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Tales in the Paasaali Dirge: Structure and Moral Lessons from the Past

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Abstract

Among the Paasaala people in the Upper West Region of Ghana who speak paasaali, dirge performance and the execution of the tale go hand in hand; the two genres complement each other. This paper investigates the close relationship between tales and dirges and establishes some of the reasons that bind them together in the Paasaala funeral context. By using the theory of ethno-poetics and methodologies such as close observation of live performances of dirges, interviews with poet cantors and cultural custodians of some selected Paasaala communities, recordings of live dirge performances as well as references to some documented sources on dirges and tales, the researchers find that there are different structural types of dirges among the Paasaala, but the marriage between appellations, the tale, and song is unique, and it is one of the most complex forms. This union is imbued with several merits, and these merits range from the aesthetic to the utilitarian.

Keywords

dirge – ethno-poetics – Paasaala – Paasaali – folktale – historical lessons

บทคัดย่อ

นิทานจากบทเพลงในพิธีศพของชาวพาล่า: โครงสร้างและบทเรียนทางศีลธรรมจากอดีต

การใช้นิทานและการเล่านิทานในพิธีศพของชาวพาล่าซึ่งอาศัยอยู่ในแถบภูมิภาคตะวันตกตอนบนของกาน่าจะกระทำไปพร้อมๆกัน ทั้งสองสิ่งเกี่ยวพันซึ่งกันและกัน บทความนี้มุ่งวิเคราะห์ความสัมพันธ์ที่ใกล้ชิดของนิทานกับเพลงที่ใช้ในพิธีศพ และหาเหตุผลที่เชื่อมโยงสองอย่างนี้ไว้ด้วยกันในบริบทของงานศพของชาวพาล่า โดยใช้ทฤษฎีวัฒนธรรมชาติพันธุ์ (ethno-poetics) และระเบียบวิธีต่างๆ เช่น การสังเกตการแสดงบทเพลงในพิธีศพอย่างใกล้ชิด การสัมภาษณ์กับขานบทกวีในโบสถ์และสัมภาษณ์ผู้พิทักษ์รักษาวัดนธรรมของชุมชนพาล่าบางกลุ่ม การบันทึกภาพการแสดงสดบทเพลงในพิธีศพ รวมถึงการอ้างอิงแหล่งข้อมูลที่เกี่ยวข้องกับบทเพลงในพิธีศพและนิทานที่มีการบันทึกไว้ ผลการวิจัยพบว่าโครงสร้างต่างๆ ของบทเพลงในพิธีศพในหมู่ชาวพาล่า มีหลายประเภทที่แตกต่างกัน แต่เมื่อนิทานกับเพลงมารวมกัน จะมีเอกลักษณ์และรูปแบบที่สลับซับซ้อนมากที่สุดรูปแบบหนึ่ง การรวมตัวกันดังกล่าวนี้มีคุณค่าหลายประการ นับตั้งแต่ด้านสุนทรียศาสตร์ไปจนถึงด้านประโยชน์ใช้สอย

1 Introduction

The folktale, evidently, is a popular verbal performance in the oral tradition in Africa that has endured over the years. Studies in oral literature in Africa have shown that tales are generally told by the fireside milieu as a form of entertainment, as a vehicle for the transmission of cultural and moral values, and for artistic expression. Sometimes, however, tales can be evoked or performed outside the usual fireside milieu to satisfy certain moral, cultural, and artistic requirements in Africa. In this paper, the focus is on tales that are used outside their usual fireside milieu by the Paasaala in order to execute their dirges.

Paasaali is a dialect of the Sisaali language. The Sisaali language is spoken by the Sisaalas, and Paasaali is a dialect that is spoken by the Paasaala people. The Paasaalas are mainly concentrated in the Wa East Constituency of the Upper West region of Ghana and specifically in the Wa East District. The Paasaalas have settlements such as Finsi, the capital of the Wa East District, Kundungu, Buffiama, Jumo, Yaala Number One and Two and so on. Their main occupation is farming, and though Christianity and Islam have influenced their religious

beliefs, they still follow traditional practices and customs when it comes to mourning the dead.

The theories of ethnopoetics and moral sentiments have been used to support discussions in this paper. According to Quick (1999, 90), 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.” The model of folklore analysis used in the discussion of issues in this paper combines elements from the two strands of ethnopoetics developed by Hymes (1981) and Tedlock (1977).

Instead of concentrating on Hymes’s strand of ethnopoetics, which emphasizes the written text, or that of Tedlock, which focuses on living discourse, discussions in this paper give cognizance to performance, the oral text, and the written text. Concerning the theory of moral sentiments, Smith (2016) argues: “When we consider the character of any individual, we naturally view it under two different aspects; first, as it may affect his own happiness; and secondly, as it may affect that of other people” (Smith 2016). These tales as found in the article host historical nuggets that teach moral lessons which are essential in discussing or contemplating what ought to be or should be done in human interactions with one another and the physical environment.

The object of this paper, however, is to present the performance, the oral text and the written text of the Paasaali dirge. These dirges are old nuggets loaded with history and moral lessons that are useful for contemporary times. It is important to emphasize that there is no exclusive study on the Paasaali dirges, especially that, which seeks to draw lessons from these old dirges. Consequently, discussions in this paper have proceeded along the following lines: first, a short explanation of the theory and methods used in gathering data and advancing arguments; second, a discussion on the intricate relationship between the tale and the dirge in the Paasaala cultural context; third, a critical appreciation of the language and structure of some sample Paasaala dirges, including lessons for humanity, and the last part of the paper deals with the findings and conclusion of the research.

1.1 *Materials and Methodology*

Interviews with bards and community elders, close observation of dirge performances in Paasaala land, our participation in dirge performances as well as documented sources on dirges have been used for data gathering and interpretation. Sample dirges from the Paasaaliland have also been collected, transcribed, translated and used as primary data for arguments advanced in this paper.

1.2 *Relationship between the Dirge and the Tale*

Abrams (2005, 77) simply defines dirge as “a versified expression of grief on the occasion of a particular person’s death.” Right from the onset, the dirge is a term that is closely related to death. In the African context, Ohwovoriole (2010, 445) defines dirges as “songs, poems or dances performed on the death or during the funeral of someone with societal recognition.” She explains further that the dirge can be “eulogic, satiric, lamentative, condemnatory or incantatory.”

On the other hand, the tale has been explained by John Hagan as follows:

It has a literary convention expressed in the scheme of formal features: the introductory statements; the body of the tale interspersed with songs; the moral or etiological conclusion; the narrator-audience interaction; the use of language characterised chiefly by repetition and resort to ideophones; the role of songs to punctuate sections of the story and to advance the plot in some cases (Hagan 1988, 19).

Evidently, the definitions of these two art forms do not bring out clearly the relationship that exists between them in the Paasaala cultural context since one is all about death and the other is mute on the subject of death. The relationship between the dirge and the tale can be fully understood when one considers the two from the angle in which they are executed and the functions of the two genres on the funeral grounds in the Paasaala cultural context.

Functionally, dirges and tales share a great deal in common. Areas of interest or issues of communal and individual concern that can be commented on using tales can easily be highlighted using the Paasaala dirge, too. Indeed, Ajuwon (1980, 71), Ogede (1995, 82), Clark-Deces (2005), Alembi (2008, 21), and Fasan (2015, 118) have all agreed in their works that dirges are not used for only mourning but are also used to celebrate life. This is why in the Paasaala cultural context, both genres (tale and dirge) are combined for effective satire and commentary on issues of individual and communal concern. Indeed, Kehinde (2010, 29) explains that “folktales are, for instance, useful media for the communication of the country’s history, culture, philosophy, mores, kinship systems, moral disposition and so on.” In another context, Aborampah (1999, 264) also draws our attention to the fact that Akan “dirges themselves cover the whole spectrum of social life, including kinship, marital and familial relations, economics, political activities and societal values.” The Paasaala dirge is not completely different from other Ghanaian and African dirges, and the areas in which both the dirge and the tale can be used are common. Combining the two genres in the Paasaala context is an ingenious way of providing the poet cantor with enough resources to use the platform of dirges to mourn, to

celebrate a life worthy of emulation, to satirize the society, to teach moral lessons, to teach the history of kinship, and sometimes, to entertain in order to provide a therapeutic or cathartic effect for mourners.

One other area in which there is a similarity between the dirge and the tale in terms of function in the Paasaala context is the expression of emotions. It has already been explained elsewhere in this paper that the dirge is used for mourning and sometimes, to celebrate a well-lived life depending on the age and circumstances surrounding the death of the deceased in the Paasaala context. Death among the Paasaala is not regarded entirely as tragic once it involves someone who has lived beyond a certain advanced age, someone who has been blessed with many children and grandchildren, someone who has died peacefully without a protracted illness and at home. Whether the mood is celebratory or mournful, one thing that comes out clearly is that both moods involve the expression of emotions. In a similar fashion, the execution of tales also involves the expression of emotions. In the case of the tale, the expression of such emotions can be “therapeutic, emotional, cathartic, didactic” and sometimes, the tale may be of “socializing usefulness” (Kehinde 2010, 29). Combining tales which can have a therapeutic and cathartic effect with dirges which can evoke mournful moods is an intelligent and creative way of mourning. Indeed, it means that among the Paasaala, it is acknowledged that death brings about grief but the living cannot wallow in that state of sorrow forever. While mourning the departed, we must be mindful not to overdo it in such a way that it would have a negative impact on our health. Combining the tale with the dirge is a way of providing an opportunity for mourners to mourn in moderation on the occasion of death and to accept its reality.

The Paasaala dirge is mainly didactic and satiric when it is used to mourn an elderly person who has lived a life worthy of emulation and has departed at an age that is the envy of the living. In such a context, the mood is not that of lamentation but rather a celebratory one. Consequently, dirges in such circumstances in the Paasaala context are used to teach communal and cultural values and to comment on issues affecting the community and the individual. The tale is well known in the African context for performing this role, and this is why Kehinde (2010) explains that storytelling in Africa should be described as an “enter-educational art.” The similarity between this function of the tale and that of the dirge is one of the evident reasons why poet cantors are able to combine the two and to execute them perfectly on the funeral grounds.

Finally, aesthetically, the Paasaala dirge is often couched in highly metaphorical terms. In its complex form, the Paasaala dirge is a combination of different verbal arts (appellations, tale and song). An appellation can be defined as

identifying word or words by which someone or something is distinguished from others (Anyidoho 1991, 70). It is not explicit and easy to comprehend, and it is not executed individually as it is found in other cultural contexts such as that of the Akans in Ghana; the poet-cantor and audience execute it together. Consequently, when the tale is used together with the dirge, the tale serves as an illustration of the meaning of the song. The tale is executed before the song is performed. In this way, when the song sounds even proverbial or metaphorical, the illustrative nature of the tale is able to help mourners understand the meaning of the dirge. Audience participation is also enhanced when tales are used in the execution of dirges. Due to the more expansive form of the tale as compared to the song or appellations, and due to the extensive use of repetitions and ideophones coupled with appropriate body language, the cantor is able to enlist the attention of the audience, who wait and encourage the cantor patiently until he or she starts the song which embeds the moral in the tale for the audience to help execute the song.

1.3 *Structural Types of Dirges*

Nketia (1955, 51–73) has been able to identify some structural types in Akan dirges based on the themes that they embed. In the same vein, 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 as its resources hunters’ songs, royal appellation poetry, and traditional Akan dirges.

1.4 *Structural Types of Paasaali Dirges*

In the Paasaala context, dirges can be categorized based on their structure and on the age or social status of the deceased which may warrant the dominance or otherwise of lament in the songs. Structural and social types can, therefore, be discussed under Paasaala dirges. The focus in this paper is, however, on structural types and particularly, on the type that combines appellations, tale, and song.

The simplest form of the Paasaali dirge consists of a song of one or two lines. These two lines are repeated more than five times before a pause is observed. The hiatus does not mark the end of the dirge; instead, the same two lines are repeated several times before the song is concluded and somebody begins another song. 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. This usually allows all the mourners and poet cantors to observe the hiatus in a smooth, uniform and euphonic manner. 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 (2003, 391) reports a similar instance of repetition in the Bakweri dirge in Cameroon. In his own words, “One line can, in fact, be repeated several times.” This form of the Paasaali dirge is absolutely participatory in its formal setting, and poets as well as mourners execute it together. The following dirge is an example of the Paasaali dirge in its simplest form:

Paasaali Dirge

<i>Nthiyawvyaa</i>	The aged are
<i>Hanbiyedaallii rē.</i>	The gods of the youth.
<i>Nthiyawvyaa</i>	The aged are
<i>Hanbiyedaallii rē.</i>	The gods of the youth.
<i>Nthiyawvyaa</i>	The aged are
<i>Hanbiyedaallii rē.</i>	The gods of the youth.
<i>Nthiyawvyaa</i>	The aged are
<i>Hanbiyedaallii rē.</i>	The gods of the youth.
<i>Nthiyawvyaa</i>	The aged are
<i>Hanbiyedaallii rē. r̥aṇaṇaṇaaaa.</i>	The gods of the youth.

The elongated forms of certain vowel sounds are stock sounds used in ending many musical or poetic compositions in the Paasaali culture. They include such elongated vowel sounds as *yieeeee*, *reeeeee*, *ooooooo*, *ngaa ngaaaa*, and so on. Such vowel sounds are not only euphonic to the ear, but they are elongated and help the poet cantor and the audience to mark a hiatus euphonically and uniformly by lowering the pitch of their voice during such compositions. They can, therefore, be used to end many compositions though they do not start them.

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 among the Paasaalas or the users of the Paasaali dialect where drums are used to provide musical accompaniment in the rendering of dirges and not xylophones as pertains among the speakers of the Tumuluṇ or Gelbagli dialects of the Sisaali language group.

From the sample dirge provided, it is evident that repetition remains the key structure or device that holds the dirge together. Due to the fact that whole lines are repeated, the song merely becomes a refrain that allows for easy participation and memorisation of the song. Since most of the songs are often couched in metaphorical and proverbial terms, it is important that they are repeated several times to emphasise their meanings, to create rhythm, and to

allow the poet to think of the next song while one is still ongoing. Poet cantors, therefore, use the technique of building blocks to execute these dirges.

Having addressed the issue of structure in this sample dirge, it is equally useful to look at the lessons for humanity. Historically, the elders (old men and members of the first estate within Ghanaian traditional society, that is, chiefs, queen mothers, divisional chiefs, clan and family heads) are believed to have some wisdom and so are able to offer important advice and direction to the youth. It is generally believed that this comes about as result of lived experience and old age. The metaphor, “the aged are the gods of the youth” cannot be gainsaid. The gods are perceived to have an important place in traditional Ghanaian society; they are propitiated for protection and counsel to ensure the well-being of persons and the traditional state and also to appease them to preserve order and quiet threatened by minor offenses committed by the people (Adu-Gyamfi 2016). This in essence places the “aged” (elders) in a special realm, “the realm of the gods” whose counsel was and is still considered unparalleled in some traditional Ghanaian societies. The words of John Fiske are an important feature in the scheme of things: “... What is the meaning of the fact that man is born into the world more helpless than any other creature, and needs for a much longer season than any other living thing the tender care and wise counsel of his elders?” (Fiske 1909, 1). In Schaefer’s *Grandmothers Counsel the World: Women Elders Offer Their Vision for Our Planet*, Winona La Duke penned: “Within the words of these grandmothers are the words of real experts. There is no way to replace intergenerational knowledge of how to live sustainably, how to reaffirm relationships. The scientific paradigm, a mechanistic methodology, will not show us the way through these challenging times. We are blessed with the teachings the grandmothers offer, and we are thankful for their words” (Anders 2008).

The second structural type of dirge which can be identified is the one that comes in the form of a song and an appellation or appellations. This type is considered complex and only professional dirge performers are able to execute it together with the audience. 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 performing the song that he or she has in mind. It takes a long apprenticeship and practice for one to memorize most of the appellations which are fixed and cannot be changed by the bard. The chorus assists the bard in executing the song itself and also supports the bard with words of encouragement and gifts of cola nuts or coins when he chants the appellations.

The appellations of the mourners are chanted by the artist alone. The appellations and the song together form the dirge in the Paasaali context. 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 several times, 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 together with different songs with different semantic implications. Indeed, the main function of the appellations in this context is to enable dirge singers to catch the attention of specific individuals at the funeral grounds and to, perhaps, motivate these individuals to give money to the bard or to enable them pay tributes to the deceased. Appellations are also used to trace the history and kinship among the mourners on the funeral grounds. The bard's ability to chant these appellations of different clans successfully equally demonstrates that he is a good poet since no mourner or clan would be pleased if their appellation is chanted wrongly. The following dirge, which consists of appellations and a song, is an example of structural type two.

Appellation

<i>Nvhu tumawaa!</i>	Owner of the cow!
<i>Ba naga ɛɛɛi vɪyanvhu ta?</i>	What caused you to abandon the cow?
<i>Gyaan ma yaalaanvhyigepan,</i>	Please, help me push the cow forward.
<i>Gyaan ma yaalaa ŋ kywala kana,</i>	Please, accept my greetings.
<i>Adamawaa! Adamawaa! Adamawaa!</i>	Attention Adama! Attention Adama! Attention Adama!
<i>Ba naga ɛɛɛivɪyanvhu ta?</i>	What caused you to abandon the cow?
<i>DyakunvkyuwalyaKagyiya nyela,</i>	Nephew of Dyakunu who paid his respects to Kagyiya,
<i>Badiyekywaa Hall nyela,</i>	Nephew of Badiye who paid his respects to Halli,
<i>NwtuwokywaaGbungbogino nyela,</i>	Nephew of Nwtuwu who paid his respects to Gbungbogino,
<i>Girigiri nyela baa faa,</i>	Nephew of those full of vitality and strength,

Naagimeba lo gyeye nyela,

Yaalaa ŋ kywala kana.

Adamawaa! Adamawaa!

l m trɛŋ ɔaŋdaaŋfeniyaŋ bee?

KyaŋdɔmɔkyuwalyaBakɔɔ nyla,

Puri pnabanakpan nyla,

Ba vyanywabalya nyla,

Gyaaŋgyaŋ di i wuwoli digna nii wii.

Nephew of those who crumble walls
with the sound of their footsteps,

Please, I greet you!

Attention Adama! Attention Adama!

What is your own appellation?

Nephew of Kyaŋdɔmɔ who paid his
respects to Bakɔɔ,

Nephew of those who value the truth
above anything else,

Nephew of those whose totem is the
crocodile,

Please, please, listen attentively.

Song

Agyiyeburilaaratuwo

Aŋ sɪburilaara?

Agyiyeburilaaratuwo

Aŋ sɪburilaara?

Agyiyeburilaaratuwo

Aŋ sɪburilaara?

Agyiyeburilaaratuwo

Aŋ sɪburilaara?

Agyiyeburilaaratuwo

Aŋ sɪburilaara?

Agyiyeburilaaratuwo

Aŋ sɪburilaaraaaaaa?

Agyiye, our protector is no more

Who will protect us?

Agyiye, our protector is no more

Who will protect us?

Agyiye, our protector is no more

Who will protect us?

Agyiye, our protector is no more

Who will protect us?

Agyiye, our protector is no more

Who will protect us?

Agyiye, our protector is no more

Who will protect us?

In the appellations, repetition remains the linchpin among other structures or devices such as metaphor (owner of the cow_ owner of the funeral), (cow-funeral), hyperbole (crumble walls with footsteps), rhetorical questions (What is your own appellation?) and so on. Much as all these literary devices contribute to the structural and semantic unity of the dirge, the structure that really brings about unity in the appellation is lexico-structural repetition. In this instance, words and phrases are repeated to enable the audience to understand that what is at the centre of the appellation is the ancestry of a mourner. Thus, the phrases “nephew of” and “who paid his respects to” are repeated in the appellations to draw our attention to the fact that it is one person’s ancestry which is being traced and that the ancestors’ age follows the order in which they paid respects to one another.

In the third type, appellations, a tale and the song are combined. The tale that is executed in such an instance undergoes some changes; this makes it slightly different from the normal fireside milieu kind of tales that are mostly presented without the interlinking of appellations, tales and song combined.

Again, in dealing with moral lessons, we infer that the dead in the dirge was an important person who had a firm ancestry or heritage. He was a protector, and in his absence, who would protect the people? We are sure to add that he will not only protect them from evil forces but from those who, in the present circumstances, will take away from them that which is due them in any form through any means. Writing on the role of the public protector in fighting corruption, Pienaar argued that governments in all countries are supposed to be the guardians of the people and of the interests of the people over whom they govern (Pienaar 2000). Though the people mourn, the need to have someone who is interested in being a protector not only of individuals but of the family, the people and their heritage would count and continue to be of grave concern.

In most cultures, the performance of tales is a form of entertainment that is provided on evenings of relaxation. (Okpewho 1992, 222). It is the same situation that pertains in the Paasaala context. Tales which are performed in a formal setting are normally referred to as '*mvla*' in the Paasaali dialect. They are usually a mixture of animal, human, and fairy-tales. They differ in terms of seriousness, the presence of satire, and the presence of comedy. Children often gather around elderly people to listen to such oral pieces. There are other instances in which the tale can be used outside its formal setting. It can be evoked in a conversation among 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 Paasaala context, it loses its label as '*mvla*'. It becomes '*namaga*,' a term which is 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*' are 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 folktale performances 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 mourners. In consequence, it is the song which is performed at the end of the tale that has a logical and cohesive connection with the narrative.

Yankah (2002) 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...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 2002, 138)

1.5 *Prose Narrative Interwoven in the Paasaali Dirge and Moral Lessons from the Past*

The following prose narrative which has been used as an integral part of a dirge is analyzed in the subsequent pages in order to illustrate its suitability to be woven into the Paasaala dirge.

Appellations

Bayoŋ waa! Bayoŋ waa!
I nyinaŋ gaŋdaa feni yaŋ bee?
Dalaa kywalya Kagiya nyela,

Nmaŋ tɔɔɔ nyela fira bana,

Nyukunƿogilli birimu hayaara gbuwoni
nyela,
Naasolli birimu ba ŋmura nyela,

Please Bayoŋ! Please Bayoŋ!
What is your father's appellation?
Nephew of Dalaa who paid his
respects to Kagiya,
Nephew of those who ambushed
wayfarers and forced them to
retreat,
Nephew of those whose unkempt
wives used human skulls as gourds,
Nephew of those who used human
tibia as flutes,

Ba naga eere i viya yoho ta?

How come you are not taking an active part in the execution of dirges?

Bayoŋ waa! Bayoŋ waa!

Attention Bayoŋ! Attention Bayoŋ!

I me tirij gandraa feni yar bee?

What is your own appellation?

Gbaŋgyaga kyuwaliya Namaali nyela,

Nephew of Gbaŋgyaga who paid his respects to Namaali,

Saali kyuwali Kuŋkōŋ nyela,

Nephew of Saali who paid his respects to Kuŋkōŋ,

Gyagyinna gyaarigenni nyela,

Nephew of expert horse riders,

Krugu tōo naanyiyere nyela,

Nephew of those who wear baggy trousers to cover spindly legs,

Gawurini tōo ba sawe nyela,

Nephew of those who wear smocks to conceal their amulets,

Nyupugu tōo nyukpurɔya nyela,

Nephew of those who wear hats to conceal their bumpy heads,

Agyiya baŋ kyuwali Saampuwo nyela,

Nephew of Agyiya who paid his respects to Saampuwo,

Gyaan gyaan di i wuwoli i digina nu wu. Please, please, listen attentively.

Tale

Banihiyawu ri sii, a kanu v haaru aŋ nyurimi. Wusi a yaa wiya, banihiyawu siya duŋ daa nyurimiya ame v penni me suwa re. Kyiye buro banihiyawu bee v haaru ki gyuv diya, banihiyawu a pina a bagisi, bagisi haaru re aŋ sii. Waa bi wuwo a ki kye haaru kipinu twa.

Eere kye kwala, banihiyawu sii a laha pina gyanɔ twa. U pina gyanɔ twa a ki mv ki maga e di piinihe kiire geri v fa a ki kan banihiyawu garv twa gyuv.

Eere geri buri pa banihiyawu, "Banihiyawu, di inɔ ki wuwo laa ŋ mubori ta paŋ, ŋ si kyisi i penni a pee." Eere piinihe me buri pa banihiyawu a buri, "Banihiyawu, di inɔ ki leŋ di ŋ kan geri a dii a fiyali ŋ losuu haŋ nye, ŋ si suri i siya pee. Leelee nye waa, banihiyawu aa kye v siya re, a bira ki kye penni me kyusino. Bakibee re waa lusi aŋ leŋ bakibee?

Eere banihiyawu sii a gyuv diya a gyuv kana gyimu ki pa piinihe. Piinihe laa gyimu haa, a di. Leelee haa, di piinihe siya fiyaliya re. Eere piinihe sii haa, a gyina Wusi nyuu aŋ ki tuu paasibanihiyawu siya abee v naanifila kuŋu. Leelee

di kyalv a laha banhiyawv siya twa. Banhiyawv kana v neni gyina lanu v siya haa, diw siya suriye. Eere haa, gebari me sii haa, nyaratatata di v kan gyee kuu nyuhu gyina. U gyina saga gyee nyuhu an kana v nyuhu gyollo an kan tuu bini. Eele di banhiyawv penni ka sii re kpogu, kpogu, kpogu anu gyaagu penni. Eere too biri, banhiyawv yirw haarv di v kan ku bini ba pina. Eere banhiyawv haarv biri di banhiyawv me tiri a bi wuwo wu buro ki yaa an aa ki walimi nara bee pina wiya. Eere banhiyawv tari v nyuwa. Haarv ki kan ku bini haa, banhiyawv tuu pina haa, di v kpa haarv pina.

1.6 *Translation of the story above*

"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 daybreak. 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 onto the face of the old man and scratched it with its claws "*kuju*." 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 onto 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."

Song

<i>Yaa wasu dɔŋne</i>	One good turn
<i>U me kyiye waseɛ</i>	Deserves another
<i>Yaa wasu dɔŋne</i>	One good turn
<i>U me kyiye waseɛ</i>	Deserves another
<i>Yaa wasu dɔŋne</i>	One good turn
<i>U me kyiye waseɛ</i>	Deserves another
<i>Yaa wasu dɔŋne</i>	One good turn
<i>U me kyiye waseɛ</i>	Deserves another
<i>Yaa wasu dɔŋne</i>	One good turn
<i>U me kyiye waseɛ yeeeeeee</i>	Deserves another

Evidently, the logical conclusion that one can draw from the tale is that the old man has much 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, fulfill their promises to their host. As a 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 wasu dɔŋ ne/U me kyiye waseɛ*). If this is measured in the sense of social support, you will find that it is exceptionally important for the maintenance of good physical and mental health (Southwick et al. 2005). However, linking this to a moral lesson, especially one concerning the traditional economic theory of compensation, we learn that compensation in essence might neglect the influence of moral principles (Frey et al. 1996). We can infer that the moral lesson of this tale links, for instance, to when Frey et al argue that conventional economic analysis assumes that offers of monetary compensation increase the willingness to accept otherwise unwanted projects. Should the old man sacrifice his fowl to restore his sight and potency? To win the support of prospective host communities, Frey et al. further argue that the compensation offered has to be large enough to offset the net disutility imposed by the facility (Frey et al. 1996). In the narrative, the hawk scratches the face of the old man very hard, resulting in the loss of enough blood that eventually it answers the physical needs of the old man. Significantly, the action of the old man is well situated within the context of the theory of moral sentiments. It also falls within the argument that individuals have a natural tendency to look after themselves. An example is security, which is "the first and the principal object of prudence. The absence of security, for instance, can expose our health, our fortune, our rank, or reputation, to any sort of hazard" (Smith 2016).

Looking at the song that follows the narrative, one striking feature of that part of the dirge is its simple structure. It consists of just two lines repeated several times until a hiatus is observed. The simple nature of the structure of the song and the fact that both lexical and structural repetition are used help render the song a piece that can easily be performed together by both the cantor and the audience. The repetitions used in the song establish a pattern that can be followed and memorised by the audience and that also facilitates emphasis in meaning. The song contains the moral of the tale, and the song is couched in metaphorical terms. For these two reasons, the song is repeated several times to foreground the meaning of the song and to encourage audience participation since the Paasaali dirge is not an individual performance as it is among the Akan in Ghana (Nketia 1955, 5) or the Iggede in Nigeria (Ogede 1995, 81) but rather, it is an issue of a harmonious and communal performance on the funeral grounds, using drums and castanets to accompany the execution of the song. Indeed, Fasan (2015) highlights the relevance of repetition in general in the following terms:

Repetition is employed to emphasise certain portions of a text. Such emphasis underscores or calls attention to particular ideas in an utterance. It should be stated that repeated utterances have a beat or movement of their own that not only enhances the rhythm of poetry, but creates auditory effects that are pleasing or even therapeutic to the listener (Fasan 2015, 116).

Concerning the appellations used in the dirge, another form of repetition is used to trace the genealogies of both Bayong and his father. In this kind of repetition, the expression “nephew of” is repeated in several lines with different elements being added to every line. This kind of repetition which Abrams refers to as incremental repetition (Abrams 2005, 19) enables the bard to describe the different qualities or stories about the genealogy of an individual without losing focus on that same person.

1.7 *The Use of Literary Devices*

Some literary devices have also been used by the artist to enliven the performance of the tale 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 form of ‘*kuɣv*’, ‘*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 (*kuɣv*), the speed with which the male lizard runs onto 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 his 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 erect male organ of a horse but it is also employed to reflect the sexual prowess that the host has regained. 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 an aesthetic quality alone in terms of their sound, 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 Paasaala culture, and it is only apt that reference should be made to it on issues of this nature. Pun, in the form of '*pina*', is also used in the last sentence of the story. '*Pina*' is a verb that can mean 'to lie down' or 'to sleep' when it is used intransitively. When it is used transitively as it is in the latter part of the last sentence with wife (*haarv*) as the object, it refers to the act of making love. Even the use of '*pina*' to designate the act of making love is euphemistic and is meant to reduce the shock contained in the 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.

1.8 *The Use of Symbols and Moral Lessons*

Finally, symbols are also employed in the story to facilitate the understanding of the meaning of the dirge as well as expand it. The hawk is well known for its good sight and, therefore, symbolizes sight in the story. The horse and the male lizard both symbolize male virility since they are known for that in Paasaala 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 audiences to participate 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 is 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 discourse demands a simple 'mhm' 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.

Equally noteworthy is the performer's ability to weave a simple but logical plot about a man and other elements from his environment. This is why Schenb (2007) 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)

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 a daily basis? Recent explorations of the topic of trust extend over a wide range of phenomena, including trust in teams, families, organizations, the professions, and various other social, political, and economic institutions (Cook 2001). In an edited volume by Valerie Braithewaite and Margaret Levi (1998) titled *Trust and Governance*; several key questions are discussed, namely: Is trust really essential to good governance, or are strong laws more important? What leads people either to trust or to distrust government, and what makes officials trustworthy? Can trusting too easily render the public vulnerable to government corruption, and if so, what safeguards are necessary? The works of Coleman (1990), Putnam (1993), Fukuyama (1995) and Gambetta (1998) argue that trust or social capital determines the performance of an institution. 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 a subtlety of

narration that bring out certain recurring structures which emphasize the creative ability of the artist.

2 Conclusion

From the exegesis given so far in the paper, it can safely be concluded that there is another dimension to the tale in the manner in which it is used in executing Paasaala dirges. There are different structural types of the Paasaala dirge depending on its organization. Whereas the song alone may be simple in terms of its organization, the song and appellations or the song together with appellations and a tale are both complex in terms of their composition and performance. Internal structures in terms of literary devices and sound structures are also used to contribute to the meaning and unity of the dirge. Most important among these internal structures are lexico-structural repetitions which imbue the dirge with structural and semantic unity. The tale also plays a very important role in the execution of Paasaala dirges by illustrating the often metaphorical and proverbial meanings of the songs and by putting the creative ability of the bard to test. The combination of the tale and the dirge in the mourning process of the Paasaala, therefore, has both an aesthetic and a utilitarian appeal. These notwithstanding, the lessons drawn from these dirges as explicated in the text, shall continue to be useful to the present generation and posterity.

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