo a wıı mı dʋʋ?	Are you not part of us?
Adamu waa!	Attention Adamu!
l wıı tuwo a wıı mı dʋʋ?	Are you not part of us?
Adamu waa!	Attention Adamu!
l wıı tuwo a wıı mı dʋʋ?	Are you not part of us?
Adamu waa!	Attention Adamu!
l wıı tuwo a wıı mı dʋʋ yeyi yeyi yeyi?	Are you not part of us?

(13)

Dumah waa! Yaa wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı.	Attention Dumah! Listen attentively.
l nyınaŋ gaŋdaa feni rı yaŋ bee?	What is your father's appellation?
Habiye Gʋŋgʋŋna nıyɛla,	Nephew of Habiye Gʋŋgʋŋna,
Dahuunʋ bayuworo nıyɛla,	Nephew of the warriors of darkness,

Yuwo di bine gaŋdaara nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who fight for fame,
Sınıya kyʋwalıya Kakyugu nıyɛla,	Nephew of Siniya who paid his respects to Kakyugu,
Bıranyaŋa kyʋwalıya Bayoŋ nıyɛla,	Nephew of Branyaŋga who paid his respects to Bayoŋ,
Yaa wuwolı ı dıgına nıı wıı.	Listen attentively.
Yaa wıya dı dʋnıya gyımıı	Of what significance is long life
Mııbol deŋ deŋ maa yeyi rɛ?	If such a life does not reflect good deeds?
Yaa wıya dı dʋnıya gyımıı	Of what significance is long life
Mııbol deŋ deŋ maa yeyi rɛ?	If such a life does not reflect good deeds?
Yaa wıya dı dʋnıya gyımıı	Of what significance is long life
Mııbol deŋ deŋ maa yeyi rɛ?	If such a life does not reflect good deeds?
Yaa wıya dı dʋnıya gyımıı	Of what significance is long life
Mııbol deŋ deŋ maa yeyi rɛ?	If such a life does not reflect good deeds?
Yaa wıya dı dʋnıya gyımıı	Of what significance is long life
Mııbol deŋ deŋ maa yeyi rɛ?	If such a life does not reflect good deeds?
Yaa wıya dı dʋnıya gyımıı	Of what significance is long life
Mııbol deŋ deŋ maa yeyi rɛ waaaaa?	If such a life does not reflect good deeds?

(14)

Ali waa! Ali waa! Ali waa!	Attention Ali! Attention Ali! Attention Ali!
l tırıŋ gaŋdaa feni rı yaŋ bee?	What is your own appellation?
Gyaŋ gyaŋ baa saa balıya nıyɛla,	Nephew of those noted for rapid development,
Daŋsɔɔ bee ʋ Kallı,	Nephew of Daŋsɔɔ and Kallı,
Aa kyʋwalı Waalı gaŋdaara nıyɛla,	Who paid their respects to Waalı,
Batiŋ baga gaŋdaara nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who settled on Batiŋ's farm,
Ba naga ɛɛrɛ ı vıya yoho ta?	How come you are not participating in the the performance of dirges?
l dɔmɔ yaa fi bee kɔgıbɔ	Your enemies are one hundred and over.
l dɔmɔ yaa fi bee kɔgıbɔ	Your enemies are one hundred and over.
l dɔmɔ yaa fi bee kɔgıbɔ	Your enemies are one hundred and over.
l dɔmɔ yaa fi bee kɔgıbɔ	Your enemies are one hundred and over.

l dɔmɔ yaa fi bee kɔgɪbɔ Your enemies are one hundred and over.

l dɔmɔ yaa fi bee kɔgɪbɔ Your enemies are one hundred and over.

l dɔmɔ yaa fi bee kɔgɪbɔ waaaaa. Your enemies are one hundred and over.

(15)

Bapɔkyiye waa! Bapɔkyiye waa! Attention Bapɔkyiye! Attention Bapɔkyiye!

l mɛ tɪrɪŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee? What is your own appellation?

Kyaŋdɔmɔ kyʋwalɪya Bakɔɔ nɪyɛla, Nephew of Kyaŋdɔmɔ who paid his respects to Bɔkɔɔ,

Puri pɪma ba na kpanɛ nɪyɛla, Nephew of those who value the truth above anything else,

Ba vɪya nyɪwa balɪya nɪyɛla, Nephew of those whose totem is the crocodile,

Gyaaŋ gyaaŋ dɪ ɪ wuwolɪ ɪ dɪgɪma nɪɪ wɪɪ. Please, please, listen attentively.

Yaa dɪ dʋnɪya na

Ba bʋrɪ ba nɪɪ tuwo. Actions speak louder than words.

Yaa dɪ dʋnɪya na

Ba bʋrɪ ba nɪɪ tuwo. Actions speak louder than words.

Yaa dɪ dʋnɪya na

Ba bʋrɪ ba nɪɪ tuwo. Actions speak louder than words.

Yaa dɪ dʋnɪya na

Ba bʋrɪ ba nɪɪ tuwo. Actions speak louder than words.

Yaa dɪ dʋnɪya na

Ba bʋrɪ ba nɪɪ tuwo. Actions speak louder than words.

Yaa dɪ dʋnɪya na

Ba bʋrɪ ba nɪɪ tuwo waaaaaa. Actions speak louder than words.

(16)

Baduwonu waa! Baduwonu waa! Please Baduwonu! Please Baduwonu!

l nyɪnaŋ gaŋdaa feni rɪ yaŋ bee? What is your father's appellation?

Dɪyakʋnʋ kyʋwalɪya Kagyiya nɪyɛla, Nephew of Diyakunu who paid his respects to

	Kagyiya,
Badiye kyʋwalɩ Hallɩ nɩyɛla,	Nephew of Badiye who paid his respects to Halli,
Ŋwɩɩtuwo kyʋwalɩ Gbuŋgbogino nɩyɛla,	Nephew of Ŋwɩɩtuwo who paid his respects to Gbuŋgbogino,
Girigiri nɩyɛla baa faa,	Nephew of those full of vitality and strenghth,
Naagime ba lo gyeyeh nɩyɛla,	Nephew of those who crumble walls with the sound of their footsteps,
Yaa laa ŋ kyʋwala kana.	Please, I greet you.
Baduwonu waa! Baduwonu waa!	Attention Baduwonu! Attention Baduwonu!
Yaa wuwoli ɩ dɩgɩna nɩɩ wɩɩ.	Please, listen attentively.
Wɩɩsɩ aa kyoyɩ	If God loves you
Ʊ kpɩya dʋnɩya aa kyoyɩ.	It is better than man to love you.
Wɩɩsɩ aa kyoyɩ	If God loves you
Ʊ kpɩya dʋnɩya aa kyoyɩ.	It is better than man to love you..
Wɩɩsɩ aa kyoyɩ	If God loves you
Ʊ kpɩya dʋnɩya aa kyoyɩ.	It is better than man to love you..
Wɩɩsɩ aa kyoyɩ	If God loves you
Ʊ kpɩya dʋnɩya aa kyoyɩ.	It is better than man to love you..
Wɩɩsɩ aa kyoyɩ	If God loves you
Ʊ kpɩya dʋnɩya aa kyoyɩ.	It is better than man to love you..
Wɩɩsɩ aa kyoyɩ	If God loves you
Ʊ kpɩya dʋnɩya aa kyoyɩ.	It is better than man to love you..

(17)

Issah waa! Issah waa!	Attention Isssah! Attention Issah!
l tɪrɪŋ gaŋdaa feni rɪ yaŋ bee?	What is your own appellation?
Gyaŋ gyaŋ baa saa balɪya nɪyɛla,	Nephew of those noted for rapid development,
Daŋsɔɔ bee ʋ Kallɪ,	Nephew of Daŋsɔɔ and Kallɪ,
Aa kyʋwalɪ Waalɪ gaŋdaara nɪyɛla,	Who paid their respects to Waalɪ,
Batiŋ baga gaŋdaara nɪyɛla,	Nephew of those who settled on Batiŋ's farm,

Ba naga εεrε ι vιya yoho ta?	How come you are not participating in the the performance of dirges?
Issah waa! Issah waa!	Attention Isssah! Attention Issah!
Gyaaŋ dι ι wuwoli ι dιgιna nιι wιι.	Please, listen attentively.
Ma deŋ aa ŋmιra na	Listen to our voices
Aa ŋmιra sιma rε.	Our voices are melodious.
Ma deŋ aa ŋmιra na	Listen to our voices
Aa ŋmιra sιma rε.	Our voices are melodious.
Ma deŋ aa ŋmιra na	Listen to our voices
Aa ŋmιra sιma rε.	Our voices are melodious.
Ma deŋ aa ŋmιra na	Listen to our voices
Aa ŋmιra sιma rε.	Our voices are melodious.
Ma deŋ aa ŋmιra na	Listen to our voices
Aa ŋmιra sιma rε.	Our voices are melodious.
Ma deŋ aa ŋmιra na	Listen to our voices
Aa ŋmιra sιma rε yeyi yeyiiiiii.	Our voices are melodious.

(18)

Baawa waa! Baawa waa!	Attention Baawa! Attention Baawa!
l mε tιrιŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your own appellation?
Gbaŋgyaga kyʋwalιya Namaali nιyεla,	Nephew of Gbaŋgyaga who paid his respects to Namaali,
Saalι kyʋwalι Kʋŋkɔŋ nιyεla,	Nephew of Saali who paid his respects to Kʋŋkɔŋ,
Gyagyιnna gyaarιgenni nιyεla,	Nephew of expert horse riders,
Krugu tɔɔ naanyiyere nιyεla,	Nephew of those who wear baggy trousers to cover spindly legs,
Gawurini tɔɔ ba sawε nιyεla,	Nephew of those who wear smocks to conceal their amulets,
Nyupugu tɔɔ nyukpʋrιya nιyεla,	Nephew of those who wear hats to conceal their bumpy heads,
Agyiya baŋ kyʋwalι Saampuwo nιyεla,	Nephew of Agyiya who paid his respects to Saampuwo,
Gyaaŋ gyaaŋ dι ι wuwolι ι dιgιna nιι wιι.	Please, please, listen attentively.

Baal rı sii, a lʋla biye fi abee kırıgı. Na ba pıpalla, na ba naŋbagıla, na ba karıkyısi, na ba bayalısı. Ɛɛrɛ ba buloŋ kaŋ kına gbeleŋ, gbeleŋ. Babuloŋ ba kaŋ kına, aŋ kɛ Baawa mɛ bı kaŋ wıyaalıı. Ɛɛrɛ Baawa a bı kaŋ tʋŋ tʋŋ buloŋ baa bee, dı ʋ sı gyʋʋ ɔhʋ a taa. Dı ʋ ba kaŋ tʋŋ buloŋ.

Ɛɛrɛ Baawa sii kaŋ ɔhʋ gyʋʋ. A vala deŋ, deŋ, deŋ a gı mʋ dı gyıbal wiye. Kiŋkerigilee kee! Ɛɛrɛ Baawa kpa mʋ doŋ. Ʊ kpa gı mʋ haa, dı goye tiŋma dʋŋ bɛyi rɛ. Ɛɛrɛ haa, ba yaa nıı tıya Baawa. Ɛɛrɛ Baawa kaŋ nıı gyıŋ pɔ ʋ nyʋwa tıyaŋ aŋ kaŋ kyuri. A kaŋ nıı tuu sigi. Ba pıyası Bawa ŋmanıı. Ɛɛrɛ Baawa baa dı ʋ lıı ŋmanıı vallı rɛ woo. Dı ʋ bıla aa mʋʋ rɛ.

Baawa bıla lıya, a bıla vala deŋ, deŋ, deŋ, deŋ dı gyıbal bıla wiye. Baawa bıla kpa mʋ doŋ. Ʊ bıla aa mʋʋ dı nı dıgı dʋŋ mɛ saa bɛyi. Gyıkolnı kɔgıbɔ abee mɔlıya bee fi. A lıı daha bee Tiŋniyabeyi, ʋ baga dʋŋ nı ɛɛ. Baawa mʋ lıı kyʋwalʋʋ, ʋ laa lɔl, aŋ tiyaı nıı ı nyʋwa. Aŋ pıyası ı ŋmanıya. l baa wıı tıı rɛ, ı kuwo a lʋl ma, ma yaa nala fi abee kırıgı. Na pıpalla, na naŋbagıla, na karıkyısi, na bayalısi. Ba buloŋ nı kaŋ tʋma. Baawa dʋŋ nı ba kaŋ tʋma. Ɛɛrɛ ı mɛ nyagı sii haa, a baa ı sı gyʋʋ ɔhʋ ta.

Ɛɛrɛ nı dıgı tıına nyaŋ baa dı Baawa bı naa, dı ba nyına mɛ aa sii, ʋ lʋla ba biye fi bee balıya. Ba buloŋ mɛ kaŋ tʋma aŋ ka ʋ dʋŋ ba kaŋ tʋma. Ɛɛrɛ ʋ sii a mʋ kpa baga gı palla aŋ gı dıyası gyımiye. Dı aŋ kɛ Baawa sii, dı ʋ kanıı baarı baga hʋ. Ɛɛrɛ Baawa sii ba gı baarı baga deŋ, deŋ, deŋ, deŋ yɔbɔ sıı balıya. Ba baarı baga a ko baŋ haa, ʋ baa Baawa ı bı naa. Ɛɛrɛ ʋ saa kʋʋ, Baawa di. Baawa di kʋʋ ko gı tı haa, ı baa ŋ kyana, nyɛ kɛ ŋ sı mııgı mʋ bɛyi. Ɛɛrɛ Baawa kaŋ ŋmanıı kpa, a gı ko Tiŋniyabɛyi, dı ba kaŋ loho gı kyemıı. Dı ı naa rı sıba Yaala tıyaŋ. Baawa yaŋ ko ʋ naa loho, a yaŋ ko yıı ʋ yııl.

There lived a man who had eleven children. Some of them became farmers, others became hunters, others became civil servants, and yet others also became traders. All those with employment became rich. They all had jobs except Baawa who did not have any form of employment. Since Baawa was unemployed, he said he would travel and would never come back home. He had nothing to do at home.

Baawa then embarked on his journey of no return. After walking for a very long time, he heard a cock crow. *Kiŋkerigilee kee*! Baawa then proceeded to the place where he heard the cock crow. When he got there, he realised that it was a community of only those with big protruding hernias. When Baawa got to the community, they gave him water to drink. He only sipped the water and gave the rest of it back to his hosts. The hosts proceeded to ask Baawa of his mission. He responded that he was travelling and that he would still continue with his journey.

After Baawa left his hosts, he journeyed for a very long time before he heard another cock crow. He went to the source of the second cock crow. Upon reaching there, he realised that it was a one man settlement. He also saw hencoops, about one hundred and thirty of them. From this place to Tiŋniyabeyi, that was the farm. Baawa went and greeted the lone resident who responded and offered him some water to drink. After Baawa finished drinking the water, his host asked him of his mission. Baawa responded that in actual fact, his father had eleven of them. Some became farmers, others became hunters, some became civil servants, and others also became traders. All the ten children were gainfully employed. It was only he, Baawa, who was jobless. That was why he decided that he was going to embark on a journey of no return.

The lone resident of the farm then retorted that his father also had twelve of them. Out of the twelve, eleven were gainfully employed except him. That was why he also went into farming, combining food crop cultivation with poultry farming. He asked Baawa to accompany him so that they could tour the farm together. Baawa obliged and his host showed him round the farm. It took them two weeks to go round the entire farm. After touring the farm together, the host explained to Baawa that the entire farm belonged to him, the host. The host then prepared food

and they ate together. After the meal, Baawa told his host that he would go back to his family and home. Baawa explained that what he had seen on his journey was enough for him. He then embarked on his return journey and when he got to Tiŋniyabeyi, he was informed that his mother had passed away at Yaala. In consequence, Baawa came to Yaala and performed his dirge as follows:

Baawa gyʋʋ pogo ı naa bee?	What has Baawa learnt from his journey?
Ŋ naa tıbıına.	I have learnt wisdom.
Baawa gyʋʋ pogo ı naa bee?	What has Baawa learnt from his journey?
Ŋ naa tıbıına.	I have learnt wisdom.
Baawa gyʋʋ pogo ı naa bee?	What has Baawa learnt from his journey?
Ŋ naa tıbıına.	I have learnt wisdom.
Baawa gyʋʋ pogo ı naa bee?	What has Baawa learnt from his journey?
Ŋ naa tıbıına.	I have learnt wisdom.
Baawa gyʋʋ pogo ı naa bee?	What has Baawa learnt from his journey?
Ŋ naa tıbıına.	I have learnt wisdom.
Baawa gyʋʋ pogo ı naa bee?	What has Baawa learnt from his journey?
Ŋ naa tıbıına waaaaaa.	I have learnt wisdom.

(19)

Abu waa! Abu waa! Abu waa!	Please Abu! Please Abu! Please Abu!
I nyınaŋ gaŋdaa feni rı yaŋ bee?	What is your father's appellation?
Dıyakʋnʋ kyʋwalıya Kagyiya nıyɛla,	Nephew of Diyakunu who paid his respects to Kagyiya,
Badiye kyʋwalı Hallı nıyɛla,	Nephew of Badiye who paid his respects to Halli,
Ŋwııtuwo kyʋwalı Gbuŋgbogino nıyɛla,	Nephew of Ngwiituwo who paid his respects to Gbunggbogino,
Girigiri nıyɛla baa faa,	Nephew of those full of vitality and strenghth,
Naagime ba lo gyeyeh nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who crumble walls with the sound of their footsteps,

Yaa laa ŋ kyʋwala kana.	Please, I greet you.
Abu waa! Abu waa!	Attention Abu! Attention Abu!
Yaa laa ŋ kyuwala kana.	Please, I greet you.
Yaa wuwoli ɪ dɪgɪna nɪɪ wɪɪ.	Please, listen attentively.

Tɪɪsɪ rɪ sii, a lagɪmɪ. Ba lagɪma ko tɪ haa, dɪ ba baa dɪ baa kyɛ ba na haŋ tɪya hʋ aa kaŋ tɔnɔ rɛ. Ɛɛrɛ peliŋ ko baŋ lɪɪ sɪŋ, ɛɛrɛ Wɪɪsɪ baa dɪ peliŋ ba kaŋ tɔnɔ. Dɪ peliŋ bee ʋ yʋgɪŋ buloŋ, dɪ amɛ dɪ diŋ dʋŋ nɛ ʋ kana. Ɛɛrɛ kʋwarɪha mɛ ko baŋ lɪɪ haa, ɛɛrɛ Wɪɪsɪ baa dɪ kʋwarɪha mɛ ba kaŋ tɔnɔ kɪrɪgɪ buloŋ. Dɪ diŋ dʋŋ nɛ kʋwarɪha kana. Ɛɛrɛ kagyetiya mɛ ko baŋ lɪɪ haa, ɛɛrɛ Wɪɪsɪ baa dɪ kagyetiya ba kaŋ tɔnɔ buloŋ. Dɪ kagyetiya kaŋ diŋ dʋŋ nɛ.

Ɛɛrɛ tolii ko baŋ lɪɪ sɪŋ haa, ɛɛrɛ Wɪɪsɪ baa dɪ tolii kaŋ tɔnɔ rɛ. Dɪ tolii aa nɔnɔ rɛ dɪ nala na tolii a dɪ. Ɛɛrɛ sʋrʋ ko baŋ lɪɪ sɪŋ haa, ɛɛrɛ Wɪɪsɪ baa dɪ sʋrʋ mɛ kaŋ tɔnɔ rɛ. Dɪ sʋrʋ aa nɔnɔ rɛ, ɛɛrɛ nala na sʋrʋ a dɪ, a bɪla na sɪmmaa a lɪɪ sʋrʋ tɪyaŋ. Ɛɛrɛ suwoŋ ko baŋ lɪɪ sɪŋ haa, ɛɛrɛ Wɪɪsɪ baa dɪ ka ba naa suwoŋ aa muro ɛɛrɛ, dɪ amɛ ʋ kaŋ tɔnɔ te peliŋ. Dɪ suwoŋ aa nɔnɔ rɛ, dɪ nala na babɪlɪya a dɪ, a na kyʋʋna bee nʋʋ a lɪɪ suwoŋ tɪyaŋ. Dɪ ɛɛ wɪya, suwoŋ kaŋ tɔnɔ rɛ kɪŋkaŋ.

Once upon a time, all the trees that lived in the forest came together. When they got assembled, they decided that they wanted to find out the useful ones among them.The first to parade itself as a useful tree was the mahagony tree, but God told the mahagony tree it was of no use. God explained to the mahagony tree that despite its size and height, it could only be used for fire by man. Then the wawa tree also paraded itself as a useful tree. Again, God told the wawa tree also that it could only provide fire for man and for that reason, the wawa tree was of no consequence. The next to take centre stage was the nim tree. God told the nim tree that it was needed by man for the purpose of building fire. As a result, the nim tree was of no importance, according to God.

When the baobab tree paraded itself, God said it was a useful tree. According to God, the baobab fruit was a source of food to man and as a result, the baobab tree was important to man. When the dawadawa tree took centre stage, God said it was of consequence to man. According to Him, the dawadawa fruit was the source of dawadawa flour which could be used as food by man and the dawadawa seeds were also used to prepare dawadawa for seasoning soup. Then the shea tree also paraded itself as a useful tree. God told the other trees that despite the miniature size of the shea tree as compared to that of the mahagony tree, the former was more important than the latter. According to God, the shea tree provided man with shea fruits which were a source of nutrition to man. Furthermore, the shea tree provided man with shea nuts which were a source of shea butter for man. For these reasons, God said that the shea tree was of great importance to man.

Abu waa! Yaa kyɛ nala	Attention Abu! If you are looking for relatives
Kɪ kyɛ suwomi doho nala.	Look for those that are useful like the shea tree.
Abu waa! Yaa kyɛ nala	Attention Abu! If you are looking for relatives
Kɪ kyɛ suwomi doho nala.	Look for those that are useful like the shea tree.
Abu waa! Yaa kyɛ nala	Attention Abu! If you are looking for relatives
Kɪ kyɛ suwomi doho nala.	Look for those that are useful like the shea tree.
Abu waa! Yaa kyɛ nala	Attention Abu! If you are looking for relatives
Kɪ kyɛ suwomi doho nala.	Look for those that are useful like the shea tree.
Abu waa! Yaa kyɛ nala	Attention Abu! If you are looking for relatives
Kɪ kyɛ suwomi doho nala.	Look for those that are useful like the shea tree.
Abu waa! Yaa kyɛ nala	Attention Abu! If you are looking for relatives
Kɪ kyɛ suwomi doho nala ŋaaaaa.	Look for those that are useful like the shea tree.

(20)

Nuhu waa! Nuhu waa!	Attention Nuhu! Attention Nuhu!
I mɛ tɪrɪŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?	What is your own appellation?

Kyaŋdɔmɔ kyʋwalıya Bakɔɔ nıyɛla,	Nephew of Kyaŋdɔmɔ who paid his respects to Bɔkɔɔ,
Puri pıma ba na kpanɛ nıyɛla,	Nephew of those who value the truth above anything else,
Ba vıya nyıwa balıya nıyɛla,	Nephew of those whose totem is the crocodile,
Gyaaŋ gyaaŋ dı ı wuwolı ı dıgıma nıı wıı.	Please, please, listen attentively.

Baarʊʊ rı sii, a lʊla biye kʊwala, kʊwala fi abee balıya. Ɛɛrɛ nara fi abee kʊwala yaa nı duwoni, a sii waa a kaŋ tʊma a tʊma kı dı aŋ kyɛ kaŋ ko kı pa ba nyıma. Kʊwala tıma, fi bee balıya tıma, ʊ mɛ yaa bii pʊgımıı. Ʊ bı kaŋ tʊmıı, aŋ hɔnɔ dıya tʊwa, ʊ bee ʊ nyıma.

Nyɛ rɛ kyɛ kʊwala haa, biisii nyıma sii haa, a kı wıılı. Ɛɛrɛ biisii fi bee kʊwala ko laŋŋı. Ba bı yıra bii pʊgımıı tıma beyi wıya bii duworu ka kpa nıı bii pʊgımıı wıya bı hıya. Bii pʊgımıı bı wuwo wıı buroŋ kı yaa. Nyɛ rɛ haa, biisii fi bee kʊwala vʊʊri a naga nıı ba mʊ vʊga naa, dı ba sı gyıma ba nyıma wııla sıı.

Ba mʊ vʊgʊrʊʊ lee haa, a vʊga. Ɛɛrɛ vʊgʊrʊ bʊrı pa ba naga nıı waa dı wıısʊlıı he doŋ nɛ. Dı seyi ba ko kaŋ ba nyıma bii kyoorii aa yaa bii duwoni kʊwala a kaŋ mʊ lıısı wıısʊlıı. Dıı dı biisi bı yaa ɛɛ, ba nyıma bı sı sii. Ɛɛrɛ biisi fi bee kʊwala ko laŋŋı, a kpa duwoso a he. Biisi fi bee kʊwala buroŋ yaa bii duwoni rɛ, ba buroŋ mɛ yaa ba nyıma bii kyooriye rɛ. Ba kı bee tıma rɛ baa kaŋ mʊ lıısı wıısʊlıı? Ɛɛrɛ ba buroŋ hɔnɔ a kı deŋ dɔmɔ sısı tʊwa.

Ɛɛrɛ bii pʊgımıı mɛ sii haa, a ko pıyası wıı aa tıı ba hɔnɔ a yaa surom a kı deŋ dɔmɔ sısı tʊwa. Ɛɛrɛ ba kpa duwoso he. Ɛɛrɛ bii pʊgımıı bʊrı dı kayi, dı ba bıra mʊ karımʊwagʊ mɛ lee a mʊ pıyası ba nyıma wııla wıya na woroŋ. Ɛɛrɛ ba bıra sii, a mʊ karımʊwagʊ mɛ lee. Ɛɛrɛ karımʊwagʊ kana ʊ tasıbaa kpa, a yaga tasıbaa kyɛkyɛkyɛ! Kyɛkyɛkyɛ! Kyɛkyɛkyɛ! Lɛɛ lɛɛ nyɛ dı pebari wıısʊlıı ko baŋ lıı sina rɛ. Ɛɛrɛ karımʊwagʊ bʊrı pa biisi dı ba kı mʊ dıya, dı ba kaŋ pebari mʊ lıısı wıısı. Dı ba nyıma sı na laaŋfıya lɛɛ lɛɛ buroŋ. Ɛɛrɛ biisii ko, a ko kaŋ pebari mʊ lıısı wıısı. Ʊ bı pıısa aŋ kɛ ba nyıma na laaŋfıya. Bii pʊgımıı, ʊ bı laa baarʊʊ bii duwoni kʊwala mııbori taa?

There lived a man who had twelve children. Eleven of the children grew up healthy and strong and had their own jobs. They took care of themselves and also broght some of their eanings to their father on regular basis. The twelth child was a weakling. He had no job and stayed at home with his father.

One day, the man fell sick. All the elven healthy children got together. They did not invite the weakling to the gathering because to the healthy ones, the weakling was of no consequence. The weakling would not contribute anything meaningful to the meeting. The eleven children decided that they should go and consult a soothsayer about their father's sickness. Perhaps, the soothsayer would help them treat their father.

They went to the soothsayer and consulted him. The soothsayer told the one consulting that there was the need for the children to make a sacrifice to enable their father recover from his illness. According to the soothsayer, the sacrifice would take the form of a human being and that person must be one of the favourite children of the sick man. In the soothsayer's view, unless the sacrifice was made, the man would not recover from his sickness at all. The eleven healthy children got together again and the outcome of the consultation with the soothsayer was laid before all of them. All the eleven children were loved by their father; which of them would they select for the sacrifice, which of them would be spared? They all went on staring at one another, finding it difficult to take a final decision on who to use for the sacrifice.

Then the weakling also came to the meeting and enquired from his eleven siblings why they were sitting down quietly, staring at one another. Then the healthy ones told him the story. The weakling objected to the soothsayer's instruction and suggested that they go to a Moslem cleric too to consult him on their father's illness. The children agreed and went to the Moslem cleric too. Then the Moslem cleric also took his rosary and started consulting it *Kyɛkyɛkyɛ*! *Kyɛkyɛkyɛ*! *Kyɛkyɛkyɛ*! In no time, the cleric also concluded that there was the need for a ram to be sacrificed. The cleric instructed the children that when they got home, they should sacrifice a ram and their father's health would be restored in no time. As a result, when the children got back home, they sacrificed a ram. Shortly after the sacrifice, the sick man regained his health. Did the weakling not save the life of one of the healthy children?

Nɩ tɔɔnɩ bee nɩ dɩɩma	Both the useless and the worthy
A buroŋ kaŋ wɩɩ yaalɩya rɛ.	Are of importance in this life.
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